

Bag of the Month

November: gold coin purses

DIANE FERGUSON

With one of these little “coin-purse” neckpieces, which are woven quickly with jewelry wire instead of yarn, you will always have at least some coins with you! Even though the decorative coins can’t be used as legal tender, there’s enough room inside the purse to tuck in some real cash or . . . small item like your keys. These purses make a good first project for learning to weave with wire. Wire-woven fabrics like these can be formed off the loom into jewelry pieces such as collars or bracelets or into boxes, baskets, or simple sculptured images.

Using wire instead of yarn for weaving requires accommodating wire’s springiness and lack of elasticity. It is important to keep the wire under tension at all times. To prevent breakage, never bend the wire repeatedly in one place or allow it to kink. If you see a loop forming, straighten it immediately. You should never try to tie knots in wire—it’s not necessary (twisting is enough to secure the wire to apron rods) and the wire is likely to break if you do.

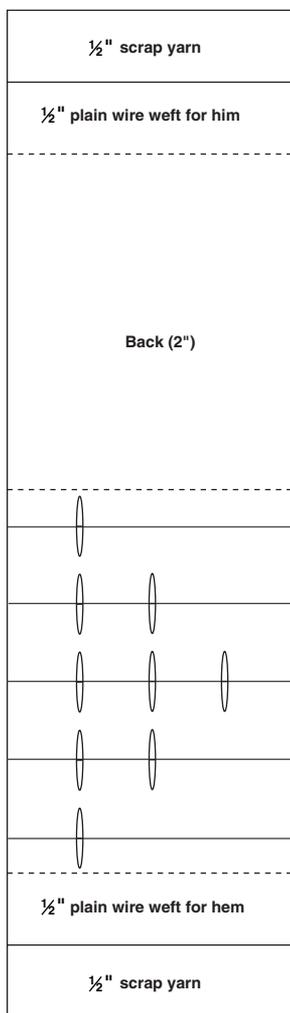
The weave structure

The weave structure for these purses is 3/1 twill (they can also be woven in plain weave). The wire fabric is woven face down (in 1/3 twill) so that the coins placed with the weft drop below the web to the right side during weaving. For the upper purse on page 2, gold coins are threaded onto a gold wire weft; for the lower purse, shells are threaded onto a strong silk weft. The gold coins are arranged in a triangular design while the shells are placed in rows, offset slightly from row to row.



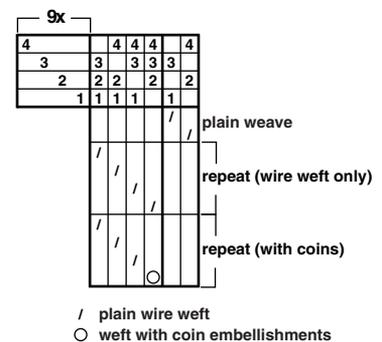
Diane Ferguson of Houston, Texas, is a longtime weaver who now also enjoys making her stash of samples into books and other art.

1. Placement layout for the nine gold coins

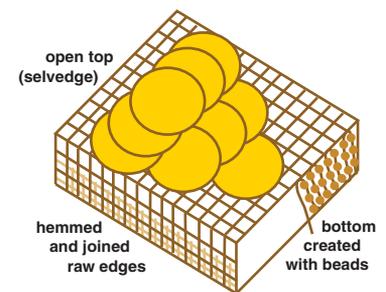


placement for gold coins (allow to drop through web)

2. Draft for both purses



3. Beading the bottom of gold coin purse



The selvedges become the top and bottom of the purse. The raw edges are trimmed, turned under, and stitched together at the purse side seams using tails of wire weft that are also used to stitch the purse bottoms. Gold beads fill the bottom opening on the gold coin purse, while the tails for the shell purse are used to weave a plain-weave bottom that is filled in with satin cord. Each purse has a satin-cord neck strap trimmed with two more coins/shells and two gold beads.



STEPS FOR WEAVING THE COIN PURSES

Step 1 Wind 36 ends gold wire 2 yd long. Keep the wire under tension at all times to maintain control. To wind: Place the spool in a horizontal position so the spool rotates without introducing extra twists. Use a rubber band on the spool to prevent the wire from spilling off one end of the spool. If you see a loop forming in the wire, straighten it right away to prevent it from tightening into a kink. Use twist ties to secure the cross. Hang a weight (2 large washers hanging from a bulldog clip) from each end of the warp before you take it off the warping board. Do not cut the loops at either end of the warp.

Step 2 Since this warp is only 2" wide, it is not necessary to use a raddle or lease sticks for winding on. I slip a stick shuttle into the loop at the opposite end of the warp from the cross and secure the shuttle with two shoelaces to the warp beam. Beam the warp using a towel to separate the layers.

Step 3 Place the cross over two warping pegs or over the V-shaped pegs (the "separator") of Schacht's Incredible Rope Machine clamped to the breast beam of the loom; the cross will be lying on its side. You can use lease sticks behind the heddles instead, but they have to be level with the heddle eyes and lie in a flat plane, and the warp ends must be long enough to reach through the heddles. To thread, remove



a. The shells shine with varying rainbows of color as they reflect the light.

one wire loop from the pegs at a time, cut the loop, and hold on to both ends as you take them back behind the shafts and through the heddles following Figure 2. Use a clothespin or bulldog clip to keep the ends under tension after they are threaded.

Step 4 Sley 3/dent in a 6-dent reed. (Pull the threads from the bulldog clip one by one, sley, and reclip as you go.)

Step 5 To "tie" the warp to the front apron rod, bring 8 or so wire ends together, bend them around the rod, and then twist them around themselves once; see Photo b. (Do not try to tie knots as you would for yarn.)

Step 6 For the gold coin purse, wind a 5 yd length of wire weft on a stick shuttle and thread 9 gold coins on the end, leaving the coins dangling next to the shuttle. Weave $\frac{1}{2}$ " scrap yarn in plain weave. Leaving a tail of wire about 10" long coiled gently out of the way, weave about $\frac{1}{2}$ " of twill with wire weft only at 14 picks per inch. Bring one coin into the next shed in the position shown in Figure 1, page 1, and allow it to dangle down through the wire web. Weave 3 picks of wire. Repeat, alternating 3 picks of wire only with 1 pick of wire with coins, placing them as in Figure 1.

After you have placed all of the coins, weave with wire weft only until the fabric is 5" long. Then leave a weft tail of about 10" for stitching later. Weave $\frac{1}{2}$ " with scrap yarn in plain weave to hold the wire weft in place. Use utility scissors to cut the woven-wire fabric from the loom. Do not let go of the cut wire warp threads; wrap them around a dowel to prevent them from falling back through the reed.

Step 7 To weave the shell purse, wrap and fasten the warp to the front apron rod as before. Wind a 5 yd length of wire weft on a stick shuttle and thread 72 shells onto a 3 yd length of black silk beading thread. Tie one shell onto the end to secure the other shells on the thread. (It's just as easy not to use a shuttle for this weft.)

PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

Weave structure for purses
3/1 twill.

Equipment

4-shaft loom, 2" weaving width; 6-dent reed; 6" stick shuttle; twist ties; 2 weights (large washers hanging from a bulldog clip); warping pegs or Schacht's Incredible Rope Machine; clothespins or bulldog clips to hold threaded warp under tension; needle with eye large enough for wire; sewing needle; pliers with nylon-covered jaws; heavy utility scissors.

Yarns

Warp: 28-gauge round gold wire, 72 yd.
Weft: 28-gauge round gold wire, 5 yd per

purse. Silk beading thread, size E (5,700 yd/lb), 3 yd, black (for shell purse).

Other materials and supplies

11 pressed metal miniature coins with holes, 50 gold beads for gold coin purse. 74 shells with holes, 2 gold beads for shell purse. For neck straps for both purses, $3\frac{1}{2}$ yd black nylon satin cord.

Sources for equipment and materials

28-gauge round jewelry wire is available from Metalliferous Inc. (www.metalliferous.com/images/BMC6770.pdf); silk beading thread from www.fusionbeads.com/shop/productchart/886/; coins from [\[bluepink.com/charms.html\]\(http://bluepink.com/charms.html\); nylon satin cord and needles from fabric stores.](http://www.sky</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Warp order and length

36 ends 2 yd long (allows more than enough for two 2" x 5" fabrics plus waste).

Warp and weft spacing

Warp: 18 epi (3/dent in a 6-dent reed).

Width in the reed: 2".

Weft: 14 ppi. Woven length (measured under tension on the loom): 5" per bag.

Finished dimensions

Amounts produce at least two coin-purse neckpieces, each 2" x 2" and $\frac{1}{2}$ " deep.



b. The warp is secured to the front apron rod by twisting the wires around each other rather than by tying. The coins drop underneath the cloth to what will become the right side of the purse. (This photo shows a sample woven before the actual gold coin purse.)

Step 8 Weave in scrap yarn for $\frac{1}{2}$ " and then begin weaving the shell purse in twill for $\frac{1}{2}$ " with wire weft only, leaving a tail of wire about 10" long as for the first purse. Then, alternate 3 picks of wire with 1 pick of black silk. For each silk pick, slide 4 shells into the shed to dangle through to the underside. Vary the spaces in the warp where you place the coins from row to row of silk. When you run out of coins (18 rows of coins), end with $\frac{1}{2}$ " wire weft, leave a tail of 10", and secure with $\frac{1}{2}$ " scrap yarn.

Step 9 Cut the piece from the loom and secure the warp again if you wish to weave more purses (there is enough warp for several more).

Step 10 For both purses: Remove the scrap yarn and trim the wire warp to the first weft thread on each raw edge using the utility scissors. (Do this carefully over a trash container so that the wire trimmings do not fall into carpeting—they can be as sharp as needles!) Press each edge against a firm surface such as your kitchen counter

to crease the first fold of a hem. Using the pliers with nylon-covered jaws, firmly press to flatten the fold. Fold again, making sure the sharp, trimmed warp ends do not protrude through the first fold. Gently roll the fabric into a tube joining the two folded edges and whipstitch them together using one of the weft tails threaded in a large-eyed needle. (The needle should not be so large that it distorts the structure of the woven wire.) Gently flatten the tube so that the sides are about $\frac{1}{2}$ " apart in the middle.

Step 11 To form the bottom of the gold coin purse, with a needle pick up 4, 5, or 6 of the gold beads (as many as you need to fill the space from front to back) on one of the weft tails and take the tail across the opening and stitch through the opposite selvedge; repeat and continue to form the bottom of the purse. Darn in the end of the wire at the opposite edge when you are finished.

Step 12 For the bottom of the shell purse, stitch across the bottom opening from front to back using one of the wire weft tails.

Darn in the end of the wire at the opposite edge. Use the other wire weft tail to needle-weave in plain weave through these stitches (from fold edge to fold edge of the purse). You may need to bring the needle in and out of the top opening of the purse to do this rather than trying to slide the needle over and under the wires. To complete the bottom of the purse, fill in the gaps in the wire foundation by weaving in some nylon satin cord.

Step 13 To make the neck cord for each purse: Measure a piece of the nylon satin cord double the length that will be needed to go over your head and allow the purse to hang where you like (24–36" times two). Overlap the ends of the cord and stitch together securely with silk beading thread. Flatten the circle of cord so that the overlapped area is in the center and a loop is formed at each side. Stitch a coin and bead about 1" from each loop. Secure the loops of cord to each side of the purse with the black silk thread. Darn in the ends of the thread in the nylon cord. 