

Basic Sprang

By Baroness Genoveva von Lubeck

Based on the class taught by THL Eva vanOldeBroek

Sprang is a very old method of weaving (or braiding) threads together. Sprang looks a bit like netting or knitting in some forms, but sprang uses only warp threads — no weft. Sprang goes back to the Bronze Age and was still in use as late as the 16th century (and beyond). Eva told me that sprang can be used for garters, belts, hairnets, stockings, scarves, and other purposes where a flexible material is required. Working sprang reminds me a bit of a solo cat's cradle game, if you remember that. Threads are pulled out and twist as you go along, creating an intriguing interlock.

Eva's classes include a simple starter kit consisting of a frame made of PVC pipes and two dowels upon which she's already wound the yarn. Here's a materials list:

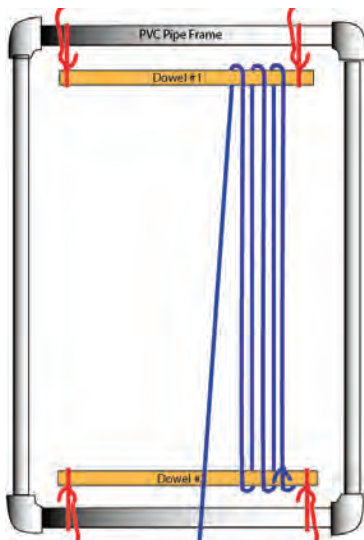
- Basic cotton yarn
- PVC pipe pieces with a diameter of 1 inch (two 2'foot long pipes, two 12" long pipes, and four connectors — you can buy these inexpensively at home improvement stores)
- Two 12" wood dowels
- 10 wooden sticks (like the sort you can buy for kabobs)

Directions:

1. To get started, suspend your two dowels to the top and bottom of your frame like shown below. Tie it securely, but make sure you can untie it easily later (i.e., slipknot) as you'll want to adjust the tension.



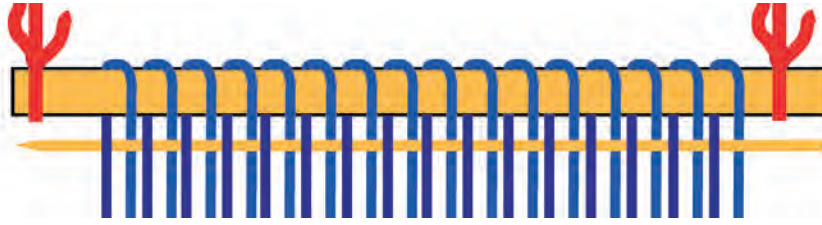
2. Now tie one end of your yarn to one end of one dowel, then begin wrapping the yarn (thread) around the two dowels in a figure-8 pattern, moving across. This is called warping. Continue until you have a good number of wraps — the one from Eva had 24 loops. When you've reached the end, tie the end off on the same dowel as your first tie.



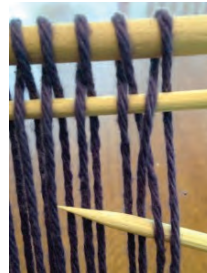
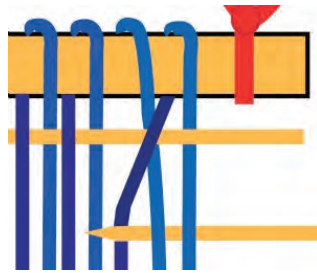
Note: Eva's warp used two different colors, which was achieved by wrapping the center section separately in a different color.

2a. Check the tension on your warped threads. A lot of my problems were caused by the tension either being too loose or too tight. You want the threads to be stable enough to work with.

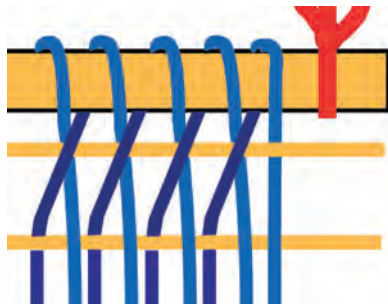
3. Now let's organize our threads — insert one of your sticks into the top end of your threads, pulling the back ones forward and the front ones back alternately, as shown below. This really helped me get my threads separated!



4. Now it's time to sprang! You will be alternating two rows of twists. Starting with the first row, pull the two rightmost back threads forward and the one rightmost front thread back, in that order, like shown below. You can use a stick or your fingers — I preferred to use my fingers, but it was harder to take a photo of that.



4a. Bring the next back thread forward and the next front thread backward. Repeat all across the row.



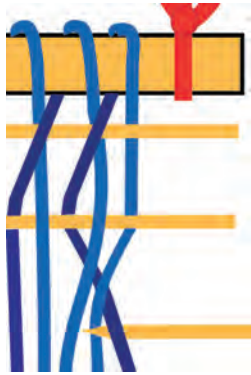
4b. Insert a second stick in the same spot as the first, as shown here:



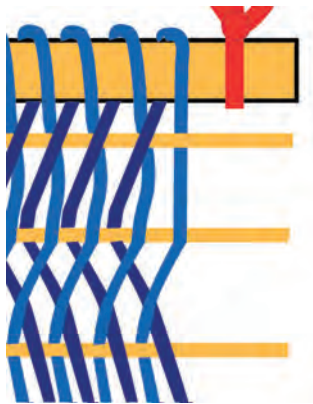
4c. Push the lower stick all the way down to the bottom and the upper stick all the way up to the top, like this:



5. Now it's time for the next row. This time instead of bringing the two rightmost back threads forward, you bring just the one rightmost back thread forward, like this:

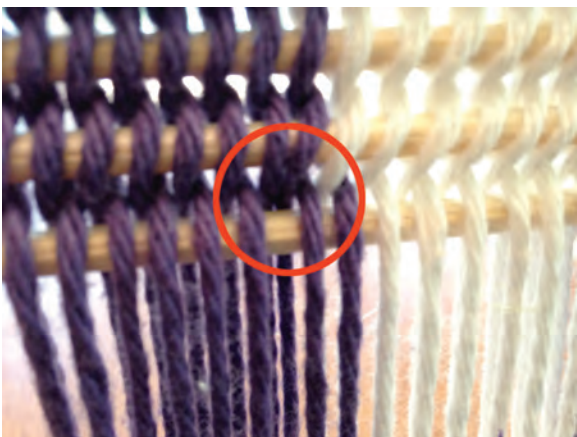


5a. Bring the next back thread forward and the next front thread backward. Repeat all across the row.



5b. Insert another stick in the same spot and push the lower stick down and the upper stick up, just like in step 4c.

6. Continue alternating steps 4 and 5 until you run out of space (the twists will eventually meet in the middle), adjusting tension as necessary. If you lose your spot (forget whether you should start with two back threads or one back thread, just check to see how many threads you started with last time. In the photo below, you can see that I started with TWO threads on my last row (I've circled those two threads to make it easier to spot them), so my next row would start with one.

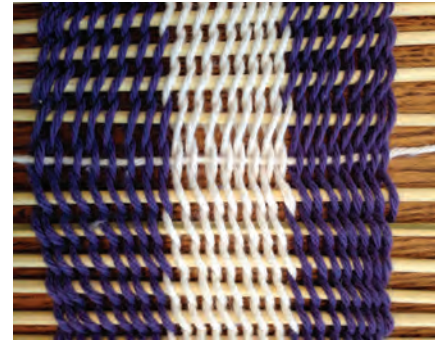


7. As you work each row, check that you got it right before moving on. I often would skip/jump a thread by accident and need to start over. Here's what that common mistake looks like so you can identify it:

8. When you get to the middle, Eva says you can either use a crochet hook and “chain stitch” the threads together, or run a thread through the center. I chose the latter.

9. Remove the sticks.

10. Cut a long length of yarn and carefully thread it through the top loops as you remove the top dowel. Repeat with another piece of yarn for the bottom dowel.



11. You can leave it like this, or you can make your sprang into a pouch! To make a pouch, fold your piece in half in the middle (where you inserted that yarn in step 8), thread a large-eye needle with one end of the middle thread, and begin stitching up the sides through the loops on the ends. When you get to the top of the side, take several more stitches in the same spot then knot it securely. Repeat for the other side.



11a. To turn the top strings into a drawstring, switch one of your top-loop strings so it enters/exits from the opposite side of the other string. This enables you to pull on both and tightly cinch the top.



Tada! A beginner sprang pouch! Many thanks to Eva for teaching me how to do this. If you would like to learn more about sprang, check out Eva's Advanced Sprang Techniques page. Eva also recommends the Sprang email list at Sprang-subscribe@yahoo.com, which includes several useful files including a copy of a Sprang Chronology started in Collingwood but added to by Maedb ingen Dungaile (also found here <http://www.florilegium.org/?http%3A//www.florilegium.org/files/TEXTILES/sprang-chrono-art.html>), and a very thorough bibliography (also found here <http://www.cs.vassar.edu/~capriest/sprangbib.html>).