

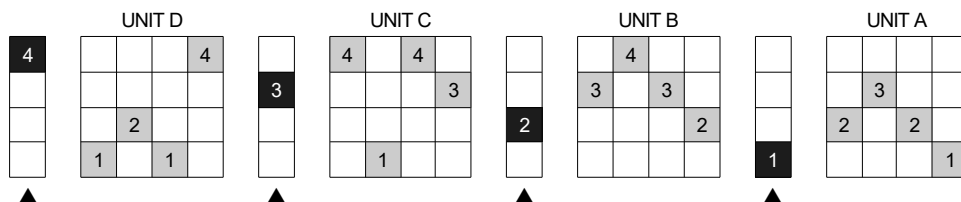
Crackle: Twill's Step-child

In 1927-28, Mary Atwater introduced Americans to the Scandinavian weave called *Jämtlandsväv* or *Jämtlandsdräll*. She supposed that the Swedish name was too difficult, and re-christened it "crackle weave." To her, the background suggested crackles in pottery glazes or batik. Perhaps you will agree with Berta Frey that "both suppositions seem rather farfetched," or with the authors of *Eight Shafts: A Place to Begin* who proclaim that "no weave is more aptly named."

Crackle has a lot in common with *overshot*, but keeps its floats under control and produces a cloth that's more like *summer & winter*. One of its popular uses was to weave enlarged overshoot patterns without impractical floats.

It is usually a 4-shaft weave with standard balanced tie-up, although it can be extended to multi-shaft designs and Sharon Alderman shows one 4-shaft example with 1/3 twill tie-up.

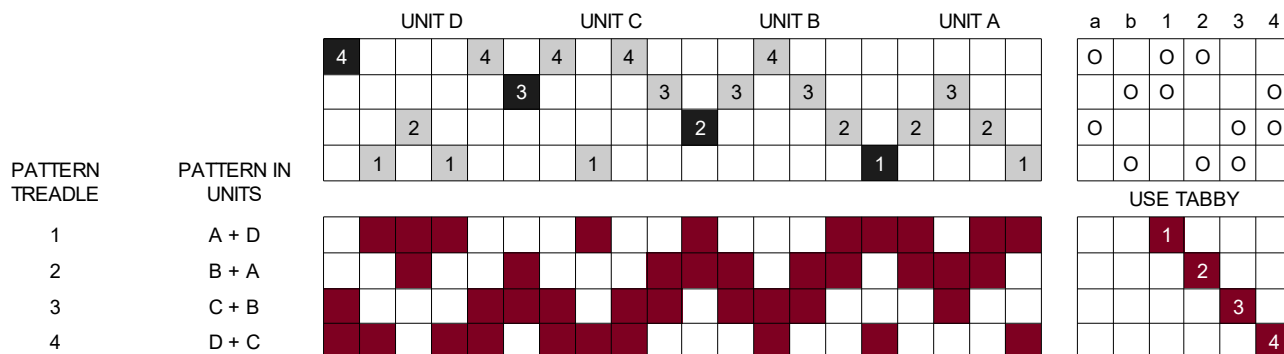
On four shafts there are four possible 4-thread units, each infinitely repeatable. However, a transition



thread (▲) must be inserted after the final repeat before commencing the next unit.

There are other threading conventions that give equivalent results, but I find this one the easiest to remember — an important consideration when threading the heddles.

If a unit is omitted, its transition thread is still required to maintain the plain weave background. So, like *overshot*, using tabby after each pattern shot creates a plain weave ground cloth. Unlike *overshot*, the units do not weave pattern independently, and are linked as follows:



Crackle can be woven in any style that is possible with a regular twill threading progression; for example, as drawn in *overshot* manner, any *summer & winter* style, or several others listed by Mary Snyder.

Probably the most attractive designs to contemporary eyes utilize just three of the four possible threading units. If, for example, there is no D unit, both the A and C units can appear in pattern either by themselves or in combination with the B units.

PATTERN TREADLE	PATTERN IN UNITS	UNIT C			UNIT B			UNIT A			a	b	1	2	3	4	
		1	A only	4	4		4						O		O	O	
2	B + A	3		3	3	3				3			O	O			O
3	C + B				2		2	2	2			O				O	O
4	C only		1				1			1			O		O	O	

USE TABBY					
		1			
			2		
				3	
					4

Another exciting design possibility arises from the ability to create positive and negative design areas simultaneously in both threading and treadling. To create a negative design from a positive one (i.e., swap pattern and background areas) just substitute the opposite threading unit or pattern treadle —

THREADING UNITS	NEGATIVE DESIGN										POSITIVE DESIGN										PATTERN TREADLE SEQUENCE
	C	C	D	D	A	A	D	D	C	C	A	A	B	B	C	C	B	B	A	A	

Crackle is well suited to polychrome treatment in warp and weft. The simplest idea is to thread each of the A B C and D units in a different colour. See, for example, Handwoven Jan/Feb 94 or Handwoven Design Collection 18.

Another idea is to thread positive design areas in one colour and negative ones in a related colour of about the same value. Perhaps vary the weft tabby in a similar manner.

References

These are the places I found information on the crackle weave. Tidball and Snyder are likely the most useful for 4 shafts, although Snyder can be hard to decipher at times.

Harriet Tidball, 1961. *The Weaver's Book*.

Mary Snyder, 1961. *The Crackle Weave*.

Berta Frey, 1958. *Designing and Drafting for Handweavers*.

S.A. Zielinski, 1981. *Contemporary Approach to Traditional Weaves: Crackle, M's & O's and others*. *Master Weaver Library, Volume 8*.

Carol Strickler, 1991. *The Weaver's Book of 8-shaft Patterns*.

Wanda Jean Shelp and Carolyn Wostenberg, 1991. *Eight Shafts: A Place to Begin*.

Marguerite Davison, 1944. *A Handweaver's Pattern Book*.

Mary Black, 1980. *The Key to Weaving*.

Sharon Alderman, 2004. *Mastering Weave Structures*.