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Recommendations For Handwoven Fabric

I don't give criteria as such, but I probably should because it is often requested. I'll add it to my lengthy list of things to do to one day – "sit down and write sett and fabric content guidelines". The issue is there is no way to give every scenario and it is important to follow your instincts as a weaver and do what you enjoy. That is much more valuable than following a recipe which does not take into account your structure, loom, atmospheric conditions, beat, washing equipment etc. I don't teach weaving, I teach how to get what you wove into a garment!

That said, my recommendations are to sett whatever you are thinking of weaving much denser than you would think. Try 8/2 tencel at 36epi, 10/2 perle cotton at 30, 5/2 at 20, etc. It will ultimately depend on the structure, and your beat and the loom. I've seen fabrics in just about every fiber and combination of fibers you can imagine. Note: The fabric can't be too thick, because it gets tough fitting multiple layers through the sewing machine.

Any fiber works, if you can weave it, but I find woven cloth for garments can have great results if at least part of the fabric is a protein content, like wool, which can be fullled up to create a dense fabric.

Sampling can be advantageous here. I've had students produce wonderful fabrics with a cotton or tencel warp and zephyr wool/silk weft, which can be fullled up well for a stable, dense but pliable fabric, great for a jacket.

Start with commercial fabric if you are intimidated. Commercial fabric can give you an idea of what weights work for what silhouette. There is of course also the issue of climate, what people in Florida choose to weave is different from people in northern Michigan.

Here are some of my basic suggestions:

Sett it denser than you think.

Avoid long floats which make a fabric less stable.

If you want a lighter fabric, choose a thinner yarn, not a looser sett.

Avoid weft patterning, repeats and blocks. They are hard to match for side seams and such.

If you use a hand painted warp, make sure there is a repeat.

Wash it well.

Finishing is important. **ALL FABRICS SHOULD BE WASHED PRIOR TO SEWING!** The exception here would be fabrics that were processed, dyed, felted, steamed, etc. They would already be preshrunk. If using handwoven fabric, or something commercial that has not been in contact with moisture, steam, water, or whatever, please machine wash your completed fabric **AT A MINIMUM** on **GENTLE CYCLE** for 3 minutes in **COLD OR WARM WATER** using a laundry detergent. This is even suitable for wool and mohair. Fabric may be hung to dry or machine dried if the fabric warrants this type of processing. Test, Test, Test! When fabric is completely dry, it should be steam pressed. You could even have the dry cleaner press it if your iron is inadequate.

FOR THE BASIC JACKET/NECK BAND, HIP LENGTH:

- Fabric should be approximately 6 yards x 24" wide or 4 yards x 36" – 45" wide or 2 yards x 60" wide **AFTER WASHING**. Remember fabric can shrink as much as 30% when washed. In order to ensure you have enough fabric for your jacket, samples, mistakes, swatches, etc., use the above guidelines as minimums. I would rather you have leftover fabric than not enough.
- IN ADDITION:** 1 YD. of LINING FABRIC (45" wide) for pocket lining and seam finishing. Pick something fun that will show off those fabulously finished seams. Any lining fabric will do, silk, rayon, acetate, cotton, polyester, whatever you can find, as long as it is lighter in weight than the outer fabric. **PRESHRINK FABRIC IN HOT WATER.** (Place in hot tap water for about 20 minutes, roll in towel, hang to dry.)
- If a full lining is desired, you will need approximately 3 yards of a suitable lining fabric. *Consider silks, poly, jacquards, fabrics that are fluid and allow the garment to move over the body easily. Cottons and quilt fabrics don't slide well over the body.* Directions are available for inserting a lining. **PRESHRINK FABRIC IN HOT WATER.** (Place in hot tap water for about 20 minutes, roll in towel, hang to dry.)
- If a longer length is desired, or the swing version, additional fabric will be needed. If making the **optional shawl collar** you will need an additional yard of fabric.



FOR THE VEST, HIP LENGTH:

- For the largest size vest (54" bust), fabric should be approximately 4 ½ yards x 18" or 3 ½ yards x 24" wide or 2 yards x 36" wide **AFTER WASHING**. **Smaller sizes will need less fabric.** Fabrics should have a consistent beat, a firm hand, and should be suitable for garment construction.
- You will need **TWO YARDS OF LINING** to line the vest. (*Lining fabrics and quilt cottons can work for this purpose*). **PRESHRINK LINING FABRIC IN HOT WATER.** (Place in hot tap water for about 20 minutes, roll in towel, hang to dry.)
- For the walking vest, or longer length, add an additional two yards of fabric.



FOR THE VEST WITH OPTIONAL YOKE, ZIPPER AND COLLAR:

- For the largest size vest (54" bust), fabric should be approximately 4 ¼ yards x 16" or 3 ½ yards x 24" wide or 2 yards x 32" wide **AFTER WASHING**. **Smaller sizes will need less fabric.** Fabrics should have a consistent beat, a firm hand and should be suitable for garment construction.
- You will need **TWO YARDS OF COMMERCIAL FABRIC** to line the vest, 45 or 60" wide. (*Crisp firm fabrics and quilt cottons can work for this purpose, try corduroy, wools, etc.*) **PRESHRINK LINING FABRIC IN HOT WATER.** (Place in hot tap water for about 20 minutes, roll in towel, hang to dry.) In addition to lining the vest, the perimeter edge will be trimmed with 2 ¼" bias, usually cut from the lining fabric. The lining can also be used for a seam finish, which will be visible on the right side of the garment.
- You will need a separating jacket zipper, size 5, 16" – 20" in length depending on your preference for length. in plastic or metal.



FOR THE TUNIC:

- 20" wide fabric - **6 yards AFTER WASHING** (Note: will require center front and back seams and piecing of part of the sleeves for larger sizes. 32" – 45" wide fabric – **4 yards AFTER WASHING**, 60" wide – **2 yards AFTER WASHING**, Smaller sizes may need less fabric.
- Since the finished garment will be a tunic or overshirt, choose fibers that will allow drape without creating a sleazy fabric. **Suggested fibers are cotton, linen, blends, tencel, rayons, or silk.** **This tunic can also work for layering in a fine wool or blend like Zephyr wool and silk.**
- 1/2 YD. of **COORDINATING OR CONTRASTING FABRIC** (45" wide) for front plackets, collar and yoke lining. This fabric should be crisp and stable. It will be seen from the right side of the garment. **PRESHRINK FABRIC IN HOT WATER.** (Place in hot tap water for about 20 minutes, roll in towel, hang to dry.)



FOR FELTERS MAKING A JACKET:

- See the template below for approximate sizes for each panel. Felt a panel for each garment section rather than try to and create yardage. Felt should be stable, suitable for a lightweight jacket or outerwear. Try to maintain the natural edge in hand felt for seam and edge finishes.
- Use your hip measurement to determine the width for each panel ($\text{Hip Measurement} + 4\text{-}6'' \text{ ease} \div 2 = \text{back panel width}$).



TEMPLATE FOR FELT JACKET

