

Bath Time Travellers

Weaving

The logo for The Roman Baths Bath, featuring the text "THE ROMAN BATHS BATH" in white, serif, all-caps font, centered within a solid purple square.

THE
ROMAN
BATHS
BATH

Did you know?

The Romans used wool, linen, cotton and sometimes silk for their clothing.

Before the use of spinning wheels, spinning was carried out using a spindle and a whorl. The spindle or rod usually had a bump on which the whorl was fitted. The majority of the whorls were made of stone, lead or recycled pots. A wisp of prepared wool was twisted around the spindle, which was then spun and allowed to drop. The whorl acts to keep the spindle twisting and the weight stretches the fibres. By doing this, the fibres were extended and twisted into yarn.

Weaving was probably invented much later than spinning around 6000 BC in West Asia. By Roman times weaving was usually done on upright looms. None of these have survived but fortunately we have pictures drawn at the time to show us what they looked like. A weaver who stood at a vertical loom could weave cloth of a greater width than was possible sitting down. This was important as a full sized toga could measure as much as 4-5 metres in length and 2.5 metres wide! Once the cloth had been produced it was soaked in decayed urine to remove the grease and make it ready for dyeing.

Dyes came from natural materials. Most dyes came from sources near to where the Romans settled. The colours you wore in Roman times told people about you. If you were rich you could get rarer dyes with brighter colours from overseas.

Activity 1 – Weave an Owl Hanging

Have a close look at the Temple pediment. Can you spot the owl? <https://www.romanbaths.co.uk/walkthroughs/temple-pediment>

An owl was the sacred animal of the goddess Minerva.

For this activity you will need:

- A sheet of card – the size will determine the size of your weaving (card from a cardboard box works just fine)
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Ball of string / twine
- Lengths of wool or string
- A large eyed blunt needle with an eye large enough for your wool / string

If you wish to turn your weaving into an owl, you will also need:

- Thin cardboard / paper (We used offcuts from a paper plate)
- Crayons
- Glue / tape
- Length of twig / pencil / lolly stick

- **Step 1**

Using your pencil and ruler, mark 10 points at least 1cm apart

along the edge of your card. Do this along the opposite edge too. Make sure that the points at each end line up with those opposite.



- **Step 2**

With your scissors, carefully cut straight lines at each point. You only want to cut about 2cm. Your card will now look like this, with notches cut at each point:

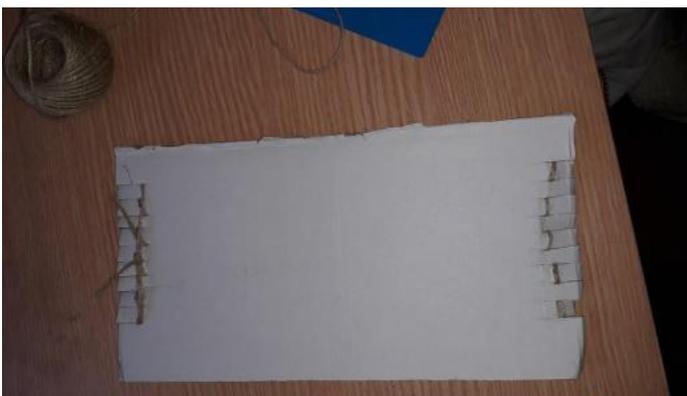


- **Step 3**

You now need to 'warp' your card. Starting at one corner, hold the end of the string underneath the card, and bring up the string at the first 'notch'. Take the string to the notch on the opposite side. Then pass the string under the card, to bring it up at the next notch along. Take the string to the opposite notch and repeat. If you were to start at the bottom left corner, your directions would be:

↑→↓→↑

The back of your card will look like this. You can loosely knot the ends of your string together, or tape them in place (you will need to undo later, so don't tie too tight)



- **Step 4**

Once you have 'warped your loom', you will need to gather your lengths of string / wool and large eyed needle.



- **Step 5**

Thread your needle with a length of wool or string. You are now ready to weave! Take your needle under and over the vertical threads until you get to the end. When you get to the end, take your wool back the other way, going over the vertical thread you went under previously, and under the thread you went over previously.



- **Step 6**

Continue to weave your lengths of string / wool to your desired length. If you use up a length, knot it neatly at the end of a row and start another. Experiment with different colours and stripes.



- Step 7

Carefully untie the ends of your 'warp' string, and lift the loops off the ends of your card (you may need to bend the card slightly). Thread your twig through the loops and use the ends of the thread you untied to tie the loops into two groups. These are your owl feet.



- Step 8

Lift the loops from the top of the loom and thread a length of string through to gather the loops together. Draw, colour cut out and stick shapes from your thin card to make eyes, beak and wings. You can now hang your owl on your wall.

- Don't forget to share pictures of your creations with us on social media!



Activity 2 – Weave a Rainbow

The Greek and Roman goddess of rainbows was known as Iris. She was believed to be the messenger of the gods, carrying messages between the heavens and earth.

For this activity you will need:

- A paper plate (non shiny is best)
- Coloured crayons / pencils / pens/ paint
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Scissors
- Something circular to draw around (we used the inside of a large roll of tape)
- Wool in a variety of colours



- **Step 1**

Using your pencil and ruler, draw a line across the middle of your paper plate. Then cut the paper plate in half with your scissors



- **Step 2**

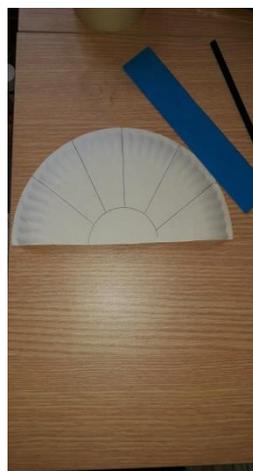
Colour in the front of your plate half.



- **Step 3**

On the back of your plate, draw a semi-circle in the middle using the roll of tape (or similar object) as a guide. With the ruler, draw lines from the semi-circle to the edge, to make wedges. We have used 6 – you don't want to make the wedges too thin.

Use the scissors to cut the lines of the wedges from the outside to the semi circle.



- **Step 4**

Choose your first colour of wool. Tie wool around a wedge, keeping the knot to the back,



- **Step 5**

Weave your wool under and over the wedges. When you get to the end, bring your wool back in the opposite direction, this time going over the wedges you previously went under, and under the wedges you previously went over.

Repeat until the strip of your first colour is as wide as you want it

- **Step 6**

When your strip of colour is finished, weave to the end of a row, and tie your wool in a knot behind. Start the process with a new colour.



- **Step 7**

When you have finished your rows of colour, tidy up and loose ends and admire your rainbow. You could add a hanging loop to display on your wall or in your window. Perhaps you could add cotton wool clouds too?

Don't forget to share pictures of your creations with us on social media.

