

CHOOSING THE RIGHT SHUTTLE FOR THE JOB

by Jane Patrick



Stick shuttles are usually the first shuttles a weaver uses. They are inexpensive, easy to manage, and don't require any winding equipment. I recommend a shuttle roughly as long as your weaving width, so you can easily place it into the shed and grab it on the other side. If the shuttle is much longer, you have to draw it out of the shed much further. If the shuttle is shorter than your weaving width, you have to dive into the shed to remove it, which gets tedious after a few rows.



Boat shuttles. For shaft loom weavers, boat shuttles are the most popular style because they're faster than stick shuttles. They require bobbins and some sort of bobbin winder. You might remember as a new weaver when you "graduated" to a boat shuttle and felt the thrill of the rhythmic throw, catch, throw, catch action. Usually weavers like a longer, heavier shuttle for wider warps, and shorter, lighter-weight shuttles for narrow weavings. Choose among Schacht's many boat shuttle options—we're sure to have one that suits your hands and your preferences.



Bottom or no bottom. Some weavers like the smooth, speedy glide of the shuttle with a closed bottom. I like an openbottomed shuttle so I can place my finger under the bobbin to stop it rotating. Try both kinds to see which you prefer.

Slim or regular. Our slim shuttle is narrower and has a lower profile than our regular boat shuttle. Because the regular boat shuttle is slightly bigger, it holds more yarn. Choose the one that feels best in your hand.



Double-bobbin. Use a double-bobbin shuttle for perfect selvages with doubled weft. (If you wrap both weft yarns on the same bobbin, they won't weave the same and little loops will appear on the edges.)

Schacht boat shuttles come in 4 lengths (9", 11", 13", 15"). The 11" boat shuttle comes with an open or closed bottom, in slim or regular sizes. All other lengths come in regular sizes with open bottoms. Our double-bobbin boat shuttle is available in slim and regular sizes with open bottoms.



I call the next group of shuttles “specialty shuttles” because they are designed for a specific kind of weaving.



End-delivery shuttles. Instead of the free-spinning bobbin that a boat shuttle uses, an end-delivery shuttle has a pin that remains stationary. The shuttle’s motion causes the yarn to unwind. If the shuttle stops, the yarn stops. Because the yarn unwinds as the shuttle moves, perfect selvages are possible with no fiddling whatsoever. Available in 12” and 15” sizes.



Belt shuttles. Similar to stick shuttles but with one beveled edge, belt shuttles carry weft back and forth and also beat the weft into place. Use a belt shuttle for inkle and card weaving.



Ski shuttles hold medium to heavy yarns and are a little more sophisticated than a stick shuttle. Ski shuttles, named because they look like skis, glide smoothly through the shed. They’re an excellent choice for fuzzy mohair or thick rug yarn. Schacht ski shuttles are available in 18” and 24” lengths.



Rag shuttles are designed to hold a large amount of bulky fabric strips. You might describe rag shuttles as two flat slabs with posts in between. Schacht offers 14” and 20” lengths.

Rug shuttles are a cross between a rag shuttle and stick shuttle and in my opinion seem to be under-appreciated. I love to use them for thick yarns or narrow 1/2” rag strips for rug weaving. You’ll be surprised at the generous capacity of Schacht’s 20” rug shuttle.

So, in the final analysis, which shuttle should you choose?

It depends on what you’re weaving, the type of weft yarn you’re using, how much efficiency matters to you, your budget, and what feels good in your hand.

