

## Lucet Info for Distaff Day Orlando 2018, Nancy Reed (Robobeagle on Ravelry)

Lucets have been used to make cord for hundreds of years. People are making Youtube videos about how to use them, there are 3D printed ones available as well as wood, and you can use the cord for pretty much anything you can think of to do with cords.

1. **Lucets and where to buy them.** I have 2 “standard” lucets crafted by Stephen Willette (<https://www.stephenwillette.com/>). I tried one out at the Maine Fiber Frolic in June 2017, loved the feel in my hand, and promptly started playing with it with some spindlespun yarn I had made the day before. He provides basic directions, has video tutorials you can watch on his website, and there is a video on youtube where he is interviewed while demonstrating making large cord that he then sews into a rug at a New York Sheep and Wool Festival ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtoYhZKpd\\_0&index=4&list=PLu4Nr1ChoSQMm1014c4ZxXxN26LYSQQTn](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UtoYhZKpd_0&index=4&list=PLu4Nr1ChoSQMm1014c4ZxXxN26LYSQQTn)).

Etsy has many listings for lucets, including 3D printed ones. Check out <https://www.etsy.com/shop/TurtleMade> – I have at least 3 of her 3D printed Turkish spindles, which I like very well, especially for demoing for children.

Jennifer Hansen (<http://www.stitchdiva.com/>) sells wooden lucets in a variety of sizes, has a book with color pictures and videos available on her website and on youtube. She also has kits for some jewelry projects and free directions to crochet a small bag to hold soap with a lucet cord drawstring.

I bought a very reasonably priced and well-made lucet made from John Smith (real name!) at a local fiber event where I demoed lucets—several people bought one and enjoyed working with them as much as I did (OrnaMental.Needle Arts@gmail.com).

2. **Books and videos about lucets.** This is one technique where I have found that seeing what someone is doing with their hands REALLY HELPS—usually I can go solo with a book. I was able to use Stephen Willette's basic directions to do the simple Turn cord from the written instructions, but I had already seen him demonstrate.... For the other options suggested in the Elaine Fuller Lacis book “Lucet Braiding: Variations on a Renaissance Cord (I bought mine from Mielke's Fiber Arts on Etsy) and Stitch Diva book *Learn to LUCET* ([https://smile.amazon.com/Learn-Lucet-ancient-knitters-crocheters/dp/0692904085/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1515237783&sr=1-1&keywords=lucet](https://smile.amazon.com/Learn-Lucet-ancient-knitters-crocheters/dp/0692904085/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1515237783&sr=1-1&keywords=lucet)), I resorted to youtube to see how people were holding the lucet and manipulating the yarns with their hands (it turns out I was doing okay, but I was worried I was doing something totally wrong). The Lacis book has left handed instructions—I follow the basic right handed instructions as it felt comfortable to do it that way and if I am demoing, most people will be right handed.

People do not hold the lucet or make the stitches in exactly the same way. For a different approach, using a lucet without a handle, and incorporating lots of buttons, beads, etc., check out Noreen Crone-Finley's videos, especially this one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtw1U22wuo4&t=466s>.

3. **What yarns can you use?** Start with SMOOTH, strong, plied yarn—something you would use for warp on a loom, preferably something close to a worsted weight. I discovered that a loosely twisted (but very pretty and soft) yarn untwisted quickly using the standard turn technique. The cord looks fine, but it was weird to work with. On the other hand, my chain-plied handspun worked just fine. After you are familiar with the basic process of making cord, you can experiment with different yarns. I bought a “sampler” on StitchDiva's website that includes a lovely rayon that is a fingerweight.

It's easy to experiment and sample different lucet cords with different yarns, as you can make a cord as short as an inch or two to see what you think about it (longer helps you determine if you like the drape/no drape, etc.). In my sampling so far, the main thing I have learned is that if you are doing a gimp cord, the gimp **MUST BE MUCH LARGER** than the basic yarn to show up nicely, and a true contrast (if you use a solid color from a multicolored yarn as gimp against the multicolor yarn, you won't see the "bumps" when the colors line up. I have liked the effect of using two yarns together for a simple cord—not only does it make a larger cord, but the colors are fun (one solid, one multicolor or 2 multicolors).

**4. How long will it take before my tension is consistent and my cord looks good?** As with anything, this depends on how quickly you tend to master new crafty techniques with your hands (muscle memory), reasonable practice, using yarn that is suited to making a consistent cord, and perhaps most important, your own standards of "looks good." I like the feel of the lucet in my hand, and the repetitive nature of a simple cord, so I found it easy to pick it up, cord for 30 minutes or so, do something else for a while, and pick it up again for another practice session. I was fairly consistent with my not totally consistent chain-plyed handspun after about 3 hours. Stephen Willette suggested starting cords, doing an inch, pulling it out and starting again until you could start without looking at the directions. I started about 20 cords that way, and now do a couple anytime I do a cord after it's been a week or more since I made some cord.

My initial "basic no turn" cord initially had a much looser tension than the "basic turn cord". I think the "proper" tension depends on the yarn used, the purpose of the project, and personal preference.

**5. What can I make with lucet cord?** Check the internet! Some basic examples are cords to use as drawstrings, cords to use as a necklace or bracelet (as simple as securing several rounds of cord with a button), making a floor rug or mug rug, buttons using Celtic knot and similar techniques, and trim for a handwoven garment or bag (Daryl Lancaster has talked about using inkle bands this way on her blog and in Threads magazine and I have seen all types of trims used over the years). I think it would be fun to weave something with my handspun and trim it with trim made on a lucet from the same handspun. I saw a bracelet made from strips of denim on youtube, which looks like fun.

One thing to note: some yarns and cords will stretch, maybe a lot! Be sure to check a long sample if you are making cord for a bracelet and especially for a bag handle.