

## Unit 202: Sampling evaluation

### Objectives

My objectives for the sampling unit were to:

1. Learn new skills trying out a variety of techniques in different materials
2. Acquire new knowledge about different techniques and materials
3. Develop a more experimental attitude to trying out new techniques and materials

### Sampling activity

Throughout the course I have made or experimented with the following (all in willow unless stated):

- 3x3 bases in different colours and weaves (pairing and French randing)
- 4x4 bases
- 3x3 base with decorative cross
- Formers for bases
- Catalan base
- Berry basket
- Breadbasket with void handle in (fresh willow)
- Fruit basket
- Waste paper bin with fitching and slewing
- Copper basket made from reclaimed window flashings
- Soft rush base
- Sampler basket
- Round shopper with bow handle
- Kindling basket with cranked side handles
- Round shopper with rope weave and ends left untrimmed
- Oval shopper
- A hare sculpture in random weave
- Traditional basket with bunny butt base x 2
- Child's shopper with bow handle
- Catalan base miniature mooses basket
- Rope weave basket
- Coil weave base in rattan
- Coil weave in willow and copper
- A raffia coil base
- A drum lampshade in rope weave
- A large pendant lampshade in a rope weave with voids
- A large lampshade for the innovative piece (will be done after the evaluation is submitted)
- Rush work (will be done after this evaluation is submitted)
- Asymmetric basket (will be done after this evaluation is submitted)

All of these samples are on [www.inwoven.co.uk](http://www.inwoven.co.uk) with the weaves, materials used and an evaluation note on each.

## Outcomes

### 1. Learn new skills trying out a variety of techniques in different materials

As the list of sampling activity shows, I have tried out lots techniques and used a wide variety of materials throughout the NVQ.

The course has built my skills up through repetition of core techniques like making round bases, 3-rod wale, French randing, English randing and slowly introducing new weaves, techniques and materials.

Preparing and calculating materials needed for projects has also been a really good skill that I've learnt through the course, particularly the assessment projects.

I have found it interesting through the course just how much physical and emotional states affect my weaving. If I've had a bad night's sleep or been in pain (tooth) I found that my performance and outputs really dropped in quality, more than anticipated. I don't know if it counts as a skill, but good selfcare definitely helps produce a better outcome.

The greatest challenge for me is finding the time to practice the skills we've been learning in class at home. I've bought in some willow and have booked a whole week off work at the end of June to have a weaving staycation.

### 2. Acquire new knowledge about different techniques and materials

I have learnt a lot about different types of materials, particularly the preparation involved in the different types of willow.

Key learnings include:

- White and buff willows are your saviour if you've been away working and not had a chance to put willow in to soak before class, as you can soak them out the night before (or even on the morning) and they'll be workable by class
- White and buff can be dried out and resoaked another day if you don't use it all
- Brown willow needs a bit more thinking through, so it is ready to use for projects being done at a certain time (like NVQ classes):
  - It will stay mellowing for up to a month in the colder months but will go mouldy if you leave it mellowing in the warmer months
  - It takes longer to soak but you can speed things up with hot water (stick them in after a bath)
  - If you have space, you can freeze it (I now have my eye out for a second-hand freezer)
- Cane is great and needs about 5 minutes soaking and can dry out and be used again and again (do not accidentally seal it in a storage box before it is fully dry as that will also go mouldy and make you feel like crying)
- Cane is a more even material to work with but for me lacks some of the charm of willow
- I used raffia for some of the coil basket techniques which was very flexible and quite fun to work with
- I used copper wire stripped out of electrical cables with willow which worked really well

- I also tried out silk over thick string/ cord and bound it on with thin floristry wire, the wire didn't quite work using the blanket stitch but I think would have worked with more straightforward stitch
- IN the design unit I tried out various materials and it was good just playing around with things without anything specific in mind

### 3. Develop a more experimental attitude to trying out new techniques and materials

Sampling has definitely made me feel empowered to have a go and just try things, without the need for them to be perfect – or even finished.

I have been trying to make sure that I get pieces finished but there have been a few (oval basket and the coil work) where I'm happy to leave them as samples, take the learning from them and move on.

The oval basket needed to have a wider handle to show balance, which I did on my traditional basket piece. I plan to have a practice at putting cranked side handles on the oval basket I made in class and turn it into a planter for the patio (lined with some thick plastic).

My Catalan basket went a bit astray but when doing the packing at the sides, I felt like it wanted to be a miniature moses basket, so I went with it and I gave as a baby present to my new niece. Instead of feeling sad that my Catalan basket wasn't going to plan, I ended up feeling really pleased with my moses basket instead.

I've experimented with different willow combinations, weaves and borders. I've tried working with other materials like card, pipe cleaners, plasticine and copper.

For me, sampling has been a very freeing concept as it highlights the fact that everything you have a go at, whether it's what you were aiming for or not, always brings something to the party – new skills, new approaches or simply ideas for doing things differently next time.