How to block a shawl without blocking wires

You will need:

➡ Your unblocked shawl (with ends sewn in preferably)

➡ Some smooth yarn that does not stretch (cotton is really great) in a contrasting colour

➡ a tapestry needle

➡ rustproof pins

➡ a pair of scissors

➡ a big surface to pin your project on (I used my couch but it can be a blocking board, your bed or any soft surface big enough for your blocked project)

➡ optional: some nylon or plastic to protect your furniture

Thread your cotton yarn through the top straight edge (just keep it as close to the top and in a straight line).

I had three straight edges without any scallops, points or fancy stuff, so in this example you will only see three straight edges.

But if you have scallops or points on the two edges you can still thread your yarn through the points only (as you would do with long blocking wires) and to pin it out afterwards so you can keep them in a similar distance from the rest of the shawl when blocking.
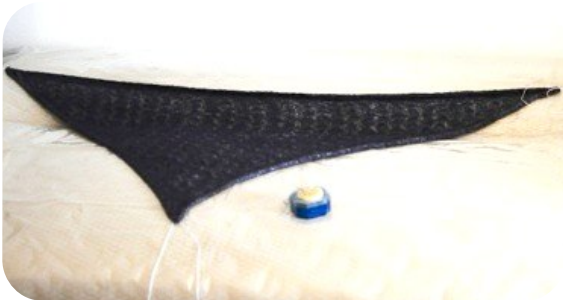

Cut the yarn after you finished one edge and leave a generous amount on either side.

Then you thread your needle again and start on the next edge right where the point is, next to the place where you just cut off the first piece of yarn.
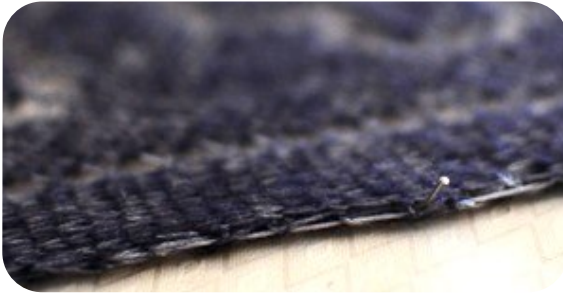
After finishing all the 3 edges (for a triangular shaped shawl) you give the shawl a nice soak for 10 to 15 minutes, depending on your fibre.

After getting all of the excess water out of your shawl by wrapping it in a towel and pressing on it, you lay it out on your big surface and you place it into shape.

(used a couch that can be made into a bed and protected it with a plastic cover to avoid any water marks on it).

Now you mark the top center of your shawl in the middle by sticking a pin in it (you should always stick the pin in a diagonal direction towards the shawl, so that it can stay in place when you start pulling in different directions).

It is always a good idea to measure the two sides from the points to the center pin to check if they are equal.
You can stick a couple of other pins in the same spot to reinforce it for the next step.
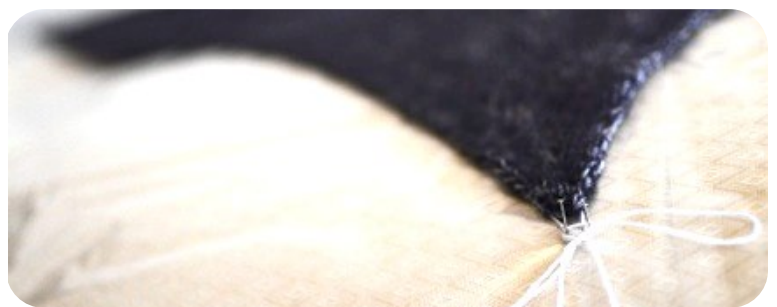
Go to the bottom where the point of the shawl is and lightly but firmly pull it towards you, to see where you want to stick the next pins into the blocking board.

I use 4 pins in diagonal positions: two facing upwards and two downwards, so that they'll be strong enough to hold up all of the pulling and stretching. Don't leave to much distance between those 4 pins. The nearer they are together the stronger they will be (but keep in mind that you will have to still be able to work around them)

Pull the two strings firmly between the 4-pin formation and while holding them with one hand try to wrap them around the pins as tightly as possible (it will be annoying at first since they keep slipping out of place, but persist and you'll get the hang of it)!

When they are firmly in place you can tie them together in a way that will be easy to undo after the blocking is done.

Repeat the same process on the other points while trying to keep the whole shawl lying flat and remeasure the two top halves to reposition your pins if needed.

Try to keep the top edge in a parallel line to the top of your couch/ blocking board/ bed by measuring out the distance of your central pin and marking the same distance on the two top edge points.
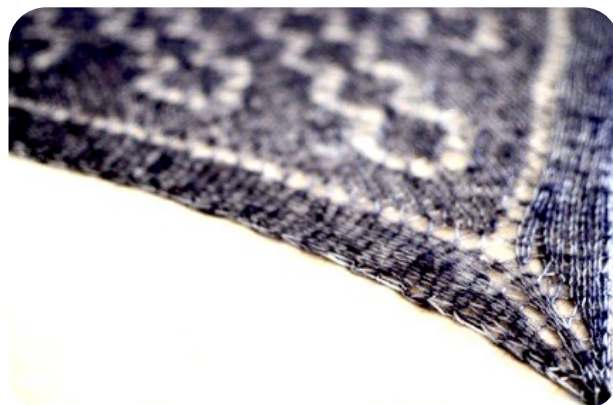
Open up the lace by lightly stroking from the middle of the shawl outwards to the edges.

At this point you can start pinning the edges in the same fashion as your first top half pin and try to keep the lacework of your shawl looking symmetrical and even. Do the same with the selvedge (if there is any).

If you have scallops or points pull the connecting string and pin them out working on the two sides simultaneously and moving back and forth to keep both halves looking the same.

Try to match the one half to the other but don't get overboard, since you don't want to break your fine lace knitting!

If everything looks even and straight leave your shawl to dry completely before you unpin it (it will not block properly if you take it out earlier).

And that's how you'll have a perfectly straight and symmetrical shawl without buying an expensive kit of blocking wires!!!