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## How to Make Hooked Rugs

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# HOW TO MAKE HOOKED RUGS

Cooperative Extension Service  
South Dakota State University  
U. S. Department of Agriculture

# HOW TO MAKE HOOKED RUGS

The beauty of a hooked rug depends upon the workmanship, its size and shape, the materials used, and the color and design.

Making hooked rugs is a way to express your individuality. You can be creative, and at the same time use old materials and develop craftsmanship.

For best results decide in advance where the rug is to be used. The size and shape must fit the space the rug is to occupy. Oval or rectangle are usually more pleasing than square, round or odd-shaped. Pleasing proportions are the same as for other furnishings, widths and lengths in proportions of 2x3, 3x5, or 5x7. Floor space, or the size and shape of the furniture with which it is to be grouped will determine the most desirable proportions.

A few large rugs seem to give a more restful appearance than many small scatter rugs.

## COLOR AND DESIGN

Choose color and design carefully. If color and design are not right, the results will be disappointing. The floor is the foundation of the room and should have the appearance of stability. Colors that appear to "stay on the floor" are preferred. Dull, soft or rich colors are best. One color should dominate. You may need to dye some materials to get the best color schemes. Use standard commercial or vegetable dyes which are fast dyes.

The design should conform in size and shape to the rug and to the furnishings in the room. Choose a design that looks good from all four sides.

The color and design of the rug should harmonize with the furnishings in the room where it is being

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## Start Simply and Learn Well

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used. Adding unrelated scatter rugs can ruin the appearance of a lovely room.

Homemade or commercial designs may be used. If you plan your own design, a paper pattern the size of the rug will be helpful. Color the spaces so you can visualize your finished rug.

## MATERIALS

Wool material is preferred for making hooked rugs. Colors will remain beautiful, and wool is durable, pliable, does not soil easily, and sews more easily than other materials.

Regardless of the material used it should be the same throughout. Also the material should be the same weight and quality. Usually one square foot of finished rug requires 8 ounces of material.

Wool yarns or dress jersey is ideal for hooked rugs, while heavy coat fabric, serge, or broadcloth would be better made into braided rugs. Firm silk or heavier knit found in undergarments make fairly durable rugs if close, short loops are used.

Cut the fabric lengthwise. The most desirable width is usually  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch. Test by trying strips of different widths in the foundation. If too wide the surface of the rug is coarse and open, if too narrow, the loops are loose in the foundation material. The time and energy spent in making a fine textured rug is well worth it. A fine close texture is produced by short loops. Fine textured rugs are more beautiful, require less material, are more easily cleaned, stay in place better, and wear longer. The cut strips may be wound in balls. The strips are *not* sewed together. Keep the cut strips straight until ready to use.

The foundation for hooked rugs should be a heavy material that is closely woven. Burlap bags or burlap sheeting with 12 to 14 threads to the inch is a

good material to use. Two-thread monk's cloth, gunny sacks or course feed sacks make good foundations. Gunny sacks, and some burlap sacks will need to be washed, starched, and ironed. Use only perfect bags; mended ones will not be good. Grain bags are hard to draw on when it comes to difficult designs.

If you are putting your design on the foundation be sure it is laid on straight. Find the middle of the foundation and mark a line on grain the full length of the piece. Find the crosswise middle the same way. Work from these two lines.

#### EQUIPMENT

Hooking is much easier if the burlap is stretched out on a frame. Keep grain straight.

A frame with verticle supports with a working surface, which can be adjusted to a sloping position is most convenient (fig. 1).

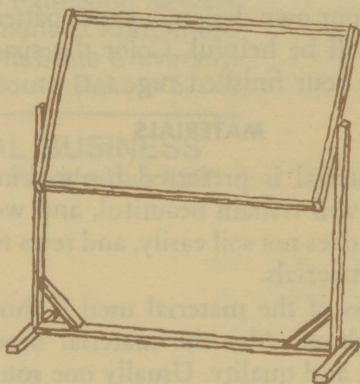


Figure 1.

Frames with front and back bars which may be rolled will take care of any length rug. Width of rug would not be greater than the width of the frame.

To make the frame more adjustable, clamps, screws, or joints may be used to hold it together (fig. 2).

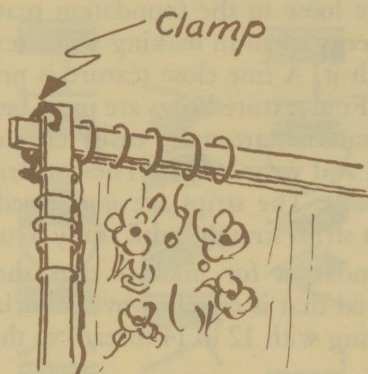


Figure 2.

The hook recommended for most work resembles a crochet hook with a wooden handle. The handle should fit the hand comfortably. Patented hooks require skill to use and are better for yarn or long strips of material which slip through the eye easily (fig. 3).

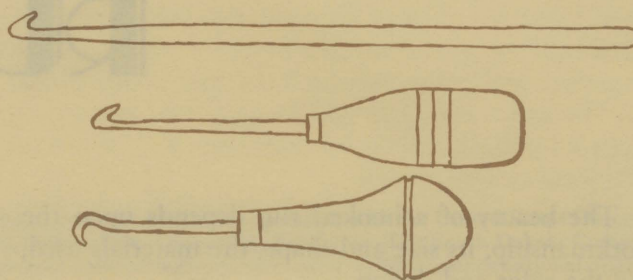


Figure 3.

#### HOOKING PROCESS

Whenever possible work from the right to the left with long rows of loops. This makes for more uniform work and also helps keep the finished rug in shape. Hook the design first, then the background. Hook around the edges of the design before filling in. When hooking the background begin next to the design and follow it for several rows. Then fill in until a straight row can be made.

If the frame is not adjustable start hooking in center and work toward outer edge. The center done last makes the rug too bulky to handle.

To start hooking, hold strip in left hand under burlap. Insert hook through the right side of burlap, and pull up the end of strip leaving an end dangling on the right side. Insert hook a second time in the

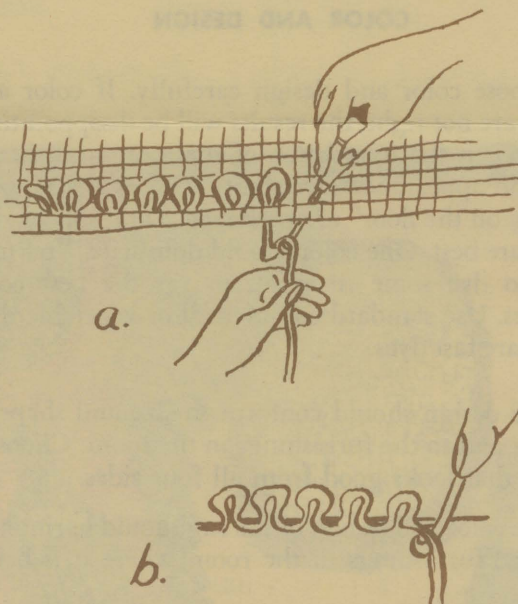


Figure 4.

next mesh or skip one mesh and pull up a loop about  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch high (fig. 4a). Continue to pull loops through in this way. Keep all loops the same height. Pull each loop taut so that the underside is flat and neat (fig. 4b). Bring all ends of strips to the right side. Eventually these loose ends are cut even with the pile. Closeness of loops depends upon foundation material and weight of material in strips. Loops too close together will make the rug hard, and it may bulge.

To end a strip pull end to right side. Begin new strip by pulling end up through same hole as preceding strip to wedge them.

If you plan to clip the loops (cut pile) make them slightly longer than for uncut loops, and use materials that do not fray.

### FINISHING

Three methods for hemming your hooked rug follow:

1. Turn burlap back close to the hooked edge, and put in a 2 to 3 inch hem, mitering corners. Be sure stitches of hem catch foundation material. If caught

only in hooking material, loops are likely to be pulled to the wrong side.

2. Stitch a strip of woolen material of the same color as the border close to edge of loops. Turn to wrong side and hem down as a facing. A flat twilled rug tape may be used instead of the woolen.

3. Before putting foundation into frame turn back edge along border line and baste. Put into frame and hook border through two thicknesses of burlap. This makes a heavier edge and is harder to do.

When the rug is completed you may want to press it. Steam press on the right side. This brings out the beauty of the pattern by flattening the loops.

Neither lining nor sizing is needed for a closely hooked rug made of material but one from yarn is quite soft. Sizing may be made by mixing 1 ounce of either powdered or flaked glue with 1 pint of water. (Let soak in 1 cup cold water and add remainder hot, stirring well. Apply to wrong side and leave in place until dry.)

Commercial sizing may be used.

More detailed information on hooking rugs can be obtained in books found in your local library or bookstore. Many current periodicals and craft publications also would be helpful.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Rugs You Can Make”—Circular 367—Pennsylvania State College, State College, Pennsylvania.

Hooked Rugs—Bulletin 247—Purdue University, LaFayette, Indiana.

Rugs, Hooked and Braided—Circular 463—University of Arkansas, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Hooked Rugs—Misc. Pamphlet 189—North Carolina, State College, Raleigh, North Carolina.

“The Art of Hooked Rug Making” by Martha Batchelder, Manual Arts Press, Peoria, Illinois.

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