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EC62-1156 How to Make Braided Rugs

Magdalene Pfister

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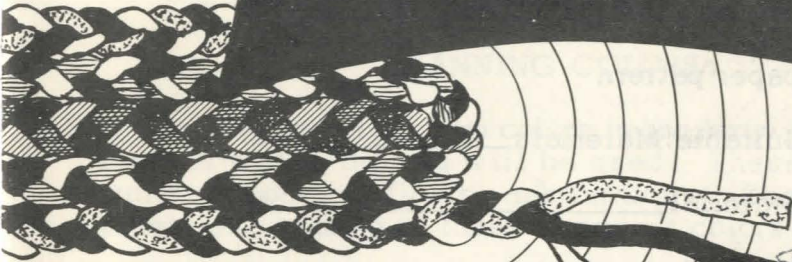
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HOW TO MAKE

Braided Rugs



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HOW TO MAKE

BRAIDED RUGS

By Magdalene Pfister
Home Furnishing Specialist

Braided rugs can add warmth and charm to informal rooms. They look best when their size, shape and colors are planned to look well with other room furnishings.

Braided rugs are simple and inexpensive to make. Well-made rugs are firm enough to lie flat on the floor and are made of materials that will withstand wear.

PLANNING COLORS

Select rug colors from colors in the large areas in the room in which the rug will be used. These are in the walls, draperies, floors, and furniture. The rug should repeat one or more of these important colors.

A few colors with variations in value (light and dark) and intensity (bright and dull) are wise choices for the rug. The amounts of colors should be varied and one color should dominate. Usually it is best to use one color or variation throughout the rug; this means about half the material should be this color. The other half can be about 35 percent of a second color and 15 percent of an accent color. Good proportion for a two color scheme is about 60 percent of the dominating color and 40 percent of the second one.

A braided rug should not only lie flat, but should look flat. The way the colors are put together influences the appearance of flatness.

Avoid strong contrasts and large amounts of bright colors. Another way to make the rug "stay on the floor" is to repeat one strand of the same color in every braid throughout the rug. Make some sample braids to see how well colors combine and to see the various braids that will be used in the whole rug.

PLANNING SIZE AND DESIGN

The rug should conform in size and shape to a particular space. To determine this, measure the space you wish the rug to cover. An oval rug is easier to make than a round one and fits better with the other furnishings. It is better to use one large rug than many small scatter rugs.

Make Proper Pattern

Cut a paper pattern the size of the desired rug. Fold this in half, and then in quarters. Mark off the length of the center braid. This length is the difference between the length and width of the finished rug plus one third to one half because it widens faster than it lengthens. For example, a rug 4 feet by 6 feet needs a center braid from 32 to 36 inches long.

Mark lines on the paper from the center to the edge $\frac{3}{4}$ inch apart -- or whatever is the width of the braids. Remember that the first one will be only a half braid. So if you plan three similar braids at the center, this sketch will show only $1\frac{1}{2}$ braids (Figure 1). Count the number of rows needed. Sketch off the color plan for your braids. Vary the number of rows to avoid monotony. Darker colors used in increasing areas toward the outside edge help hold the rug together.

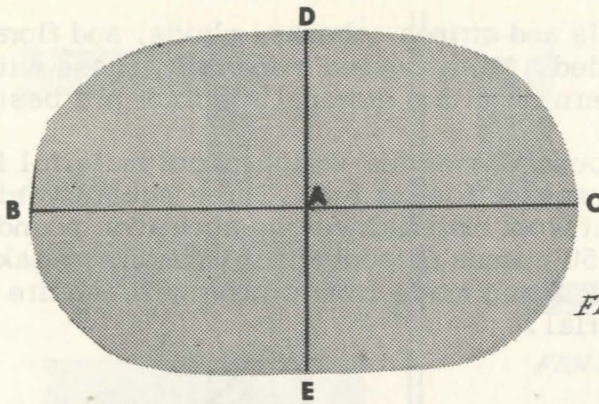
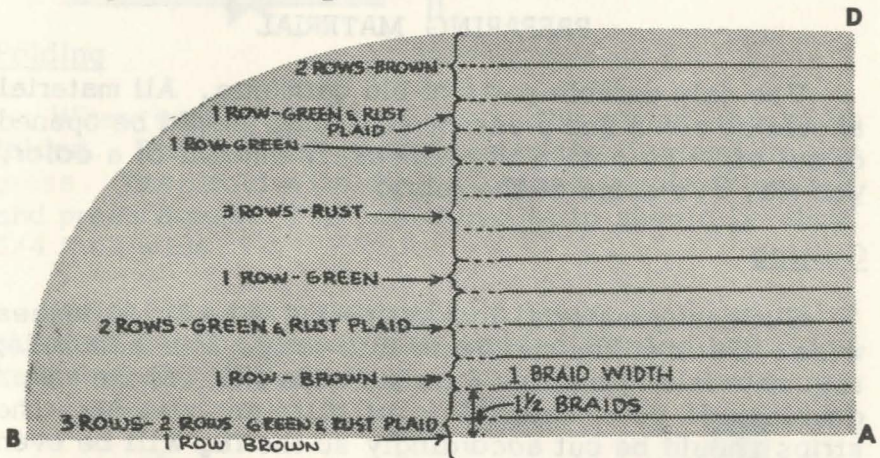


FIGURE 4
1



CHOOSING SUITABLE MATERIALS

Use materials of uniform weight to produce a good looking rug. Medium-weight or slightly heavy fabrics make a good braided rug. Thin materials make a thin, narrow braid that does not stand wear and a rug that wrinkles easily when walked upon.

Wool makes the best braided rug because it is soft and resilient, yet heavy enough to lie flat on the floor, wears well, holds its colors, and resists soil. Cotton makes a good rug, but is heavier, not so soft and is harder to keep clean. New and old materials may be used together, but it is better if they are either all wool or all cotton.

Plain materials and stripes, checks, plaids, and floral designs are needed. With figured materials, those with an all-over pattern or with a dominating color are best.

About one pound of medium-weight wool material is needed for each square foot of rug. Three square yards of medium-weight wool material weighs about one pound. therefore, about 50 pounds of wool will be needed to make a 6 x 9 foot rug. A rug made from cotton will require a little more material.

PREPARING MATERIAL

Use only durable parts of old garments. All material should be clean and pressed; all seams should be opened or cut off. To obtain the necessary amount of a color, you may dye some of the fabric.

Cutting

Cut heavy material into strips 2 1/2 to 2 3/4 inches wide. Cut medium materials into strips 3 inches wide; thin materials into strips 6 inches wide and fold the strips double. If your material is of different weights, the strips should be cut accordingly so the rug will be even in texture.

Strips from one yard to one and one-half yards long are the easiest to braid. Cut on the straight of the goods, either across the width or down its length. Some cottons may be torn, but woolens should be cut.

Joining Strips

Strips should be joined with a bias seam. Place two strips right sides together with the second piece placed on the top and at right angles to the first. Allow edge to overlap 1/4 inch. Stitch with heavy duty thread (Figure 2). Trim seams to about 1/4 inch. Press seams open.

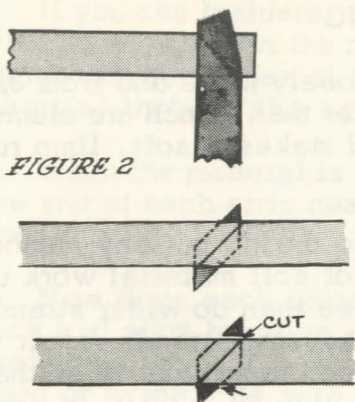


FIGURE 2

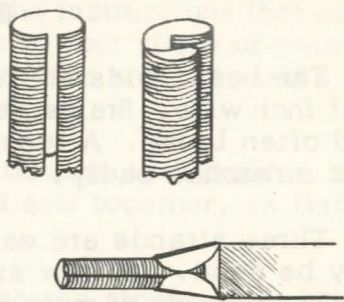


FIGURE 3

Folding

When braiders are not used, the strips should be folded. Bring in the raw edges to the center line and press. Then fold with the raw edges inside (Figure 3) and press again. The completed strip should be about 3/4 inch wide.

Strips can be drawn under a gauge made of catch stitches evenly placed on a padded ironing board and then pressed (Figure 4).

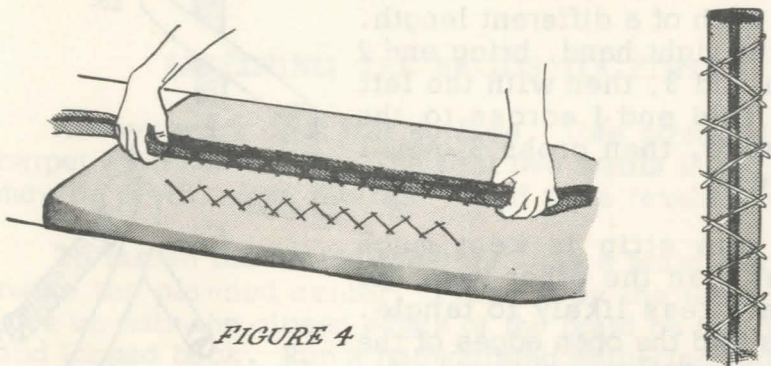


FIGURE 4

Winding Strips

Roll strips of one color around a rolled magazine or mailing tube, keeping folded edges together

BRAIDING

The best braids are firm, closely made and from 3/4 to 1 inch wide. Braids much wider than 1 inch are clumsy and often loose. A loose braid makes a soft, limp rug that stretches badly.

Three strands are easiest to braid, but any number may be used. Narrow strands of soft material work up better in braids of more than three than do wider strands of heavier material. Braids of several strands result in firmer rugs if they are sewn or laced in straight lines than when shaped into oval rugs.

To start a three strand braid, select two long folded strips. Hold one with its open side upward. With a pin, mark off one third of the length of the strip. At this point sew the end of the second strip at right angles to it and with its open side toward the right hand. There are now three ends, each of a different length. With the right hand, bring end 2 across end 3, then with the left hand, fold end 1 across to the right side, then cross 3 over 1 (Figure 5).

If one strip is kept much shorter than the other two, the ends are less likely to tangle. Always fold the open edges of the strip toward the center, and keep the closed edges on the outside of the braid. This process makes a flat smooth braid and a smooth rug.

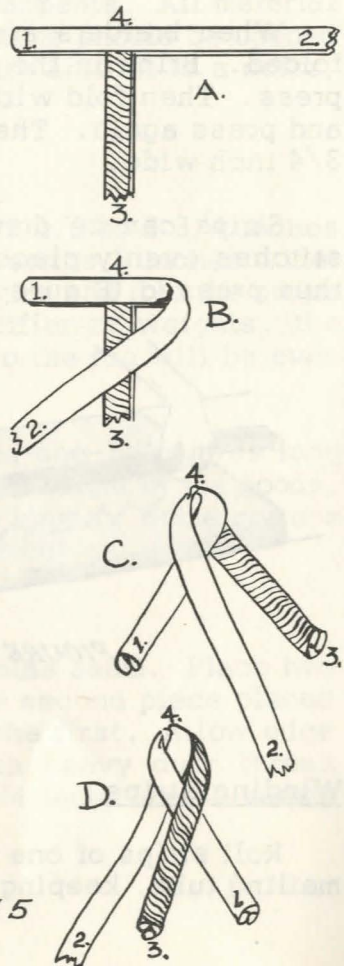


FIGURE 5

If you use braiders, follow the instructions that come with them. To start the rug, insert your strips of material under the guide bar of each braider and then push the material through the small end.

When the material is pulled through each braider, fold the end of each strip neatly and sew together, as flat as possible.

Now draw each braider down the strips about a half inch and start braiding -- from this point on, draw your braiders down each strip just enough to allow you to braid once or twice. Be sure to hold all 3 braiders with open edge to right, so that this edge is always covered when attached to the rug -- weaving clockwise. This assures you that the rug will be reversible, looking the same on each side.

To make a tight braid, place a heavy object such as a covered brick over the braid and pull back as you braid. Or fasten the braid with a safety pin or clamp to a strong support such as a door knob or a spool pin on a sewing machine. A snap clothes pin will help hold the end of the braid when you have to leave the work.

FASTENING THE BRAIDS TOGETHER

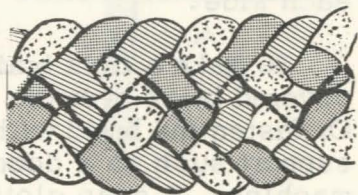
Always work on a flat surface. Use strong linen or carpet warp and wax it. The first two braids in the center may be sewn, then the rest laced for a reversible rug.

To fasten the braids together, use a braid more than twice the planned center. Place it on the table wrong side up with the closed edges of the braid on the outside and looped back. Run a harmonizing gathering thread on the inside edge of the loop for about 5 inches. Pull the thread so that the braids are side by side and the loops are flat. Sew together, keeping the stitches well hidden. Back stitch occasionally for reinforcement. Use another gathering thread at the turn.

A bodkin or blunt needle may be used to lace the rug after the first two rows are sewed together. Lace clockwise first inserting the lacer in the braid being attached, then in the loop of the braid opposite, each time going from the center to the edge (Figure 6). Pull the thread tightly forcing the braids close together. To lace around the curves, lace under a loop on the inner braid, then lace under two loops of the outer braid. Do this four or five times around the curve or until you reach the straight part. If the rug cups, you are not adding enough loops; if it ripples, you are adding too many. These errors can not be detected unless you are working on a flat surface.



FIGURE 6



To add a new length of thread, join it to the old with a square knot.

MAKING COLOR CHANGE

All color changes in the braids should be made on the curve of the rug in a diagonal line with the end of the center braid (Figure 7). Join the new color and continue braiding. Do not make more than one joining at one place in the braid. Several joinings in one place can cause a bulge.

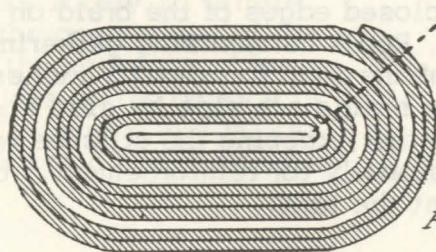


FIGURE 7

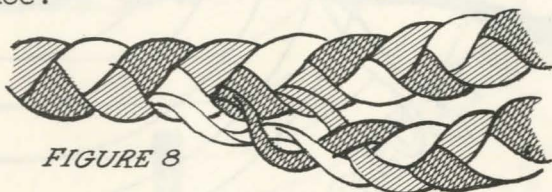
FINISHING THE RUG

The end of the braid where the rug is to be finished should taper, but the length of the tapering depends on the size of the rug. For a rug 4 x 5 feet in length or longer, the braid should decrease in size for about 2 feet.

Let the end of the full-sized braid extend beyond the regular stopping place for the change of color in the braid. Ravel the braid a little back of this point and pin the strands together here to keep the braid firm. Cut each unbraided strand to a long tapering point. Fold, press, and rebraid.

Sew or lace the tapering braid in place in the same way as was the full-sized one. Poke the end of each strip separately into a different opening of the braid beside it, and sew securely there with all rough ends concealed (Figure 8).

Pressing a rug sometimes helps give it a more finished appearance.



SUMMARY

You can be proud and satisfied with your finished braided rug if:

1. Rug lays flat and looks flat.
2. Braids are firm and uniform.
3. Size, shape and colors fit the room.
4. Colors are nicely blended with interesting spacings of color
5. The rug is reversible.

FINISHING THE RUG

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