



# Braided Rugs

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## BRAIDED RUGS

Designing and making rugs is an old art and an interesting hobby. It is the kind of handwork that many women enjoy and many more would undertake if they knew how to go at it.

Good braided rugs are soft underfoot, yet heavy enough to lie flat on the floor. They have firm, strong braids joined together by close stitching, lacing or locklacing to make them reversible. Colors are repeated within the rug for interest and balance.

### PLAN THE DESIGN

The design of a braided rug is made by the use and placement of color in the braids and the proportions of the different colored bands in the rug. Colors of the bands in any one rug should appear to be related to each other and the change of color in the bands should be gradual. There are various ways to make color changes in your rug.

1. Drop one color and add another, one strand at a time. Then go around at least once before adding another.
2. Use one strand of neutral color throughout the entire rug, changing the other two — one at a time but always keeping the neutral one.
3. Use the colors in the center at least once again in your rug. You tie parts of the rug together by repeating a color you have already used.
4. If you want to use a solid colored braid in any area you will need to drop one strand and pick up one of the desired color, go around once, then drop another and pick up a second strand of the color, go around again and then drop the third strand and pick up a third one of the color. The transition in and out of a solid color is quite subtle and pleasing when each color change is carried around the rug at least once and may be carried 3 or 5 times.
5. Keep your areas of color uneven in width. A most uninteresting rug comes from carrying each color change around the same number of times.

6. It is well to keep the values of the colors used in your rug within one-half of the value scale. A very light color used with a very dark color stands out in sharp contrast in your rug. The rug which will show soil least has values which fall in about the middle half of the value scale.

7. Be sure you have at least one color that is a little brighter than all the rest. Use it in small quantities, one or perhaps two strands at a time but not in solid color braids. It is the color that gives life and spark or spice to your rug.

8. In order to have your color bands equal in width all the way around the rug, you will want to change color each time opposite the last color change. Make the changes opposite the first or second turn and continue to make all following changes in a line with the first one.

A paper pattern the size of the rug is helpful. Color the spaces so you can better visualize the finished rug. Mark the design with crayon or paint or pin small pieces of colored cloth to the surface.

### CHOOSE MATERIALS SUITED TO USE

The way a rug is to be used determines the kind of materials to use.

Woolen materials of medium weight are the best choice since they are more resilient and soil less easily. Cotton materials are a good choice if the rug is to be laundered many times, but cotton rugs are more difficult to make and they may not give the long service that woolen rugs do. Rayons and silks are better for table and chair mats than for floor rugs.

### BE SURE TO HAVE PLENTY OF MATERIAL

Collect fabrics that are similar in texture and weight so that wear will be equal.

It is hard to estimate the exact amount of material that you will need. An accepted general plan is to allow one pound of medium-weight cloth for each square foot of rug made. It takes about three square yards of medium-weight cloth to

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make one pound. To allow for loss in making rugs from old material it is wise to collect about 30 per cent more used material than you think you will need.

### PREPARE YOUR MATERIALS

Use only those parts that are strong and durable. Wash and press all old material before cutting it into strips. The best width of strip depends on the size of braid desired and weight and texture of the materials. Most women agree that braids of 3/4- to 1-inch in width make the best looking rugs. The same width and thickness of braid should be used throughout the rug. Thick braids in the center will cause the rug to "cup" while thinner braids in the center will cause it to "ripple". If braids are narrow the rug will be too light to stay in place. The weight of material and the width of the strips will determine the texture of the rug.

Cut or tear materials on the straight of the goods either lengthwise or crosswise. Choose materials that do not fray easily. If you do use such materials cut them on the true bias to reduce raveling.

Use materials of equal weight when you can. If you have to use materials of different weight, cut the lighter weight fabrics into wider strips, then fold a greater number of times in order to equalize weights. Or, strands of lighter weight material may be padded, but this is not advisable if the rug is to be laundered.

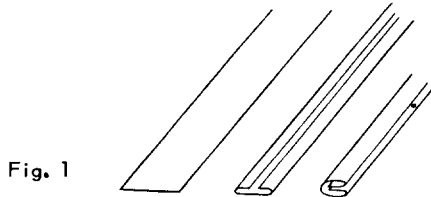


Fig. 1

Fold the raw edges of strips to the center. Bring the folded sides together with the raw edges inside (Fig. 1). You may need to use a long blindstitch to hold the raw edges in place as you braid. As an aid in folding in raw edges some rug makers like to use a braider kit, which consists of 3 cone-shaped metal braiders. Most mail order houses have these kits, as well as nylon thread and other rug making supplies.

Strips of very heavy material, which do not ravel badly, need not have the raw edges turned in. If the heavy fabrics are wiry and won't stay folded, stitch the two raw edges together.

Cut the strips from one to two yards long for maximum ease in braiding. Cut them of uneven lengths so that the joinings will not come in the same place as you braid.

For ease in working out your color combinations, wind strips of one color into a flat roll. Push pins all the way in here and there to keep the strips in place. You may prefer to wrap the strips on a card.

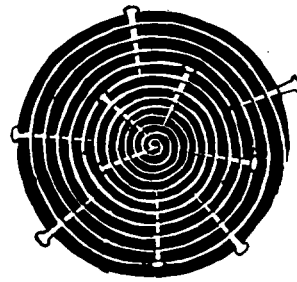


Fig. 2

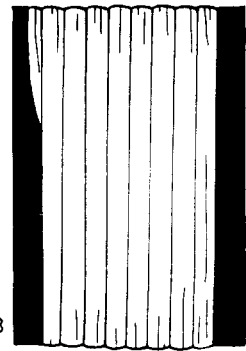


Fig. 3

Strips of one color in flat roll (2) and wrapped on card (3)

### BEGINNING THE BRAID

While braiding is simple to do, it must be done correctly if the rug is to hold its shape. Three strands are usually used, but the braid may be made with many strands.

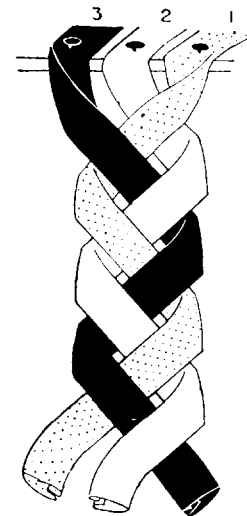


Fig. 4

Three strands loosely braided to show method

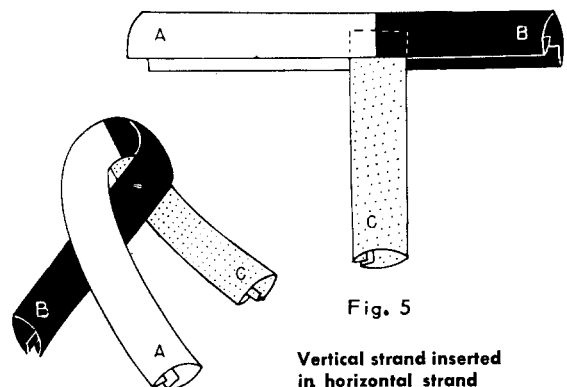


Fig. 5

Vertical strand inserted in horizontal strand

When you begin a braid tack or pin the strands together. Another method for starting braids is shown in Fig. 5. This makes a neat finished braid right at the start with no raw edges to turn in. To begin a braid of two colors, place a strand of one color in the horizontal position with the open edges facing downward. About one-third of the way from the end of this strand, insert a strand of the second color between the open edges at a right angle. Sew firmly in place. This gives you three strands to braid together. If you

want three colors in the braid, make the horizontal strand by sewing together two different colored strips. Then insert a third color for the vertical strand.

For a braid made with more than three strands attach more vertical strands close together between the open edges of the horizontal strand.



Fig. 6

Braid the three strands by laying the right strand over the middle strand and under the left. Then pick up the strand which is now on the right side and repeat the process. Always fold the open edges of the strand toward the center of the braid. Keep your tension firm and steady for a smooth even braid. It helps if the end of the braid is weighted down or attached to something so that it is possible to stretch the braid slightly as you work. A straight pin put through the center of the braid and moved forward as the work progresses also helps to keep braids firm. When ever you must let go of the braid, the braided ends should be pinned together. A spring clothes-pin is handy at this point.

Seams where new strips are added to the braid should be spaced so that no two joinings ever occur in the same place or the braid will be bulky and bumpy. A bias seam usually shows least. Press seam open so that the joining is flat.

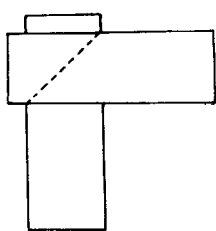


Fig. 7

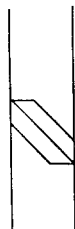


Fig. 8

### CONNECTING THE BRAIDS

For an oval rug decide the length and width you want it to be. Then subtract the width from the length to determine the length of the center braid. But in lacing braids together some of the length is lost, so add another inch for each foot of length of your rug. For example, if you want your rug to be 3 feet by 5 feet, measure 24 inches for the center braid. To the 24 inches add 5 inches, making the center braid 29 inches.

Mark the 29 inches with a pin and make the first turn so that the braid will carry around clockwise. To make the braids lie flat easily as you go around the turn, put in a permanent gathering

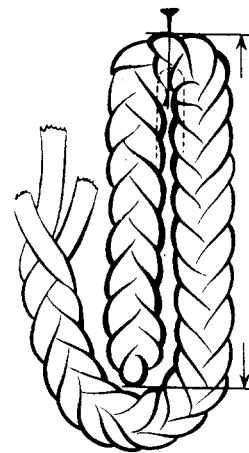


Fig. 9

thread around the inside turn every time you go around the end of the rug. Use a matching colored regular sewing thread doubled for the gathering to keep it from showing and to make it hold. Start the gathering three inches back of the pin and continue it three inches beyond the pin - six inches in all. Pull the thread up tight enough that the braid will go around the turn comfortably, but not enough to make the braid bulge. Fasten the thread securely and without cutting the thread, carry the thread back to the pin and sew the inside corner of the braid together securely for about 3/4 inch. Now sew, lace or lock-lace the braids together. The best thread for joining braids is nylon thread about the weight of fish-line. Work on a table to keep the rug from cupping.

**Sewing** - Sew the braids together with a slip-stitch if you want the rug to be reversible. Place stitches close enough together so that no holes appear between the braids. Take a backstitch every few inches to keep threads from pulling. For a time saver take three stitches before drawing up the thread. As you pull up these three stitches the braids will automatically flatten out.

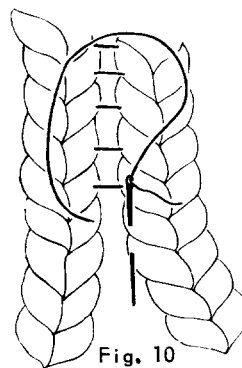


Fig. 10

Use a slip stitch and heavy nylon thread.

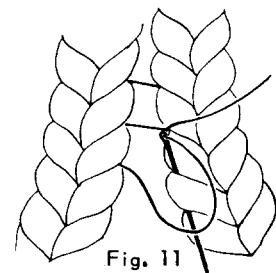
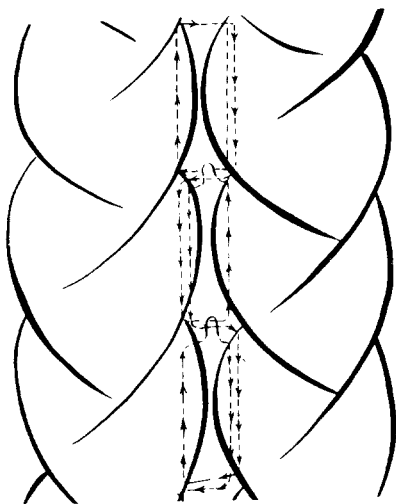


Fig. 11

Lacing with heavy nylon thread.

**Lacing** - Lace the braids together by using a bodkin and the heavy nylon thread. Pull the thread toward you through a strand of one braid, then through a strand of the opposite braid. Continue weaving in and out until the rug is finished.

Fig. 12



**Lock-Lacing** – A method that will hold braids secure for the lifetime of the rug. The path of the nylon thread is shown in the diagram:

1. Go down the right side, cross over, up on the left side, cross over, down on the right side same as before, cross over.
2. Go down on the left side, cross over, up on the right side; now take your thread up and over the other two threads and pull up tight. All three disappear deep down between the braids. Cross over. Come down on the left side, cross over.
3. Go down on the right side, cross over, up on the left side. Take your thread up and over the two threads and cross over. Go down the right side, cross over.

Continue in this manner as long as the strands of each braid correspond exactly.

Strands will lace together easily if strands fall into place exactly opposite each other. Check before beginning lacing.

When an irregularity occurs in the braid it will be necessary to drop your lacer and pick up your needle and lace two strands into one, using the needle to go through the cloth. This is especially true when the inside curve of the braid is gathered to make it lie flat around the end curve. Here it will be necessary to lace as many as three strands of the outer braid into one strand on the inner braid.

When it is necessary to add on more thread, make a secure knot in the two threads and pull the knot out of sight. Use as long thread as you can handle without knotting (4-6 feet). Too short a piece will mean more knots and less strength.

As you work make sure your rug measures the same across the ends and center. If these measurements are not the same, you may be pulling your gathering thread too tightly and your rug will begin to take on a kidney shape.

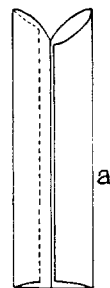


Fig. 13

Taper the last few inches of each strand.

### ENDING THE BRAID

Finish braiding the strands. Then taper the last few inches by cutting away some of the under part of each fold. Cut the end of each strand to a point on the diagonal. Slip the cut ends one at a time under loops of the braid and sew firmly. For a rug three to six feet in length the taper might be 24 inches long.

Fig. 14



### References:

- Making Handmade Rugs, by Dorothy J. Irvig,  
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