

Hooked Heart and Hand

This tile insert is about 4 x 7". We've cut an opening in a complimentary check cotton fabric, turned under the edges and buttonhole stitched the tile inside. The pillow is piped in the black of the hooked background. What a fast and easy way to show off your hooking skills!

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HOW TO HOOK

General Instructions

The first order of business is to decide on a frame or a hoop to hold your pattern firmly. It is imperative that the hooking surface is quite taut (without much "give") for ease of pulling the strips. Also, you can check the height of your loops more easily on a taut surface. I find the Puritan frame ideal as its gripper teeth do not require the use of pins to hold the pattern which therefore can be moved easily. For a first project, however, you may wish to use an inexpensive wooden lap frame (make sure the wood is soft for ease of pushing in pins) or a quilting hoop. If using a hoop, it should be somewhat larger than the design area; usually a 14" or 16" size will be adequate. Be aware that balancing a hoop can be difficult as you will need both hands to hook.

Now, machine stitch two rows (straight or narrow zig-zag) around the pattern: one row about 1/4" beyond the last border line and the second about 1/4" beyond that.

Next, you must decide on the finishing or binding method you will use. There are numerous ways to bind your hooked piece, several of which may be appropriate for any given project.

Binding:

One of the easiest and most traditional ways is to stitch the binding on the pattern before beginning to hook. If you elect this method, you will place the smooth edge of the rug binding tape on the outermost border line of the pattern with the tape **inside** that line, overlapping part of the pattern area. Machine stitch around the pattern, almost at the very edge of the tape. Make certain that you properly overlap the beginning and end of the tape so that both cut edges are concealed when the tape is turned back after hooking. Now you may place the pattern in the frame, pinning back the binding so that you may hook **right up to the stitching**.

After finishing the hooking, cut the excess burlap from around the pattern, leaving about 3/4". Turn the remaining burlap and the binding to the back of the hooked piece. Stitch down by hand, mitering corners as necessary. If the piece is rounded, you can ease the tape around the curves by pulling the outer thread of the free edge and drawing in on it. Now, steam press the wrong side of your work and allow to dry flat.

Hooking:

Place the pattern on your frame, making sure it is taut and not pulled off-grain. You will be working on the pattern top, creating the pile on the side **facing** you.

Some people hold the hook like a pencil while others hold the hook's handle in the palm of their hand, gripping it like a toothbrush. Whatever works for you is fine. I generally use the pencil grip when hooking narrow strips and change to the palm method for ease of pulling up wide strips. What is important is that the strip is pulled up through the burlap with no twisting or looping on the back side. One major pitfall to watch for is wrapping the strip around the hook (as in crocheting) prior to pulling it up.

If you are right-handed, you will be working in a right-to-left direction; if left-handed, you will work left-to-right. When you need to hook upward or downward, change the direction of the open part of the hook tip to more easily catch the strips. Or, you may change the position of your frame, whichever is more comfortable and gives you better results.

Loops should be pulled up to a height approximately the width of the strip. In other words, if using a 1/4" strip, the loops should be about 1/4" high. Also, loops should be pulled up so that a row of them viewed from the front should appear as a row of ribbon candy. Strive to pull all the strips to a uniform height. Again, a taut surface will help enable you to correctly gauge the height of your strips.

It is easier to achieve a smooth surface, particularly on a large rug, if you hook from the center out to the edges.

To begin hooking, hold the strip in your left hand and the hook in your right. Push the hook through to the back, catch the strip and bring up an end. Leave at least 1/2." Do not worry about trimming at this time. Hook to the end of the area or to the end of the strip. End the strip by cutting through the last loop and pulling down the excess or drawing up the remainder of the unused strip. If you need to cover more area with the same color, start a new strip by drawing up an end in the same hole you used to finish the previous strip. **Never tie knots to hold strips in place.** The tension of the burlap will hold them securely.

You must hook closely enough to hide all the burlap, but not so closely that your work buckles and ripples with packed loops. When using #8 (8/32"=1/4") strips, I usually skip every other hole and every other row on Angus burlap. Using narrower strips and tighter burlap or other backing, skip fewer and fewer holes and rows. You must judge by eye and "feel." Also, turn your work over from time to time to check for large open areas of burlap or other problems such as twisting and crossovers.

Generally, when finished hooking one row, cut through the last loop and start the next row back at the right. **Do not** turn sharp corners in hooking as this will create twisting on

the back and non-uniform loops on the front. Also, any points (as at the tip of a leaf) will be rounded.

It is often attractive to fill in a design area by following the outline and working inward. Also, backgrounds are often started by hooking one or two rows of the background wool around the detail areas and within the border and filling in in a swirl-y fashion. Sometimes it is desirable to hook in straight lines across design areas or backgrounds. Your design and taste will dictate what you will want to do.

The edges of the rug should have at least two rows of straight hooking going around to "hold" them and make finishing easier.

Using your rug:

Try not to place your rug in strong sunlight, as it may fade the colors.

Do not launder your hooked piece by immersion, either by washing or dry cleaning. Vacuum regularly (not with the power head) and spot clean as needed with the suds of a mild detergent solution (no bleaches). With a clean sponge, work suds into soiled area (after spot testing for colorfastness). Rinse several times with clear water on a sponge. Allow to dry. Vacuum any residue.

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