

Traditional Rug Hooking Terms

Acid Dyes:

Type of commercial dye ideally suited to achieving color-fast dye in wool. Acid dye lowers the pH of the dye bath, allowing color to penetrate the fibers of the wool. The dyeing process is completed with an acidic mordant, such as vinegar or citric acid. Dye manufacturers include Cushing, Pro-Chem, Jacquard, and Aljo

As-Is Wool:

Wool fabric as it originally came from the mill (washed or unwashed;) fabric has not been overdyed for rug hooking.

Backing/Foundation:

Open-weave fabric onto which rug design is drawn, and used to hold wool strips to make a rug. Most commonly used foundations include: linen, monk's cloth, and rug warp, but burlap may also be used. Excess foundation is required around edges, beyond drawn design for use in attaching design to frame and for finishing/binding completed rug.

Beading:

Technique where two strips of wool are held as one and alternately pulled through the backing into a single row. Useful technique for adding detail to motifs or adding highlights. Beading also creates small-scale checked areas when hooked in adjoining rows.

Binding:

The process of finishing the edges of a hooked rug to prevent the foundation from fraying and the rug becoming unstable. Binding methods vary and include, whipping with yarn, covering with binding tape, or covering with wool strips or bias covering.

Tape:

Cotton twill tape, usually 1¼ inches wide, used to finish, secure and protect the edges of a rug. Binding tape should be washed before using to pre-shrink and ensure color-fastness.

Crossover:

Visible on underside of rug, crossovers are created when a strip is carried over a previously hooked row to be used in another area. This is an undesirable condition, which should be avoided by ending a strip in one section and beginning a new strip in the next section.

Cutter:

A simple mechanical, wool cutting machine operated with a hand crank that turns sharp circular cutting heads. When wool pieces are fed into the machine, several strips of equal width are cut as the wool passes beneath the cutting head. Cutters can have interchangeable cutting heads so that one machine can be used to cut a variety of strip widths by changing the cutting head. Manufacturers of cutters include Beeline/Townsend, Bolivar, Bliss, Fraser, HoneyDoo and Rigby.

Cutting Heads/ Blades:

The cutting blade part of a wool strip cutter. Heads/blades come in different sizes to cut strips the required width for rug hooking. Cuts are measured in 32nds of an inch (cutter head sizes are marked #6, #8, etc., meaning 6/32 or 8/32-inch width cuts.) Heads/blades are removable and changeable.

Directional Hooking:

Hooking technique that creates visual interest and movement to a rug by hooking in a specific direction to achieve such. Examples: following a circular pattern to create clouds and movement in a sky or background; following a curved linear pattern to create the illusion of fields or hills; hooking in a specific pattern to create stripes, or checks, etc.

Frame:

Holds rug foundation very taught while hooking. Frame with gripper strips of metal carding, manufactured specifically for rug hooking (or a heavy-duty, wooden quilting hoop.) A variety of frames and stands are available, and some have special features. A

few well-known manufacturers are Gruber, K's Creations/Bee Creek Ltd., Pittsburgh, Puritan, Purple Crow, Snapdragon, Townsend and Turtle Creek.

Hit or Miss/Hit and Miss:

Hooking technique that uses unplanned color changes, often in borders or backgrounds. Pattern is created by randomly hooking strips of varying lengths and colors to fill an area of a rug. Historically used because fabrics were not readily available and a hooker might run out of one fabric before an area of the rug was completed. It is a great way to use up leftover strips of all colors and sizes.

Holiday:

An area observable on the back of a rug (wrong side) where too much foundation is visible, indicating that the area is not filled sufficiently with wool loops. Can be corrected by adding loops to the area that is too sparsely filled.

Lamb's Tongue:

Folk art motif, resembling a tongue-shape, traditionally used in penny rugs. As a design element in a hooked rug, tongues are typically used in a border, and are hooked following the curve of the tongue shape in concentric rows of varying colors.

Loop:

The repeated formation of a strip of wool, used to create a hooked rug; an even series of loops pulled through a foundation to create a rug pattern. Traditionally, each loop is pulled up as high as the wool strip is wide.

Overdyed Wool:

Wool that has been altered by hand-dyeing, or by adding heat and water to discharge and stew or marry their original colors. Commonly used terms that describe various methods of overdyeing are: spot dyed, mottled, gradation, casserole dyed, dip dyed, swatch dyed, stone-dyed and marbled.

Packing:

A common beginner's mistake of pulling too many loops, too closely together, in an area of a rug. When loops are packed, very often the resulting finished rug will not lie flat on the floor and cannot be steamed to do so. Each loop and each row of loops should be visible and not pulled too close to adjoining loops or rows when filling a design; skip at least 2-3 holes in the foundation between loops and rows to avoid this mistake. Loops should appear fat and round, not flat and pressed together; rows should just barely touch one another and loops should not be bent or crooked from being crowded too closely together.

Primitive:

A simple style of hooking in which scale is often unstructured and child-like adding a naive feel to a rug. Mimics antique rug style done in wide cuts with simpler designs and does not use gradation shading or precise detailing.

Proddy Hooking:

An old rug technique using short strips of fabric (usually ½" wide x 3" long) pushed or pulled through rug foundation so that both cut ends are on top of the rug. Proddy can be worked from the front or back of the design, depending on the type of proddy tool used. Proddy is sometimes combined with primitive, traditional hooking. This technique might use random colors without a design or be used to create flowers and leaves and other dimensional aspects of a design.

Stick:

A wooden measuring device around which wool is wrapped and cut to create consistently sized wool strips for use in proddy rug making.

Tool:

Either a short-handled peg used to work from the back side of a design by pushing both ends of a wool strip through separate foundation hole, or a spring-loaded tool consisting of a wooden handle with a metal tip designed to work from the right side of a rug by feeding the wool strip into one hole, and then up through another.

Recycled/Reclaimed Wool:

Wool obtained from deconstructed garments, cast-off blankets or other 100% wool items with the intent to use as a material suitable for rug hooking. Wool for recycling can be found at thrift stores, resale shops, garage sales from online sources. Once prepared for

rug hooking, recycled wool can be overdye or used as is, and added to the hooker's wool stash. *See my document, Preparing Wool for more information.*

Red Dot (Tracing Fabric):

Sheer, interfacing-type fabric with a grid of red dots at 1-inch intervals. For use in rug design, trace or draw the rug pattern onto Red Dot Tracing Fabric, and then lay tracing over rug foundation. Trace the design again, using a permanent marker, allowing the ink to bleed through and be transferred to the rug foundation. Red Dot Tracing Fabric is ideal for this use since it does not stretch and the pattern is reusable.

Reverse Hooking:

Act of removing an undesirable strip of hooked wool from a rug design. Pull the strip from beneath at the back side of the rug. Reverse hooking is used to change a color, improve the hooking, or any of reason a hooker has for needing to remove a wool strip that has been hooked into the rug. Reverse hooking can be used at any stage of the hooking process.

Rug Hook:

Tool used to pull wool strips through the rug foundation and create the rug design. Resembles a metal crochet hook set into a handle. Hooks are selected based on style of hooking, strip widths used, and personal comfort. They come in straight shank and bent shank styles, with a wide variety of wooden handles of varying sizes and shapes. Wide-cut strips require the use of a primitive size rug hook. Commonly used rug hooks are Hartman, Moshimer, Miller (pencil hook), and Meno Trigger Grip.

Rug Hooking:

The technique of creating a rug by pulling loops of wool strips from beneath the stretched rug foundation material to form a design on the top of the rug.

Kit:

An assemblage of rug hooking supplies purchased together in kit form, allowing the hooker to have everything required to hook a particular rug design. Most kits include a design on foundation, whole or pre-cut wool, and instructions; some kits also include a rug hook.

Pattern:

A design drawn or stamped onto foundation material and then stretched onto a hooking frame where the rug design is hooked into a rug.

Wool:

Wool fabric of certain types that are suitable for rug hooking (*see my documents, Preparing Wool and also Wool Types for more information.*) Rug hooking wool must be properly prepared before use in a rug; washing and drying under certain conditions renders the wool "fulled" so that it does not fray during the hooking process. Wool is cut or torn into strips for hooking the rug design.

Scissors:

Scissor type most helpful in rug hooking are offset handle or knife-edge appliqué scissors. These types of scissors employ bent handles that easily allow snipping off tails of wool strips even with the height of the hooked loops; scissor blades lie parallel to the hooked loops while the handles are positioned farther above the finished work enabling the hooker to more clearly see where the cut is being made without holding the scissors at an angle and cutting the loops unevenly.

Snippets:

Bits of wool trimmings that are cut from the tails of wool strips as they are started and stopped during the hooking process; snippets accumulate while hooking a rug so hookers keep a shallow dish or 'snippet bowl' nearby to collect them for discard later or for use in stuffing pin cushions, pillows, and other dimensional work.

Steaming/Blocking:

Use of steam to prepare a rug for finishing after hooking. Steam creates an overall, smoother appearance and helps work lie flat. Always allow a steamed rug to dry flat before finishing the edges.

Strips:

Cut pieces of prepared wool material used to create loops when hooking a rug. Strips are cut with a fabric cutter, rotary cutter, or sometimes torn by hand or hand-cut with scissors. Strip width varies depending upon the requirements of the rug design. Most primitive rugs require wide-cuts ranging from #6 to #10 or wider cut strips. Cuts are measured in 32nds of an inch, so a #8 cut is actually 8/32 inch (or ¼ inch) wide. Hand-torn strips can measure ½ inch or wider. Strip cutter heads use the same measurement system, so a #8 cutter head will produce strips cut into 8/32 inch widths.

Tail:

When beginning or ending a series of loops with a wool strip, the end of the strip is pulled to the top of the rug – this is called a tail. Tails are trimmed to the same height as the pulled loops. There will generally be two tails in one foundation hole since a strip begins in the same hole where the previous strip ended; the bulk of the two tails is the same as one pulled loop.

Tapestry Needle:

A tapestry needle with a large eye is used to whip the edges of a rug with yarn to bind the edges. Needles size is usually #13 and might be straight or bent with a blunt tip and smooth finish.

Texture:

Rug hooking wool woven into a pattern, such as plaid, herringbone, or stripe. Also weaves such as tweeds and bouclé. Hooking textured wool into a rug adds interest and shading. Textured wool can be overdyed to add even more drama and versatility to a rug.

Tunneling:

Practice of carefully hooking in a much narrower strip of contrasting wool between two standard size rows of hooking, much like a pencil line in wool. Tunneling gives definition to a motif within a design. Technique is especially helpful in creating subtle definition for primitive faces, flowers, animal features and lettering.

Whipping:

A binding technique where edges of a completed rug are wrapped with wool yarn or wool strips, protecting, finishing and concealing the foundation material around the perimeter of a rug.

Wide-Cut:

Hooking style suitable for a particular rug design – usually a primitive. Wide-cut refers to the width of the wool strips used; most primitive rugs are wide-cut and hooked with strips in a #6 cut or wider.

Want to Learn More About Traditional, Primitive Rug Hooking?

Get my 5-booklet how-to series . . . each one covers a different aspect of rug hooking. You'll find them on my web site—get them all and be informed!

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My website offers lots of great educational information, books, patterns, and my catalogs of designs for rug hooking and punch needle embroidery.

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