

Simple,
Spectacular

Braided-in Rugs

OTHER TITLES BY THE AUTHOR

Rugmaker's Handbook Series:

- #1 Knitted Rag Rugs for the Craftsman*
- #2 Fabulous Rag Rugs from Simple Frames*
- #3 Crocheted & Fabric Tapestry Rugs*
- #4 Traditional Shirred & Standing Wool Rugs*
- #5 Simple, Spectacular Braided-in Rugs*

Other titles:

- Bohemian Braid Rugs for the Beginner*
- Multi-strand Braids for Flat-Braided Rugs*
- Flat Wrap Rugs and Baskets*
- Introduction to Patched Rugs*
- Amish Knot Rugs*
- Broomstick Rugs*
- Chain Braid Rugs*
- Wagon Wheel Rugs*
- Anchored Loop Rugs (American Locker Hooking with Rags)*
- Bodkin Rugs*
- Introduction to Tambour Rugs*
- Knotted Shag Rugs*
- Pjonging and the Single Strand Chain Braids*
- "Hook Braided" Rugs; the Two-strand Attached Chain Braid*
- Kitchen Table Rugs*
- String Crochet Rugs*
- Primitive Rug Hooking, An Introduction*
- "Beaded" Rugs, A Unique Standing Wool Rug*
- A Rugmaker's Sampler*

For more information about all types of traditional rugmaking, visit the author's website, ***Rugmaker's Homestead*** at

<http://www.rugmakershomestead.com>

Simple, Spectacular

Braided-in Rugs

**Written and Illustrated by
Master Rugmaker**

Diana Blake Gray

Rugmaker's Handbook No. 5:
Simple, Spectacular Braided-in Rugs

All Rights Reserved, Copyright 2015 by Diana Blake Gray

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or by any information storage and/or retrieval system without the written permission of the publisher.

Rafter-four Designs

For information address:

Rafter-four Designs

P O Box 40

Cocolalla, ID 83813

<http://www.rugmakershomestead.com>

This book includes information previously copyrighted by the author in 1985, 1988, 1993, 1996 and 2005

SHORT EXCERPTS FROM THE TEXT MAY BE PUBLISHED WHEN INCORPORATED IN A REVIEW. HOWEVER, CRAFT WRITERS AND EDITORS SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT SEVERAL OF THE METHODS INCLUDED IN THIS BOOK ARE PUBLISHED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME AND REPRESENT ORIGINAL WORK. DERIVATIVE ARTICLES AND WRITTEN WORKS REQUIRE WRITTEN PERMISSION AND MUST INCLUDE SPECIFIC CREDITS.

ISBN: 1-512024-23-6

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....1

Chapter 1, Jump Right In.....5

Types of T-shirt Knits
Cutting T-Shirts
Making a Practice Braid—The Four-Strand Flat Braid
Identifying a Braid Loop

Troubleshooting the Practice Braiding
Adding More Braiding Strip
 The Bias Joint
 The Bow-Tie Joint



Making a Practice Piece—Beginning a Rug
Making a Striped Practice Piece
To Make Larger Braided-in Rugs Using Only Four Strands
Finishing Off a 4-Strand Braided-in Project
Turning the Practice Piece into a Basket

Chapter 2, Raid a Thrift Store: Make a Rug.....25

Your First Real Braided-in Rug
Adding the Sixth Strand
Braiding-in with Six Strands
Increases with Six Strands

Completing the Six-Strand Round
Adding a Strand to Make Eight
Braiding-in with Eight Strands
Increases with Eight Strands

Completing the Rug
Finishing Off
Beginner's Pattern for Any Size Oval Braided-in Rug



Chapter 3, More Beginner Rugs.....35

An Old School Design
Pattern for the Old School Rug
Alternate Way to Start the Base Braid
Dramatic Effects Using Just Two Colors



Using Cotton Jersey Fabric
Pattern for a Two-Color Braided-in Rug with a Bold Design
Making a Braided-in Rug with Fleece
A Round-ish Beginner Braided-in Rug

Chapter 4, Straight-to-Eight.....43

An Intermediate Way to Begin a Braided-in Rug
Setup for an Eight-Color Rug with a Straight-to-Eight Start
Intermediate Oval Rug Pattern Using the Straight-to-Eight Start



Chapter 5, Rectangular Braided-in Rugs.....48

Beginning a Rectangular Rug
Ending Off a Rectangular Rug
A Note About Square-ish Rugs



Chapter 6, Using Wool & Other Heavy Fabrics.....52

Using Braiding Cones to Pre-fold Heavy Strip
Turn Backs—A Different Method of Increases
Safety Pins and Bodkins for Heavy Fabrics
Modifying the Oval Pattern for Large Rugs



Working Considerations
Adding a Border
Changing the Order of Strands in the Setup

Chapter 7, The Showoff Oval.....60

Setup is Everything
Starting the Showoff Oval Using the Straight-to-Eight Start
Critical Points
Continuing a Showoff Oval
Ending a Showoff Oval



Chapter 8, True Round Braided-in Rugs.....68

Beginning a Round Rug
Making the Round Core
Adding Strands in Setup Order
Continuing the Round Shape—Basic Procedure



Round Rugs for the Bold
To Start a Bold Round
Continuing the Bold Round
Ending Off
Making Larger Round Rugs

Chapter 9, The Odd Relative, Two-Strand Braided-in Rugs.....80

Beginning a Two-Strand Heptagon
Make the Base of a Heptagon
Round “One”, “Two”, etc.
Correction Rounds



Design Considerations
Border Rounds
Ending Off
Closing the Center

Steaming
Round Two-Strand Braided-in Rugs
Oval Two-Strand Braided-in Rugs

Chapter 10, Braided-in Baskets.....93

Two-strand Braided-in Basket—Working a Spiral
Hit-or-Miss Baskets with Light Cotton Fabrics
The General Formula for 8-strand Oval Baskets
Formula for 8-strand Round Baskets
Baskets Using Heavy Fabrics
Adding a Border Round



Chapter 11, The Fine Points.....101

Tools & Sources of Supply
How Long Should I Cut the Braiding Strands?
The Working Area
Using Other Braids

Formula for Totebags
Steaming Rugs and Baskets for a Professional Finish
Pattern for an Oval Six-Strand Braided-in Rug
Estimating Fabric Consumption

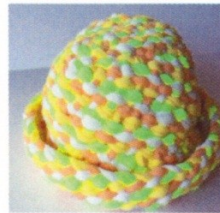


Using Yarn and Cord in Braided-in Rugs
Methods of Cutting Knit Clothing for Braided-in Rugs
A Key Skill: Straightening the Strands
The Laid-In Joint

Real Life with Rag Rugs
Caring for a Braided-in Rug

Afterword.....111

Making a Braided-in Hat



Introduction

When people see a braided-in rug for the first time, they think that it must take some terribly complicated, possibly magical process to create those wonderful, colorful patterns. That impression has deterred generations of rug makers from even attempting a braided-in rug. The irony is that braided-in rugs are simpler and quicker to make than plain braided rugs. There is no fancy equipment needed and a very short learning curve. I've shown folks of all ages (and both sexes) how to braid-in with eight strands and they astonish themselves by actually doing it in under ten minutes.

Braided-in rugs form swirling lines of color and though they appear to be complex, the process is simple and those impressive lines form automatically. Even first-time rug makers have stunning results as long as they start with the right directions. That's where this book comes in. I set out to create a book that would be so straightforward that it would bring braided-in rugs to life for rug makers with any skill level.



STRONGER RUGS, MORE QUICKLY MADE



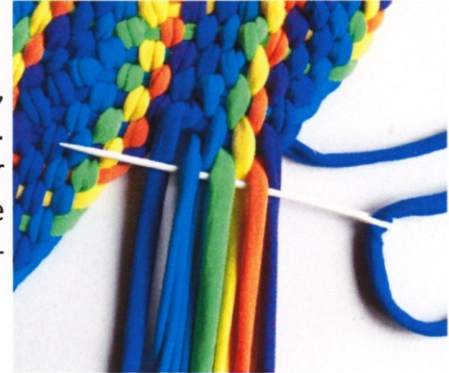
Most people are familiar with a regular braided rug. Fabric strips are braided and then the braids are coiled and laced together to form the rug. With braided-in rugs, the simply woven braids are made and laced into the rug in one step. This makes for a much stronger rug since the rounds of braiding can't separate if a thread breaks—and it eliminates an entire step in the making the rug.

So, if braided-in rugs are so simple, how did the method get lost? The answer is that braided-in rugs never had a standard increase pattern developed for them, and without that, the rugs were intimidating. Anyone who has struggled to make a three-strand plain braided rug lay flat would assume that eight strands (eight!) would be a nightmare of the rug cupping or waving and endless tries to get the rug to cooperate. The standard increase patterns in this book eliminate all that guesswork.

SO MANY STRANDS—THAT SOUNDS LIKE A GIANT TANGLE

With a three-strand braid the left and right strands are used alternately. The ends of the strands cross each other and have to be untangled over and over again. It's no wonder people are hesitant to try braiding with four or more strands. But braided-in rugs use a different type of braid. Braided-in rugs use left- and right-handed braids, meaning that the strands are worked only in one direction. One strand goes across the others and ends up in the correct position. Tangles prevented.

As for four, six or eight strand braids being intimidating, braided-in rugs are made with a type of braid called a plait. That means that the working strand is always going over one strand, under one strand, over one strand...in a simple weaving procedure. If you made woven sock loop potholders in grade school, you already know the process.



RUGS FOR THE NEW MILLENIUM

Rag rugs developed as a way to use worn fabrics in the 19th century. That tradition of recycling is perfectly at home in the 21st century and braided-in rugs are ideal for the types of fabrics that we have in excess today. While these rugs can be made with just about any fabric, throughout this book I am emphasizing the use of T-shirts since they are easy to come by, quick to prepare and easy to work with. That makes T-shirts the ideal medium for beginning rug makers.

HOW BRAIDED-IN RUGS WERE LOST

I'm not joking when I say that full directions for making braided-in rugs with the traditional eight strands have never been published. This was a technique that was passed down as an oral tradition, largely by immigrants to North America from Scandinavian countries. When I first wrote about braided-in rugs (in 1985) I had traced their origins in North America to immigrants from Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Recently I heard from a rug maker of Finnish descent, living in Wisconsin, who also had a family history of making the rugs.



The traditional style of braided-in rugs used very narrow strips of lightweight scrap material. They were made by "feel" and colors were added in a more or less random fashion. These rugs still exhibited the classic swirling lines, but without a regular increase pattern, the design possibilities were quite limited and seldom symmetrical.

Like so many of the other rug making traditions, braided-in rugs were ignored by the urban-oriented homemaking publications so the survival of the rugs at all was a matter of a few scattered rug makers continuing a family tradition. The same sad story of many other types of rugs also occurred with braided-in rugs. In only one or two generations, the tradition wouldn't be passed down since the younger generation wasn't interested. How often I've heard "My grandmother made rugs, but I never learned how"—even from gals in their eighties.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE TEXTILE EXPLORER

There are several brand new techniques in this book that take braided-in rugs beyond the older traditions of braided-in rugs. The old rugs were made exclusively in the oval shape, using the "increase as necessary" method.

Of course, the increase patterns that allow the spectacular effects are new, as are the techniques to accent the pattern lines. Directions for making a true round braided-in rug with eight strands appear for the first time in this book.

Other firsts include alternate starting procedures, going straight to eight strands, braided-in baskets, rectangular rugs and the unique seven-sided shaping of two-strand braided-in rugs .



USING THIS BOOK

I'm sometimes asked about a book, "Is it written for a beginner like me?" With braided-in rugs, everyone is a beginner and with that in mind, I've organized the book progressively with each step illustrated. The idea is to get you started with small projects and then a rug, seeing results very quickly. Look through the book (especially Chapter 11: The Fine Points which has all sorts of basic information) and then start at the beginning.

Your life will be much simpler if you use T-shirts for your first project because they are so easy to work with. Once you've made one, you'll be ready for more. From preparing fabrics, to beginning a rug and ending off—the chapters are organized to make the process as easy to follow as possible. With just a little practice, you'll be surprised at how impressive your very first rug is.

The two-strand braided-in rugs are at the end, not the beginning for a very good reason. Those rugs are the slowest of the braided-in rugs. If there's one thing I've learned in all these years it is that beginning rug makers want to see results quickly. So, please don't think that it is going to be easier to use two strands, because it isn't.

NEW IN THIS BOOK

This book has features that none of my previous books on rug making could include. I've always listened to the requests and suggestions of my readers, who almost universally wished that the rug books could have color pictures.

Because of the larger format, the photos can also be larger, but I didn't forget that it is the detailed close-ups that my readers have found most useful. The larger format also allows a little larger typeface, which is easier on the eyes.

And for all of my left-handed friends and rug makers, for the first time, I've been able to include both left- and right-handed directions for all of the basic procedures.

**Yes, Virginia, I am
a Beginner's Rug!**



HAPPY RUGMAKING!

In summary, braided-in rugs have seemed overwhelming and even intimidating to the uninitiated, but that reputation is just not deserved. The braided-in technique is friendly and forgiving—one with few hard and fast rules. The rugs offer a lot of room for exploring color and design. Once you make a braided-in rug, and see the astonishment of friends and family, you can be forgiven for pretending it is a really difficult and complicated process—just don't overdo it. Eventually, they'll find this book, too.