

Crochet a Special Rug

Betty Abel remembers the first time she tried to crochet as a young girl.

"I was going to Florida with an aunt of mine on the train," says the Gadsden, Ala., resident. "Every time the stitch wasn't just right, she'd slap my hand. I said, 'If I ever finish this, I'll never crochet again.'"

A grownup Betty changed her mind, but making that first rug was as painful as crocheting on the train ride. Her hands swelled. Later, she learned that the crochet hook was too small. The handiwork actually helped her arthritic hands when she was properly equipped.

The rugs are an ideal floor covering for any room in the house because they are durable and easy to care for. They can even be used on a porch, although the colors will fade to a muted shade of their original hues.

The rugs are machine washable and dryable, but the larger ones require a commercial-size washer.

Before beginning to crochet, Betty tests the fabric to be sure that the rug won't "bleed" when washed. She also uses a stain-resistant spray.

To make a crocheted rug lie flat takes a certain "feeling," she explains. She is referring not to an emotional state but to a sensitivity to the necessary give-and-take rhythm.

"If you try to follow a definite pattern direction, because of the different weights of material or the different-size strips that you might use, then you'll have trouble with them curling up," Betty says.

"To compensate for that, I usually use an extra stitch," she says. "I use a chainstitch, a single crochet, or a double crochet."

Accomplished crocheters have a problem getting the rugs to lie flat.

You don't want to make the stitches as tight as you normally would for crocheting other items, Betty continues.

"If you're pulling too tight, the rugs curl up. But if you're relaxed and having fun, then they are going to lie flat," she says.

NANCY DORMAN-HICKSON



Crocheted rugs are durable enough to be used on an unscreened porch.



Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4

Betty's Guide To Crocheting a Rug

Step 1: To start a round rug, make a loop, insert a size Q hook, pull bottom thread up through loop, and tighten. (Three-inch-wide strips of material are ideal for use with a size Q hook.)

Step 2: Wrap strip over hook, then pull strip through loop. Repeat to complete six chains. Make a slipstitch in the first chain to form a circle. This foundation chain is crucial and must not be too tight.

Step 3: To start the first row, make a turning chain. Continue with the first single-crochet stitch, then chain, then single crochet, then chain, and so on. This series increases the circle and ensures a flat rug as the rows increase.

Step 4: To make sure that the rug lies flat with no large gaps or

lumps, relax and ease the tension of stitches. When the strip is held too loosely, the stitches have too much space between them and leave gaps. When it's held too tightly, the stitches are hard to work and pull out of line.

Exact yardage of material needed cannot be determined because of varying size and tension of strips.

However, if you're using a 4½-inch-wide strip with a size Q hook, 1 yard of material will crochet about 2½ stitches, or 2 inches of the rug. The narrower strips of material produce more stitches.

Using a 4½-inch-wide strip 35 yards long produces a rug center about 14 inches round; 50 yards makes about a 16-inch center; and 85 yards makes about 22 inches.