How to Hang Braided Rugs – for Display or Exhibit

1. Nails (between the loops, not through fabric)
2. A Lacing Cord Wrapped Rod (the flatter the better)
3. A Sewn-On Sleeve: Helps to sew with a curved needle
4. Foam Core Board Backing
5. Lace to Wire Fencing
6. Mount onto a backing board, then frame.

1. Nails

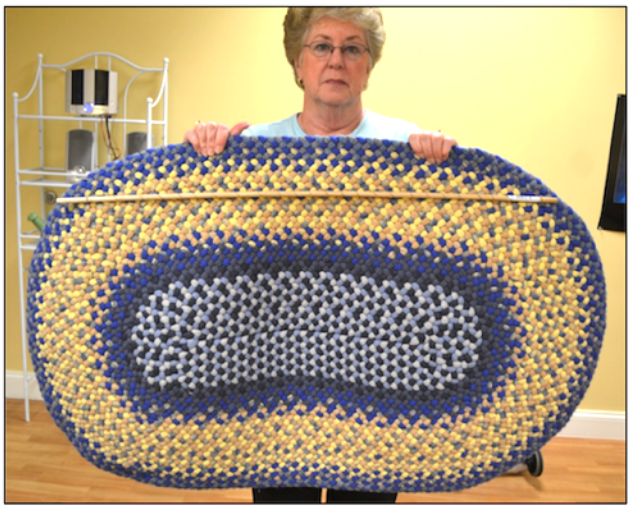
If you work nails between the loops, you can place finishing nails or "headless" nails all through the rug to support the weight against the wall.

While most of the nails will be along the top, you can additionally support the rest of the rug with more nails halfway down and along the bottom as needed.

Work for Heavy Rugs? Yes, if you use enough nails
Work for Irregular Shapes? Yes.
Destroy the Wall? Probably
Easy to Take Down? Yes
Easy to Put Back Up? No

Difficulties: As you place the first few nails, you need to make sure that the rug is supported by another person, or it will distort the line of the top braids due to all the weight falling on a couple nails.

2. Lacing Cord Wrapped Rod



This method is best for small to medium-sized rugs. Just get a metal curtain rod or wood dowel (the flatter the better) and lace along the backs of loops to hold the rod in place. You can then stretch a piece of wire or cording around both ends of the rod (notch the wood to hold the wire or cord in place) and suspend the rug from the center of the cord, or you can use two nails (and a level, to make sure they're straight) to support the ends of the rod.

Work for Heavy Rugs? No
Work for Irregular Shapes? No (but add finish nails to secure the irregular bits)
Destroy the Wall? No
Easy to Take Down? Yes
Easy to Put Back Up? Yes

Difficulties: If you have a round rod, it can cause a round bump. It can also tent the rug away from the wall and make it hang unevenly. Choose a thin metal curtain rod for the best look.

3. A Sewn-on Sleeve

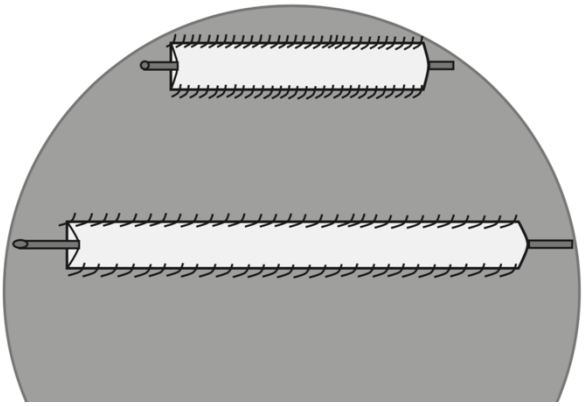
Sleeves can support small to large rugs, similar to the lacing cord wrapped rod above. The sewing can be a little tricky if you are unused to using a curved needle – which is MUCH easier for taking a bite of braid than a straight needle.

A second sleeve can support more weight, but must be mounted EXACTLY parallel to the top of the sleeve above. (I didn't manage to achieve this with my fish, and it has a ripple in the rug when both sleeves are used).

Sleeves are made with a durable non-stretch fabric like cotton khaki or cotton canvas. With perfectly parallel cuts

and seams, make a tube of fabric. Stitch the top and bottom of the sleeve to the back of the rug, allowing some extra fullness in the outer part of the sleeve for the rod. The flatter the rod, the better.

See attached instructions for sewing with a curved needle.



Work for Heavy Rugs? Yes… with more than one sleeve

Work for Irregular Shapes? No (but add finish nails to secure the irregular bits)

Destroy the Wall? No

Easy to Take Down? Yes

Easy to Put Back Up? Yes

Difficulties: The difficulties are: sewing with a curves needle if you're unused to it; making the sleeves perfectly parallel; making the hanging nails perfectly parallel.

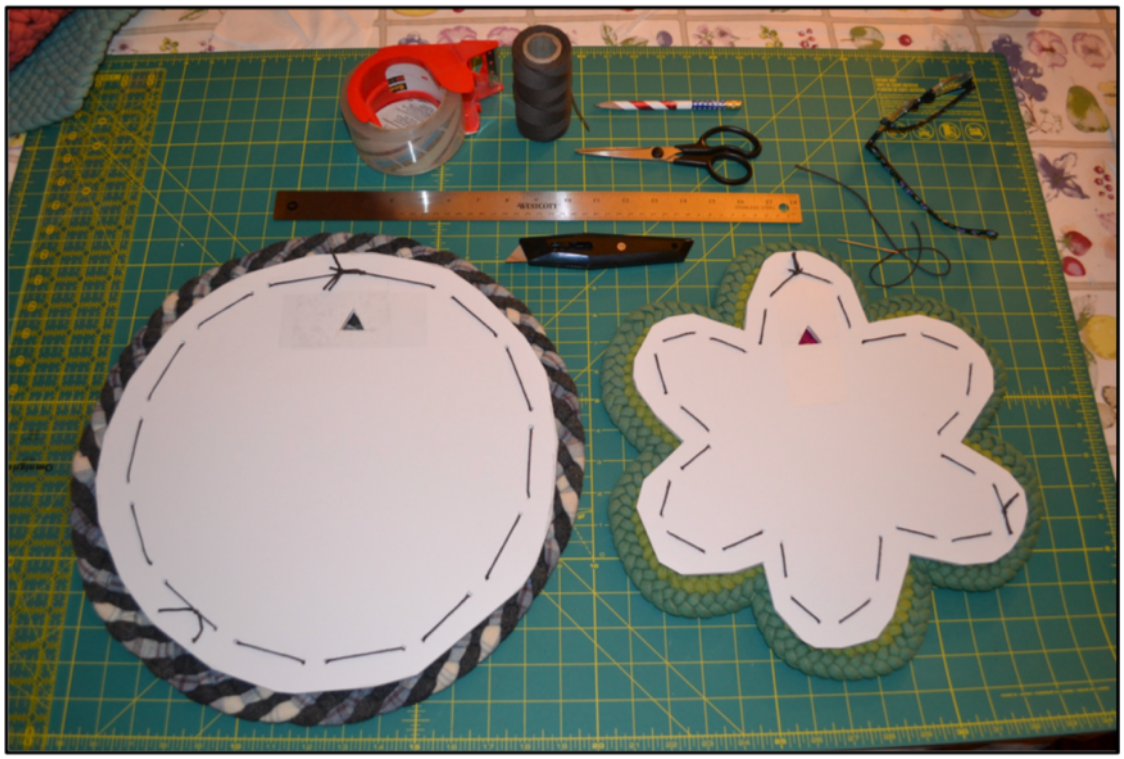
4. Foam Core Board Backing

This method is very effective and light-weight. It works best for small- to medium-sized rugs that are irregular in shape. The foam core board can get beat up and bent if you don't store it properly… but it's inexpensive, and you can just make a new one if needed.

This is the method I used for my hexagon rug on exhibit right now at the Pittsburgh Airport in the show, Common Threads.

Supplies:

- Foam Core Board (comes in 3/16" and ½" thickness
- Exacto knife
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Cutting Mat
- Lacing Cord
- Scissors with long skinny blade
- Packing Tape
- Label, or marker, for putting name etc on the back.

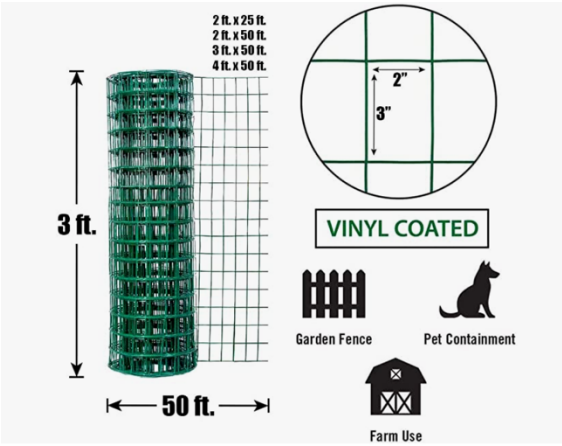


Directions:

1. Trace the outline of your rug onto the foam core board.
2. Draw a new shape 1" in from the outlined rug. Simplify the shape as needed for easy cutting.
3. Use an exacto knife to cut out the inner shape.
4. Measure carefully to find the top center of the foam core board shape. Cut a triangle as shown (this will be where the shape hangs by a nail). Put a piece of tape over it and cut from the center out to the triangle's corners, folding down the tape to the inside.
5. Use one blade of scissors to stab downward and twist ever few inches for the lacing holes: see photo.
6. Lace loosely, catching back loops. Tighten up the cord a bit, and tie. Trim ends. Done!

5. Lace to Wire Fencing

This method is hands-down the most secure method for hanging really heavy and big rugs – even the irregularly-shaped ones. But, it's a process and a bit annoying. Use it if you have a large rug that you plan to display for a long time, or a special rug that you're afraid won't be hung well otherwise.

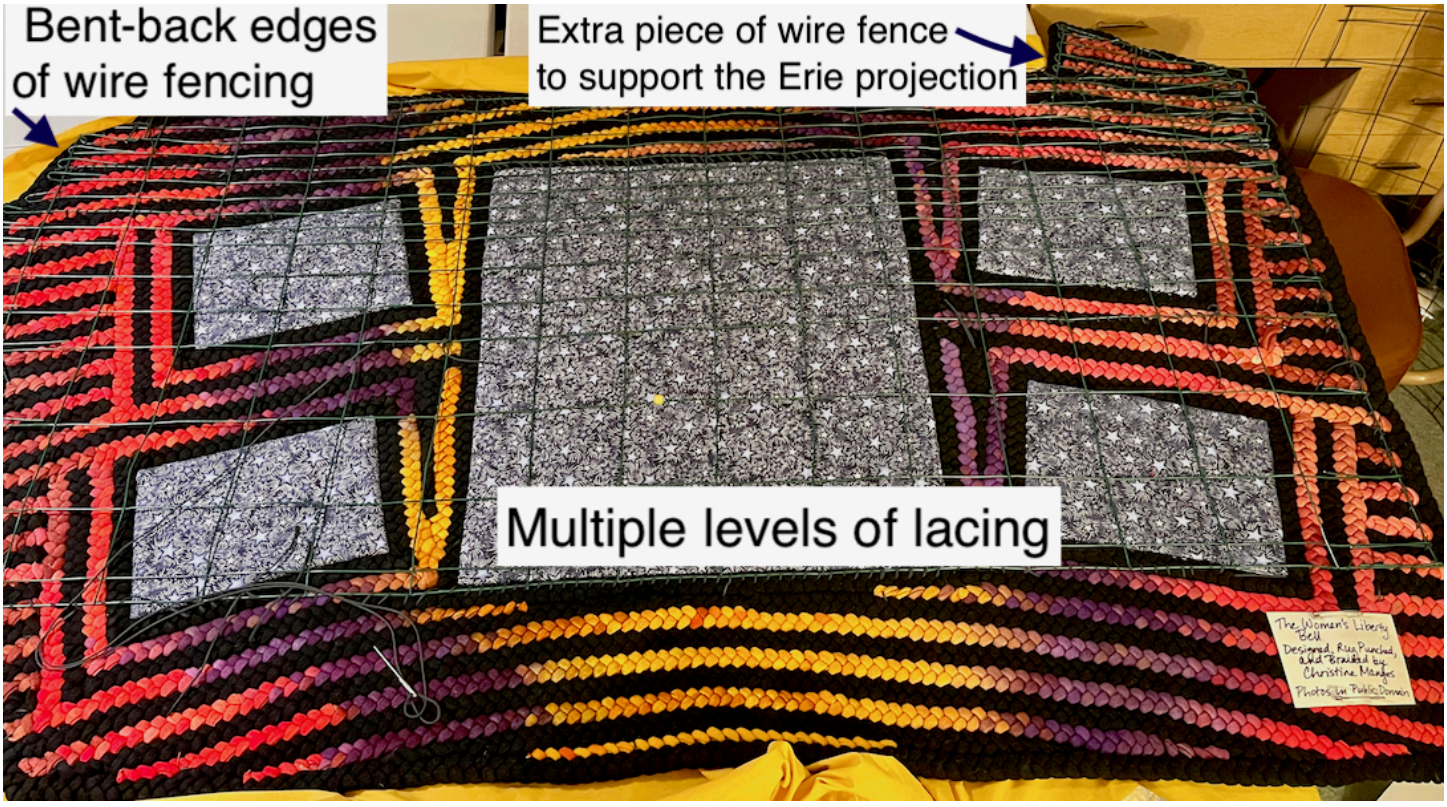


Supplies:

- Galvanized or coated wire fencing (you do NOT want rusty wire on your rug)
- Wire cutters
- Extra wire
- Lacing cord and lacing needle; scissors

Directions:

1. Unroll an amount of wire fencing longer than needed. Spend some time bending the rolled wire flat.
2. Lay the rug face down, and the wire fencing on top of the back of the rug. Using wire cutters, cut the wire so that there are long spokes sticking out. Bend the spokes back toward the center of the rug so that there are no sharp edges sticking out.
3. Cut extra pieces of fencing to support any irregular projections from the rug. Using the extra wire, wrap these pieces onto the main part of the fencing securely.
4. Lace the wire backing onto the back of the rug, catching the backs of loops at multiple levels to support the weight of the rug.
5. When hanging, use multiple headed nails to support the wire. Do not hang from the top rail of the fence, just in case it pulls free – hang from the second rail down.



6. Mounting and Framing

Antique Combination Hooked and Braided Rug, Artist and date unknown. Owned by the authors. Beautiful use of hooking fills the open spaces between the braided circles.

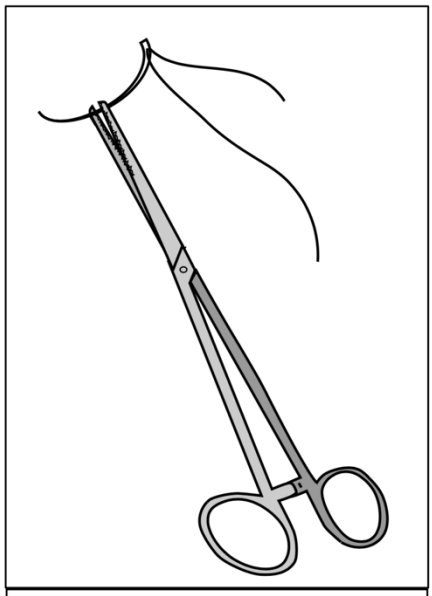
This example shows a beautiful antique rug that unites braided circles with hooked fill-in shapes. It is mounted onto a sturdy fabric backing with careful stitching.

Next page: Sewing onto Braids with a Curved Needle.

Sewing with a Curved Needle

I found that my fingers were really sore after shoving a straight needle through the twill that I chose for the sleeves on the backs of rugs. Also, it was awkward to grab a good bite of the braid loops – I had to push the braids up from below to get my straight needle to come out.

I decided to try working with a curved needle, and using a hemostat as my "needle driver." I wish I had tried this sooner: it was SO much easier. Here's my best effort at diagramming how to sew like this:



Grab needle at its halfway point with tips of hemostat. Needle should be perpendicular or tip slightly away. Tighten hemostat handles a couple clicks.

1. Load your needle onto your hemostat. The needle should fall right at the *tips* of the hemostat. It should be perpendicular or else tilted with the sharp point further away slightly. Grasp the needle at its midpoint.

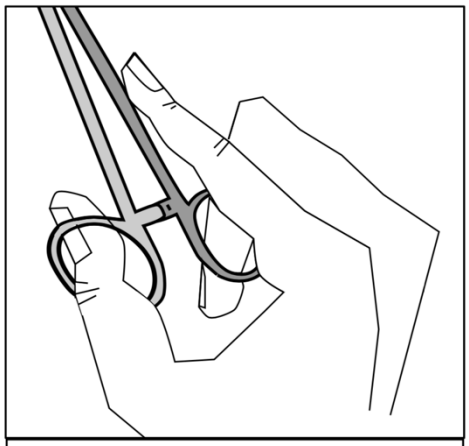


Diagram shows hand position for hemostat.

2. Clamp the needle with the hemostat tips firmly: tighten a couple clicks so that the needle does not wobble or spin.

3. Diagram left shows hand position for the hemostat: the thumb through the left hole, the index finger along top of right handle, and middle finger down through right hole. (Some put ring finger through right hole and middle finger on top of the hole.) Try both ways and see what's comfortable.

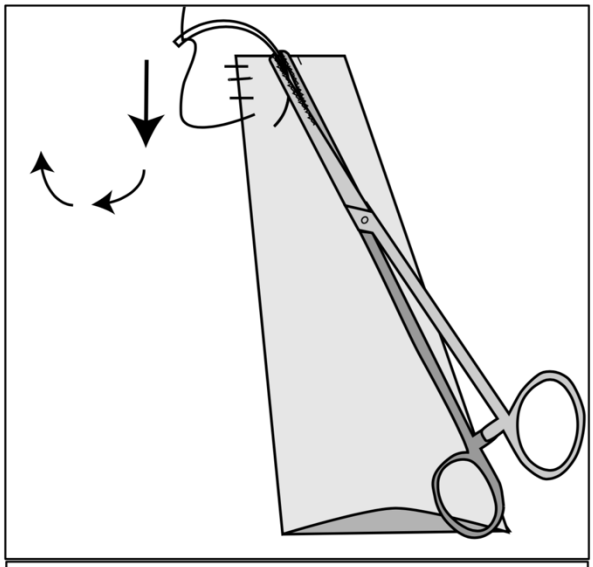
4. When you stab the needle into the sleeve, turn your hand thumb-down so that the needle enters the fabric POINT STRAIGHT DOWN. Then *turn your hand clockwise following the path of the curve* through the fabric, until about 1/4 inch of the sharp tip emerges.

5. Let go of the needle, and re-grab the needle close to the fabric (ie, not right at the tip). Your hand with the hemostat should be palm-down again as it grabs the needle end.

6. Turn your hand thumb up (clockwise) to get the needle to curve through the rest of the fabric.

7. Re-load the needle as in step 1 and repeat.

Comment: A needle driver is better than a hemostat, but a lot more expensive and harder to come by. The hemostat's coarsely ridged ends will eventually chew on the needle enough that it will twist and turn as you try to push it through fabric. Just get a couple extra curved needles to have on hand so that when your needle is chewed up, you can use a new one.



Needle must enter fabric with the point straight down. Turn your hand clockwise to drive the curved needle through the fabric. Re-grab the needle when it comes out of the fabric, and continue turning clockwise to get the needle out of the fabric.