Finishing Rugs with Fabric Welt

by Celia Oliver

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I finish all my rugs with a fabric welt that coordinates with the rug. Basically, the technique uses a 3"- 4" strip of fabric sewn to the rug edge, and wrapped around to the back. This forms a strong secure edge, which resembles applied welt, also called piping.

Finished Welt

On the front, the finished edge is approximately ¼" to 3/8" wide and looks like another row of hooking. This illustration also shows the fabric welt on the back sewn with a mitered corner.

Plan A - Applying welt before hooking

I cut a strip of fabric 3-4" wide and long enough to wrap around the perimeter of the rug plus 6". I usually sew a few pieces together using a diagonal seam, cut on the bias, which reduces the bulk of the seam. I mark the strip with a chalk line about 3/8" from the outer edge.

Welt strip sewn along edge of pattern

I match the chalk line to the edge of the pattern, then pin and sew the strip just outside the pattern line. I clip the 3/8" seam at an angle to within 1/8" of the seam, then clip the wider strip (which will be the welt) to within 1/2" of the seam - just enough so it will lie flat.

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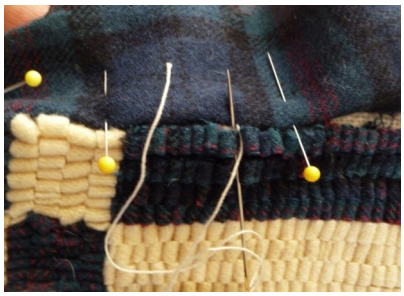
Welt strip folded back - Ready to hook

Once the welt strip is sewn to the pattern and folded back to the outside, you can begin hooking. Placing the first row close to the fabric welt will hide the foundation.

Plan B - Applying welt strip to finished rug

I rarely know the finished size of my rug or the color of the border, so I am always sewing the welt fabric after the rug is complete. The general process is the same, but the strip is sewn on by hand, not machine. Make a 3"-4" wide strip long enough to go around the rug plus 6", using bias seams to join strips and press open the seams.

Sewing welt along finished edge



I fold the edge of the strip under about 3/8” and pin it in place close to the hooked edge. I use a button or upholstery thread matched to the welt fabric. Here, I am using a white thread to make it more visible.

Hiding the stitches

I use a long running that that is hidden in between the hooked loops. Bring the thread up through the foundation at the edge of the hooking, insert it into the fold of the welt fabric and take a ¼” running stitch. Then insert the needle back into the foundation and repeat the stitch.

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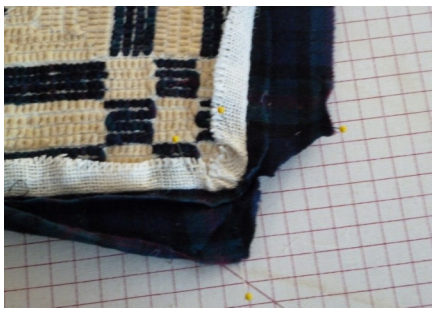
Running Stitch on the wrong side

The running stitch secures the welt close to the edge of the hooking.

Folding fabric to back to create the welt

Fold the fabric welt to back. I like the finished welt to be about the width of a hooked row. I don't put any cord inside the finished welt, because I have found that the layers of welt fabric, the 3/8" seam and linen backing create enough bulk for the welt. Trim away the extra foundation and pin in place.

Preparing a mitered corner



First, trim the foundation at the corner to reduce the bulk. Next fold the foundation fabric flat at the corner, divide the remaining fabric into two folds placed close to the edge of the rug, and lightly press down with your fingers or an iron.

Pinned corner ready to sew

Arrange the welt fabric by laying one side down flat, then laying the top layer over it. You will need to trim away some extra fabric. Fold the top layer under about 1/4" to create a mitered seam, pin and sew in place.

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Sewing the welt strips together

I overlap the strips, cut the edge of the top piece on the bias, fold the cut edge under about 3/8”, and sew the layers together. Then I can sew the remaining welt to the rug edge.

Finished welt

If the fabric is thin, I fold the edge under 1/2" and use a simple hem stitch to secure the fabric to the foundation. When I use a thicker fabric to make the welt, I usually just trim the edge of the fabric and sew it with a herringbone or blanket stitch.

The Finished Rug

Rug with Velcro Mount

Velcro detail

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