

# Finishing Finesse

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## The Beginning

Think of yourself as an artist and your backing as a blank canvas. It doesn't matter if you are doing a room-sized rug, smaller mat, using a purchased pattern or designing your own, the steps you take now will affect the finishing technique you choose.

There isn't a right or wrong method. Experience tends to make us do a method that is within our scope; meaning that we have the tools necessary, knowledge and the time to invest.

Not to scare you, but this is just the beginning and you probably have many, many hours to hook this project. Taking a few minutes now might make the ending easier.

## Backing

There are lots of choices. Naming the ones I am familiar with, but there are always new products available and most have a preferred backing.

Burlap (Scottish or not) - Lots of older patterns were done on burlap. My recommendation would be that if you own the pattern, to transfer it to another backing and send that pattern to a Museum. Burlap is hard on the hands, some say it can cause health issues, water is its enemy and there are too many other options available now.

Linen (Primitive, etc.) - Natural fiber. Easy to work on and different weights will accommodate anything from a fine cut #3 to a large cut #9.

Monks Cloth—Soft cotton fiber, easy to work on. Some think it stretches while hooking. I personally like it and use it often.

Rug Warp—Stiffer and even-spaced holes. Good for fine cuts.

Wool Fabric—Different weights of wool and usually for a smaller project like a pillow, purse, attach to clothing.

## Edge Preparations

Serge—A machine that overcasts the edges of the fabric to prevent fraying. A purchased pattern should be finished in this manner. If you don't own a serger, someone in your community probably does and would be glad to help you.

ZigZag—You don't have to have a sophisticated top of the line sewing machine to be able to do this stitch. A double row of zigzag stitches close to the edge will help prevent the backing from fraying.

Additionally, a double row of zigzag stitching 1" to 1 1/2" outside the design edge will help you later.

Tape—Masking, Painter's, Duct Tape. Fold around the fabric edge. Certainly not my choice, but people use what is easy and available. You will have to remove before final finishing is completed and you will still have a raw edge to deal with.

Glue or Fray Check—Stiffens the fabric and prevents fraying. The downside is that you have to wait for it to dry and then when doing final finishing, I would cut it away.

## Hooking

The hours and hours of hooking are finally complete. You might have done this over years or months, or those who are "fast" by nature, a matter of weeks. It doesn't matter how long it took to get to this point, you have an investment in this project. There are a couple of steps taken now to help you achieve the perfect final result.

## Steam

Using an iron on high setting without water and using a cotton/linen dish towel, wetted and wrung out, you press the rug. Reposition the iron across the rug until the entire surface has been steamed. I steam the front and the back of the rug; sometimes it takes several steamings to make it lay flat and square.

Note that you do not want to steam your rug on a wooden surface without paper and lots of padding to protect it. An ironing board surface is good for smaller projects. There are quilting padded mats that are designed for pressing. Some people use their kitchen counters with several layers of heavy towels. I have a kitchen table with porcelain top that is ideal.

Proper steaming will make your loops blossom and what might not have looked “perfect” before steaming does in the end.

Be sure to let your rug dry in a flat position after steaming.

## Fuzz Grabber

A battery-operated sweater fuzz shaver. Some people use these during the hooking process. It isn't necessary, but one of those extras that once you are used to you might always use.

## Holidays

These are open spots that were not filled in with hooking; not a vacation you deserve after all those hours of hooking.

Holidays are often hidden on the right side of your work, but turn it to the wrong side and the holidays are visible. Once you locate them, insert a toothpick from the back to the front; once the rug is back on your frame, you will be able to easily locate them.

You can do this before steaming, but I have found that they are easier to locate with at least one steaming. Also, it's not a big deal to steam that small area after visiting the 'vacation' spots.

## Pre-Finishing

You wondered if you would ever get to this point, and now “more” work to do. Wasn't hooking that entire rug work enough?

Once the steaming is complete, holidays found and fuzz gone, you are now ready to whip, bind and/or frame your rug.

