



RIGID-HEDDLE RAG RUG

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Photos by George Boe unless otherwise noted

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Rag rugs on the rigid-heddle loom? Not only is it possible, you can use this technique to create bold and beautiful designs as in this rug.

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Rigid-heddle looms are not the most obvious choice for weaving a rag rug, but they can do the job if you plan ahead, use a single-ended tapestry beater, and take your time. (For more information, see Resources.) Weaving with fabric strips on a rigid-heddle takes a bit of extra time, but it is worth it.

MATERIALS

Type of Project: Rigid Heddle

STRUCTURE Plain weave log cabin.

EQUIPMENT Rigid-heddle loom, 25" weaving width; 8-dent heddle; 2 stick shuttles; single-ended tapestry beater; sewing needle and black thread; (optional) sewing machine.

YARNS Warp: 8/4 Cotton Carpet Warp (100% cotton; 1,600 yd/lb; Maysville), #83 Moody Blue, 352 yd; #3 Colonial Blue, 64 yd; #85 Dark Green, 288 yd; #2 Black, 32 yd. **Weft:** 8/4 Cotton Carpet Warp, #83 Moody Blue, 90 yd. Quilting fabric (100% cotton homespun), dark blue, 1½ yd; light blue check, ½ yd; dark green, ½ yd.

WARP LENGTH 184 doubled ends (368 total threads) 2 yd long (allows 10" for take-up, 28" for loom waste).

SETTS Warp: 8 epi (warp threads are used doubled). **Weft:** 2½ ppi for fabric; 10 ppi for carpet warp.

DIMENSIONS Width in the reed: 23".

Woven length (measured under tension on the loom): 34". **Finished size after washing and hemming:** 20" wide x 34" long with 1" hems.

PROJECT STEPS:

Weft fabric preparation

- 1 Wash the fabric in hot water and dry in hot dryer.
- 2 Iron the fabric and cut it into 1" strips across the width of the fabric.

- 3 Place the ends of two strips together at a right angle and sew diagonally across. Snip off the excess triangle. Sew all the same color strips together, making sure to keep the seams on the same side.

Rug

- 1 Set up your loom for direct warping a length of 72" following the warp color order in Figure 1. Note that all threads are used doubled. Center for a weaving width of 23" in an 8-dent heddle. Pull a loop through every hole and slot as you warp. Do not skip the holes. There will be 2 threads in each hole and slot.

- 2 Weave a header with scrap yarn to spread the warp.

TIPS

- Use a quilting fabric known as homespun. It is a woven fabric, rather than printed, so the pattern goes all the way through, making both sides of the fabric look the same with no real wrong side.
- Log cabin blocks stand out better when there is strong contrast between warp colors.
- Weaving with fabric strips takes up more warp length than usual, so be generous with the warp length.
- The fabric for rag rugs should be dense. Pack each pick in tightly. After each pick, press back with the heddle, change sheds, then use the tapestry beater all along the fell line to push each pick firmly down.

Figure 2. Weaving Order

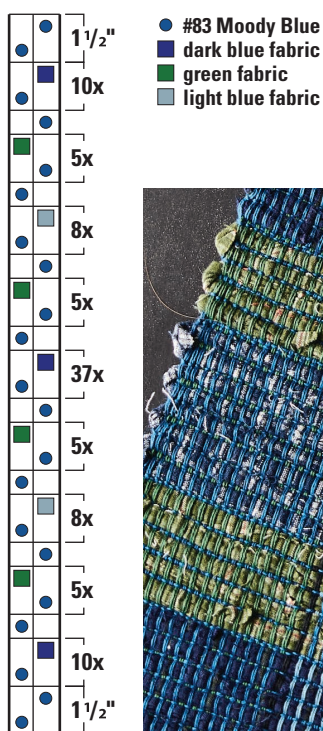


Figure 1. Warp Color Order

	16x	8x	40x	8x	16x	
88	1	1	1	1	1	#83 Moody Blue
16		1		1		#3 Colonial Blue
72	1		1		1	#85 Dark Green
8	2	2	2	2	2	#2 Black

184 ends, 368 total threads (all ends are doubled threads.)



3 Wind a shuttle with Moody Blue and another shuttle with dark blue fabric. Taper the tail of the fabric strip. Following the weaving order in Figure 2, using Moody Blue, weave 1½" for the hem. Start weaving the body of the rug with a pick of dark blue fabric, leaving the tail outside of the shed. Beat, open the same shed, and bring the tail of the fabric strip into the shed, wrapping it around the edge warp thread to secure it. Beat again before adding a pick of Moody Blue. Continue to weave picks of fabric followed by picks of Moody Blue throughout the length of the rug, adding a second pick of Moody Blue when switching fabric colors. Finish with 1½" Moody Blue for the hem.

4 Weave a few picks of scrap yarn.

5 Remove the rug from the loom. Zigzag along each hem end twice to lock in the weaving. Turn hems under twice and handstitch hem to rug.

6 Wash in warm water and dry in dryer on low. *

RESOURCES

Hall, Constance. "Rag Rugs & More on the Rigid-Heddle Loom." *Easy Weaving with Little Looms*, 2017, 66–68.