

Mix It Up Mug Rugs

LAURA LOUGH



Photos by Matt Graves

HANDWOVEN

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STRUCTURE

Plain weave.

EQUIPMENT

2- or 4-shaft loom,
5" weaving width;
12-dent reed; 1 shuttle;
1 rag shuttle.

YARNS

Warp: 8/4 cotton rug warp (1,600 yd/lb; Maysville),
Velvet, 140 yd.

Weft: 8/4 cotton rug warp, Velvet, 10 yd. Assorted
scrap yarns in any weight, color, and fiber.

Note: Laura selected a warp color that went well with
the stash yarns she wanted to use; pick a warp color
that coordinates with your chosen yarns.

WARP LENGTH

60 ends 2 $\frac{1}{3}$ yd long (includes floating selvages;
allows 2" for take-up, 22" for loom waste; loom waste
includes fringe).

SETTS

Warp: 12 epi (1/dent in a 12-dent reed).

Weft: about 3 ppi, depending on the thickness of
the chains.

DIMENSIONS

Width in the reed: 5".

Woven length: (measured under tension on the loom)
57" including 36" of interstitial fringe.

Finished size: (after wet-finishing and hemming)
four mug rugs, each 5" x 5" plus fringe or hem.

My stash is full of yarns without a purpose: all the odds and ends left over from completed projects, yarns bought on sale (but without a plan), and yarns in colors that looked better on the website. I designed this project to use even the smallest amounts of yarn in nearly any weight, fiber, or color. It's also easy to scale the project to create full-sized rugs using the same technique.

A specially made weft that uses any yarn in your stash makes this project unique. I prefer to use natural fibers in my work, and those fibers make up most of my stash. However, I have also used blends that include synthetics without a problem. When planning a project, I gather colors I like without much attention to weight or fiber content. For this project, I pulled out lots of blues, greens, and purples, trying to get a mix of light and dark shades. Even if my overall goal is rich, dark colors, I find that including some highlights makes the dark colors pop more. Colors that you might not like on their own often look great when toned down or brightened up by other colors.

After gathering the yarn, find a space where you can spread out—preferably away from kittens. Organize your colors in a pleasing pattern. I usually follow the rainbow order, which in the case of these mug rugs meant purple, blue, green, blue, purple on repeat. Put each color in its own section—it's fine if there is overlap.

Select about 6 strands of yarn from the first section of colors for a thick bundle. Use this bundle to work a daisy or crochet chain using your fingers, as you would chain a warp before beaming. The chain doesn't need to be tight but should be consistent and comfortable for your fingers to create. After about 12", choose a yarn strand to drop and pick up a strand from the next color section, overlapping the new





and old strands for a chain stitch or two before dropping the old one. Continue adding new strands to the bundle whenever an old one runs out and/or you desire a change. The resulting chain will gradually transition from one color section to the next. You can make the color changes as slow or fast as you want. Gradual color transitions will result in four mug rugs, each at a different place in the rainbow. Shorter transitions will result in more of the rainbow in each mug rug. Create at least 12 yards of chained weft, as each mug rug requires approximately 3 yards of chain.

A word about yarn weights: I often keep a variety of yarn weights and fibers in my bundle at all times. When I drop a thin strand, I'll replace it with another so the overall size and feel of the chain stay consistent. A bit of change in the thickness of your chain won't be a problem in the finished weaving and will add to the "scrappy" look—just don't let the chain vary so much that it no longer works with the sett of the project or makes the rug too lumpy to set a mug on!

Once the chain is finished, figure out how much can comfortably fit on your rag shuttle. Starting at the

beginning of the chain, wrap it onto a rag shuttle until the shuttle is full but not so thick that it won't fit through the loom's shed. Cut the chain and tie a knot at its beginning. Now, take the chain off the shuttle and measure it. Cut the rest of the daisy chain into sections that are the same length. While measuring and cutting the chain, tie a knot at the beginning of each section and keep the sections in order. If you won't be using them immediately, label them to keep track of the order. Wind the first section back onto the shuttle, starting with the knot, and begin weaving with the unknotted end. Repeat with the other chains in order.

1 Wind a warp of 60 ends $2\frac{1}{3}$ yd long. Warp the loom for plain weave using your preferred method. Centering for a weaving width of 5", sley 1 per dent in a 12-dent reed.

2 Wind a bobbin with cotton rug warp. Leaving at least 6" of unwoven warp for fringe, spread the warp with scrap yarn.

3 Leaving a 20" tail for hemstitching, weave 5 picks of plain weave with cotton rug warp. Use the tail to hemstitch in groups of 4 warp ends.

4 Ravel 1"–2" of weft chain and trim the threads to various lengths to form a taper. Begin weaving with this taper sticking out from the selvedge. On the second pass, tuck in the taper to secure the ends. Repeat this method to start

or finish a section, or overlap tapered ends to join a new weft chain.

5 Continue weaving in plain weave with weft chains for 5", not including the picks of cotton rug warp.

6 End with 5 picks of cotton rug warp and hemstitch as you did at the beginning.

7 Leaving 12" of unwoven warp for fringe, advance the warp and insert scrap yarn or warp-spreading sticks. Repeat from Step 3 three more times. See Finishing Tips.

8 Remove the mug rugs from the loom. Cut them apart, leaving about 6" of fringe on each end. For knotted fringe, tie bundles of 4 warp ends in overhand knots or use an alternative finish (see Finishing Tips). Trim fringe to 1". For braided fringe, braid in bundles of 6 warp ends (3 pairs). Trim fringe to 1½". Wet-finish in warm water by gently agitating and soaking. Lay flat to dry. 

A lifelong fiber artist, LAURA LOUGH now carves out small pockets of time to weave while caring for three young children. Find her on Instagram as @My_Other_Creative_Side.

Finishing Tips

Laura finished her mug rugs with simple knotted fringe bundles and braids, but they can also be finished with twisted fringe, knotted/macramé fringe, or folded hems.

- For folded hems, increase the thin cotton sections at the start and end of each mug rug to at least 1". If you do not want to hemstitch on the loom, you can
- machine zigzag, whipstitch, or apply fabric glue to secure the weft. Cut mug rugs apart. Turn hems under twice and sew in place. **Note:** Skip the 12" unwoven gaps in Step 7 if you are using folded hems.
- Prepare twisted fringe using bundles of 4 warp ends. Trim fringe to 1½".

