Repairing Hooked Rugs

A well-made hand-hooked rug can last for generations. But let's face it, if you put a rug on the floor, it's going to get stained, snagged, dull and worn on the edges. Fortunately, most of this damage can be undone and repaired.

The most common problem is the occasional loop that gets pulled out. If the material or yarn is still there, it may be possible to just re-hook it.





Another common wear and tear issue is worn edges. This is usually due to an old rug being finished with a simple turned-under hem, rather than binding the edge. Over time, the backing fabric can become brittle along the foldline and unravel. Any time the backing fabric becomes damaged, the problem continues to progress. The loops may seem to hold things together for a while, but the damage continues in slow motion unless something is done to stop it. The only thing that will stop a hole from spreading is to unhook until you get to healthy backing, sew in a patch, and rehook through both layers.



You might assume a rug like this is a goner. There's nothing left of the hem, the burlap has worn away, along with the fabric strips.

The first thing to do is to unhook the edges, to get to solid backing. You may or may not be able to rehook the original material. You can match the colors and bring in new material. In this case, the original material was hookable, just a bit brighter than the rest of the rug. To blend in the subtle color change, I unhooked some of the rows in the center and rehooked with the brighter stuff. It seemed to work with the impressionist style of the design.



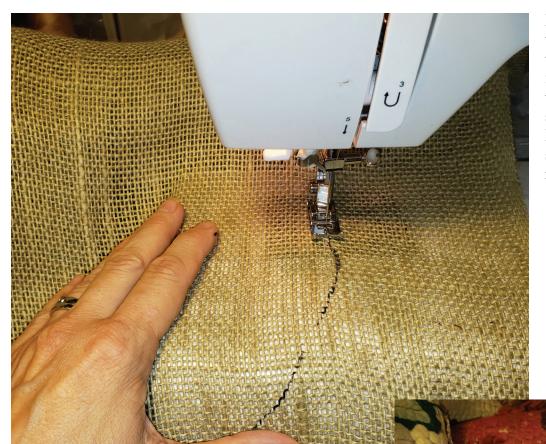
Making a patch:

Once I had unhooked to healthy backing, I needed to create a patch. The original backing material for this rug was burlap, so that's what I used to make the patch. Of course, you could use linen or rug warp, but considering that the rest of the rug was hooked on burlap, brand-new burlap with a bound edge would hold up better than the rest of the rug. Also, if I had used linen or cotton for the patch, it would show on the hem, which could be misleading (making people think the whole rug was hooked on linen, which would affect it's value, kind of like false advertising).



I like to use a whole piece of backing for the patch, rather than strips along the edge. This way, I avoid having extra bulk in the hem, and I can bind the edge in the normal way (left).

I pinned the burlap to the back of the rug, then marked along the pin line with a Sharpie pen (below).



I need to be able to cut the center section out of the patch. First, I reinforce the Sharpie line with a zig-zag on my sewing machine. Then I cut out the center and sew the patch into the rug.

With a small rug like this one, I like to reinforce the raw edge of the original backing with a zig-zag stitch. If the rug is very large or fragile, I might not want to manhandle it through the machine. I would just carefully hand sew it to the patch.



Sewing in the patch (view from the back).



Sewing in the patch (view from the front).



Here's what the sewn-in patch looked like, viewed from the back. With plenty of extra on the sides, I was able to mark a new edge on the front and rehook the original strips.

Then I bound the edge (wrapping the backing around a cord, whip stitching around the cord) and did a normal hem.



As you can see, practically anything that happens to a rug can be repaired, giving the rug many more years of use.

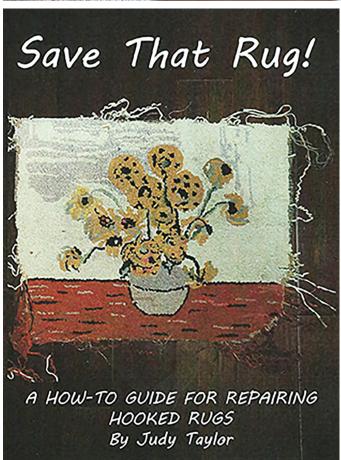


With dozens of repair projects, and hundreds of detailed photos, you can learn a lot more about rug repair, cleaning, replacing stains, matching colors and even finishing other people's unfinished projects in my book, *Save That Rug!*

Deanna David (Ribbon Candy Rug Hooking) said of the book: "The Rosetta Stone for fixing rugs... an 'out of the park' book... most timely, up to date, thorough, intelligent and easy to absorb..."



You can watch the entire review on her podcast, Coffee Time on Facebook! (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGbVx1E_gzA) Many thanks to Deanna for that glowing review!



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