

# Hook a Flock of Sheep

## Rug hooking basics

BY JUDY TAYLOR

**U**SE YOUR HANDSPUN yarn and a rug hook to create these charming sheep for your Christmas tree. This simple project is a great way to learn the basics of rug hooking—the techniques are the same as those used for making a floor rug.

I start by drawing oval shapes on the middle of a piece of burlap, leaving about 15 inches of fabric on each side to wrap around my legs. Draw several ovals with at least 2 inches in between, but keep them centered and allow enough fabric on the sides to wrap around your legs as you are hooking. The ovals are about 1½ inches wide and 2½ inches tall, with a funny face drawn in the middle.

### Basic rug hooking

Sit with your knees comfortably apart. Place the burlap over your lap, design side up, and tuck it around the outside of your legs. Keep the fabric taut while you are working. Take the yarn in your left hand (if you are right-handed) and put it under the burlap. Take the hook in your right hand above the burlap and put it through where you want to begin. Connect the end of the yarn to the hook with your left hand and pull the end through to the top of the burlap. You will leave that tail end sticking up for the time being.

Judy Taylor designed these sheep ornaments using basic rug hooking techniques with hand-spun yarn.

Next, push your hook into the burlap close to the end of yarn sticking up (skip one or two threads in the burlap). Let your left hand slide down the yarn a couple of inches and lift it up to connect it to the hook. Keep pulling down gently but firmly on the yarn with your left hand once the yarn is connected so it stays on the hook as you are pulling it through to the top of the burlap. You need some extra slack in the yarn as you are pulling up the loop so you don't pull out the yarn or loops that you have already made. When you have connected the slack yarn to the hook, continue giving downward pressure to keep the yarn on the hook. Once you have pulled the yarn through to the top, you can let go with your left hand and feel the back of the rug to make sure you are pulling the yarn up snugly to the back of the burlap. As soon as you feel the yarn pull snugly across the back, you can stop pulling up on it. Then use your left hand to pull the yarn down so

### Project Notes

**Finished size:** 1½" wide and 2½" tall.

**Fiber:** I like to use long wools, such as Lincoln, Romney, Navajo Churro, Border Leicester, and Cotswold, as well as adult mohair blended with wool.

**Yarn:** Small amounts of handspun yarn in light and dark colors. The best yarn for hooking is a bit on the bulky side—a balanced two-ply yarn that is worsted weight or thicker

and measures between 8 and 12 wraps per inch. My handspun yarn is thick and thin (I like the texture it adds to my rugs); when I come to a thin section, I make my loops closer together.

**Hook:** A rug hook is basically a truncated crochet hook mounted in a wooden handle so you can hold it in your fist. Check out the suppliers at the end of this article or search the

web for rug hooking companies. The coarse hook works best for this style of rug hooking.

### SUPPLIES

36" square of burlap	Pipe cleaners
Permanent marker	4" square of wool felt
Scissors	Needle and thread
Decorative yarn or ribbon	Hot glue gun and glue



1. Push hook through burlap and hook yarn. 2a. Give yourself extra yarn to work with. 2b. If you don't give yourself extra yarn to work with, you'll pull out the previous loop. 3. When you feel this loop pull tight, stop pulling with your hook. 4. Pull remaining yarn down until loop is the desired height.

the loop is about ¼-inch tall.

Push in your hook again and let your left hand slide down the yarn in the back. Lift up the yarn to the hook, pulling down gently with your left hand to keep the yarn on the hook. After you have pulled the yarn through to the top, let go with your left hand. Gently pull the yarn up with your right hand, feeling with your left hand to make sure it pulls up snugly to the back. Then use your left hand to pull the yarn down until the loop is the desired height.

### Deciding how far apart to place your loops

Here's a good rule of thumb: The loops should be close enough that you can't see the backing from the front, but not so close that the piece won't lie flat. Basically, the yarn needs room to spread out (that is part of what holds the loops in place) so, for most worsted-weight or thicker yarn, a loop every other hole in the burlap should give the loops room to spread out but still cover all the backing.

When you come to the end of a section and want to stop hooking with that length of yarn, push in your hook and bring up a loop just as if you were

going to continue, only this time cut the yarn from the top and pull the extra yarn out, so you are left with a 1-inch tail sticking up, as when you began. These tails have to remain sticking up until they are surrounded by loops. Then, you simply cut them off so they are even with the surrounding loops.

### Troubleshooting

The two most common problems people encounter when they start rug hooking are splitting the yarn on the hook (grabbing only one ply instead of the whole yarn), and pulling out the last loop when they're pulling up the next one. To avoid splitting the yarn on the hook, remember to exert firm downward pressure on the yarn with your left hand so it stays on the hook until you have pulled it through to the front. To avoid pulling out the last loop when you pull the next one through to the front, remember to slide the yarn down before you connect it to the hook so you have a couple of inches of extra yarn that you can pull up on without disturbing the last loop. Then, when you are pulling up, feel with your left hand so you know when you have pulled the yarn tight in the back. In

### Rug Hooking Resources

Edelal Farm, (253) 939-1350,

[www.onlinerughooking.com](http://www.onlinerughooking.com),

Halcyon Yarn, (800) 341-0282,

[www.halcyonyarn.com](http://www.halcyonyarn.com),

Underhill Farm, (978) 363-2485,

W. Cushing & Co., (800) 626-7847,

[www.wcushing.com](http://www.wcushing.com).

this way you know to stop pulling up without pulling out the last loop.

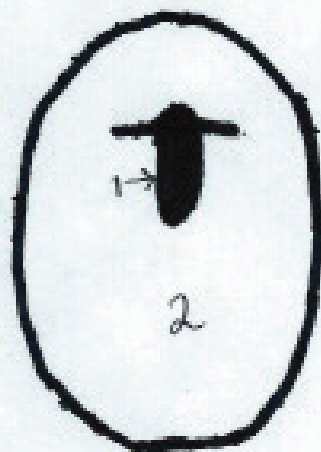
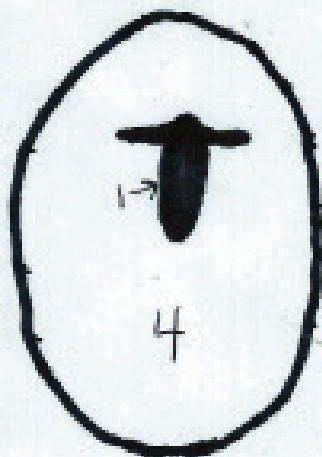
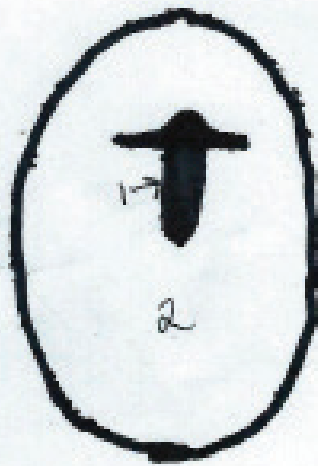
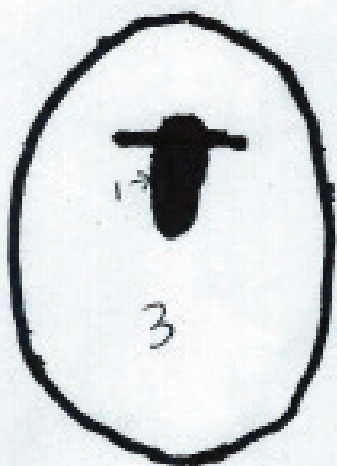
### Finishing your ornament

Once you have hooked the sheep, cut them out of the burlap, leaving at least a 1-inch seam allowance all the way around each sheep. With a needle and thread, tack the burlap to the back, close to the hooked edge. Trim away as much of the excess burlap as you can so it won't cause bulk in the back. Sew a decorative thread or ribbon loop to the top. Next cut a 3-inch piece of pipe cleaner and fold it in the middle. With hot glue, glue the folded end to the back of the ornament in the center so the pipe cleaner legs stick out about 1 inch. Then use the hot glue to glue the piece of felt to the back of the ornament. When the glue cools, trim away the excess felt around the edges. ✦

JUDY TAYLOR raises Jacob sheep and Angora goats on Edelal Farm in the Green River Valley in Washington State. A handspinner and a rug hooker, Judy wrote *Hooking with Yarn*, published by Rug Hooking Magazine in 2003.



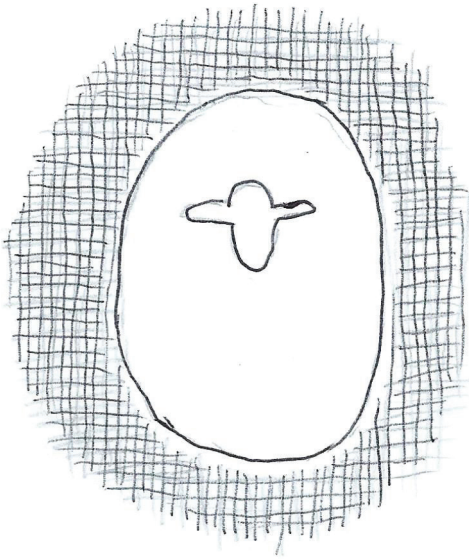
Left: Clip the end of the yarn so it's even with the rest of the loops after you've finished hooking. Right: A worsted-to-bulky weight yarn works best for rug hooking. The hook is like a truncated crochet hook with a large wooden handle. Draw a simple design on the burlap with the permanent marker, and then pull loops of handspun yarn through the burlap to create a design.



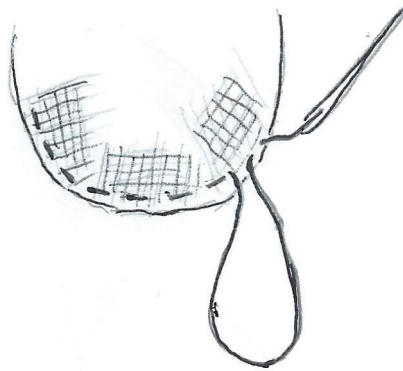
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- 1- black
- 2- white
- 3- lt. brown
- 4- gray

# Assembly Instructions



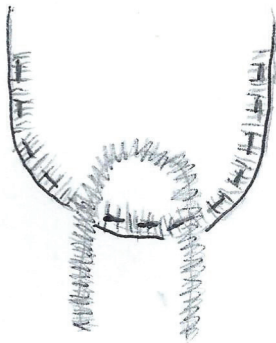
Step 1:  
Trim around the hooked sheep,  
leaving at least 3/4" selvedge.



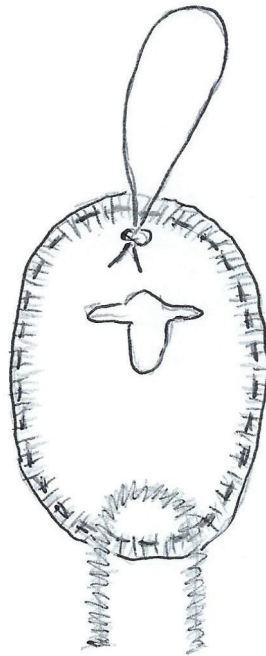
Step 2:  
With a needle and thread, sew  
down the selvedge, close to the  
hooked edge.



Step 3:  
Trim away excess selvedge,  
close to the stitching line.



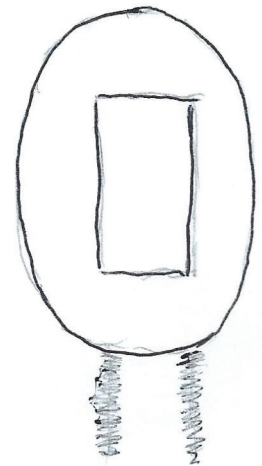
Step 4:  
Sew or hot glue a bended pipe  
cleaner to the back.



Step 5:  
Tie a knot in the ribbon,  
and sew or hot glue it to  
the back.



Step 6:  
Sew or hot glue the  
felt to the back,  
trimming away the  
excess.



Step 7:  
If you prefer to make  
a magnet, skip Step  
5. Remove the tape  
from the magnet, and  
hot glue the sticky  
side of the magnet to  
the felt backing.

\*For personal use