

# Instruction Sheet 1: How to weave a circular rag rug



## Materials

- circular loom
- fabric of one colour, torn into 4cm (1.5 inch) strips
- scissors

## Terminology

**loom** – the structure you use to weave on

**warp** – the strands that attach to either side of the loom and hold the tension of your weaving (with this technique, the warp strands look like the spokes of a bicycle wheel)

**spoke** – our term for the half-length warp strand from the centre to where it attaches to the loom, as well as the additional strands you add as you go along.

**weaver/s** – the fabric strips you weave with – in this technique, we use two weavers that cross each other.

This is a very forgiving technique. Don't worry if you aren't 100% sure about what you're doing, or make a mistake. Everyone's in that boat! Just keep going and your rug will turn out beautifully. All measurements are rough guidelines. It's absolutely fine if yours are slightly different.

## PREPARATION

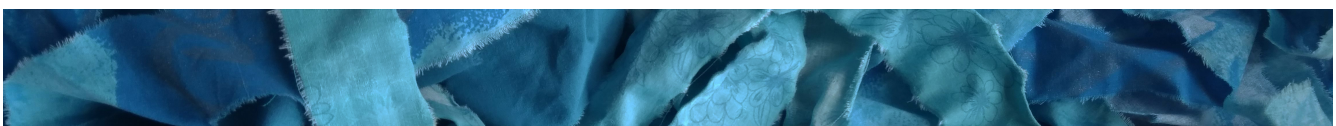
### 1. Find or make a loom

Any sturdy hoop will do for your loom. It can be an old hula hoop, large metal ring or one you've made from strong poly pipe (we've found 20mm blue line poly pipe to be ideal). See Instruction Sheet 2 'How to make a loom' for instructions.

### 2. Prepare your fabrics

Depending on the size of the finished rug, you may need a kilo or more of fabric torn into 4cm (1.5 inch) strips. You don't have to have it all torn up in order to begin, but it's a good idea to have a good bundle to start with. Old bed sheets and doona covers are perfect, as they are readily available from op shops, easy to tear and give you nice long strips, however most fabrics of a similar weight (except for very stretchy fabrics) are fine to use. Please try to use 100% cotton.

It's best to remove folded-over seams, as well as ruffles, button closures and elastic in fitted sheets so that your torn strips are as even and 'clean' as possible. On that note, you'll find that as you tear the fabric, threads come loose from the frayed edges. It's worth your while to clean these off as you go, otherwise they end up in a giant mess.



### 3. Add warps (spokes) to your loom

In this weaving technique, the warps are strung like the spokes of a bicycle wheel. For ease of explaining, we'll call them 'warps' when they stretch the full diameter of the loom and 'spokes' when we refer to them as they radiate from the centre.

For the warps, you'll need to tear some of your strips in half, as they need to be about 2cm wide. Choose strong fabric that is not threadbare, as the warps will form the structure of your rug. To start your rug you need eight to sixteen long strips, depending on the size of your loom. Each strip needs to be about 20-30cm longer than double the diameter of your loom.

Wrap one end of the warp, near the middle, twice around the thin edge of the loom – this gives you extra length for the fringes when you cut the rug off the loom and also helps the warp stay in place on the loom. Then loop one of the free ends of the warp twice around the opposite side of the loom, and tie it to the other free end with a bow or double knot, allowing a generous length of material after the knot. The fringes of a finished rug should be around 15cm, allowing us to tie the rugs to one another.

The loom should look like this. Yours will be all one colour warp, but we've done this one in two colours to make it clearer as we go through the instructions.



## STARTING OFF

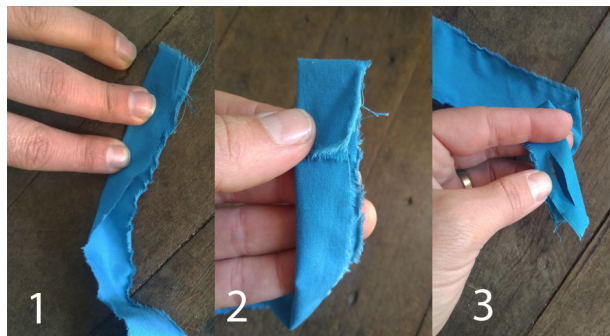
### 4. Join two strips of fabric

This is the same technique you'll use to join two strips of fabric when you come to the end of one and need to add a new one. Tear your fabric in half lengthwise, (this is just for the centre, so this part of the rug isn't too bulky – later you'll use your wider strips). Choose strips that are of slightly unequal length (so you aren't joining new strips at the same time).

Fold over the last 4cm/1.5 inches of the first strip and make a snip in the folded end (1). Do the same with the second one. Unfold them and lay them one over the other so the openings line up and the 'tails' face in opposite directions (2). Bring the tail of the top piece up and through from below (3). Gently pull it all the way through to make a clean join (4, 5). Sometimes you need to help it a bit in the final stage, but it doesn't matter if it's not neat, as long as it holds!



Note: When it comes time to join full-width strips, fold the end of each strip lengthwise first (1) (effectively making it half-width), then fold up the end (2) and continuing as usual (3). This leaves you with a neater join.

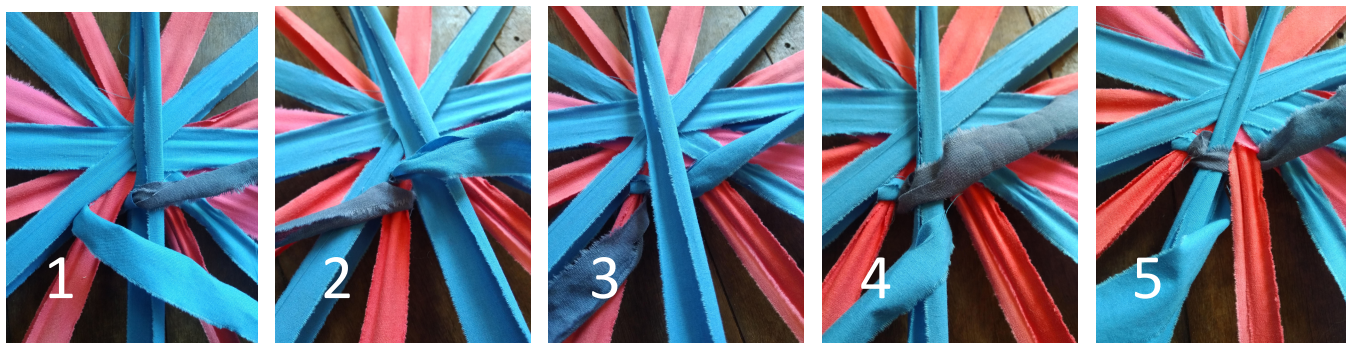


## 5. Weave the centre

To start, pass your fabric around both strands of a spoke (to start with, we're going to treat the two strands of each spoke as one) and place the join of the two strips just behind the spoke (1). Cross the two weavers so that the tails face opposite directions (2). Bring the top weaver (turquoise) under both strands of the spoke to the right (also turquoise) (3). Swap the places of the two weavers so the blue strip is now the top weaver (4). Bring the top weaver (blue) under the (pink) spoke to the right (5). Repeat 4 and 5. The first full circle looks like (6). We've used two different colours here to show you the process more easily, but you'll use the same colour for the warp and both the weavers.

We suggest weaving the first 4cm (2 inches) using narrower strips and then add full-width strips as your weavers run out (7).

We recommend you watch the video tutorial on how to weave the centre.



## WORKING THE MIDDLE

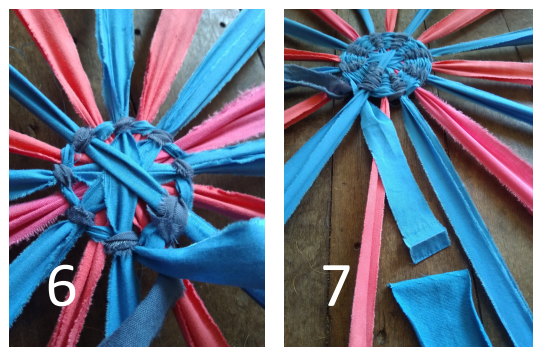
### 6. Separate the spokes

After you've woven about 5–6cm from the centre (2.5 inches), you can separate the spokes, treating the two strands of each spoke as two rather than one.

The technique stays exactly the same. You'll notice that this doubles the number of warps, which makes the weave of the rug stay nice and tight, and therefore strong.

### 7. Keep going

You've now learned nearly all the skills needed to make your rug and can keep on weaving until the rug is about dinner plate size. Then, the next thing to do is to add more spokes.



## 8. Add more spokes

The more you weave, the further apart your spokes get. Depending on the diameter of your rug, you will need to add a round of spokes once, twice or a few times. The rule of thumb is that once the spokes are more than about 5cm (2 inches) apart you need to add more spokes. For the first round of additional spokes, add a new spoke in every second major gap (here shown in yellow) = eight new spokes.

To add a new spoke, take a half-width strip of fabric and feed its tail through the rug about four rows back (1). Weave both ends of the fabric alternating over and under those four rows to disguise the new spoke (2) then tie it to the loom in a bow or double knot (3). You're now ready to keep going (4).



Keep weaving as normal, treating the new spokes as two strands from the outset. You can adjust the spokes a bit to make all the spaces more or less equal between them.

After a while, when the distance again grows to about 5cm (2 inches) between spokes add another round of spokes in the same way.

## An alternative to adding more spokes

An alternative to adding more spokes is to start by having more warps at the beginning. If you do this, you pass the weaver around four strands of spoke (two warps) at the centre, then gradually separate to pass the weaver around two strands of spoke (one warp), and then gradually you separate the spokes, treating each spoke as one.

## 9. Finish and tie off your rug

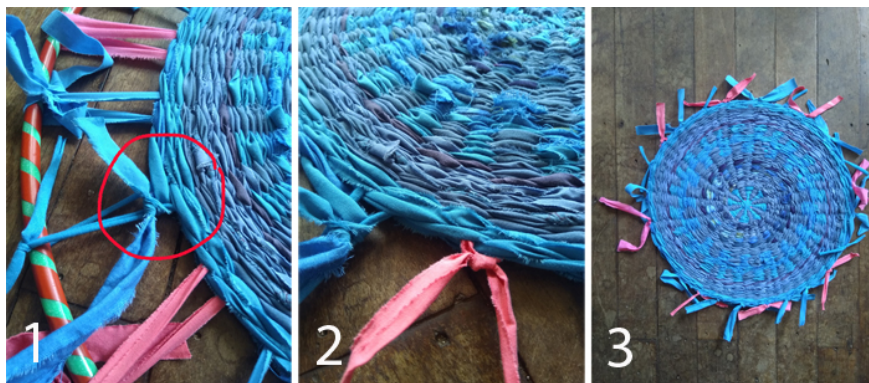
You can finish your rug at any point, but we would love you to make it as large as you can. However, you do need to finish by the time you're around 2.5cm (1 inch) away from the loom

at the narrowest point. This relies on you having left long fringes on both sides of the loom. If you didn't leave long fringes, you'll need to tie off around 7cm (2 inches) from the loom.

To finish off, **gently** tie your two weavers in a double knot around a spoke (1) and weave in the ends. Then cut or untie the next double spoke as close to the loom as you can. Tie the two ends **gently** into a double

knot at the edge of the rug (2) (if you pull these knots too tightly you'll end up with a bowl-shaped rug). Continue this process until the whole rug is off the loom (3).

Congratulations! You're done!



### Some important notes

**Tension** – If you're anything like us, and have a tendency to pull things a bit tight, let this be an opportunity to hang loose, Mother Goose. A tightly-woven rug is more likely to come off the loom as a bowl, rather than flat. This isn't the end of the world, but ideally, keep your weaving gently firm, rather than tight. You'll get the feel for it.

**Colour** – When you're choosing your fabrics, keep in mind that the finished artwork will be viewed from above and each section needs look like a single, uniform colour so it can form part of a larger design. So please use a single colour for your whole rug – warps and weavers! Rather than think 'I'm sick of this colour,' consider it as a colour meditation!



Thank you so much for taking the time to make a rug and sharing it with us for the Reclaim the Void project. We would love to know the story of your rug: what it means to you, any special materials you used in it, or why you were interested in the project. Please share your story using the 'share your rug story' form on the website.

Stay in touch with project via our website: [www.reclaimthevoid.com.au](http://www.reclaimthevoid.com.au) or on Instagram and Facebook #reclaimthevoid