

Peg Looming

Contributed by Ginkotree

Since the Wool weekend in Wales, peg looming seems to have really caught the spirit of Downsizing and everyone wants to have a go. Quite a few Downsizers will keep rare breed sheep and have had the sad story that the wool marketing board are not interested in the coloured fleeces or you produce so few that the returns are simply demoralizing. It can cost more to shear the sheep than the money you get for a fleece. In a time where the cost of feed is rising and tough decisions are having to be made about our flocks it makes sense to try and get the most out of all our produce. This craft will certainly get more fleeces used and possibly save a sheep or two.

Wool crafts often look more complicated than they really are. Spinning is difficult until you finally get the Ah Ha! moment, and it all works but peg looming is really for everyone.

I am delighted that this craft is catching on and hope it continues to grow. I feel to help the awareness of the value of our country side and it's products, the more people who have a peg loom rug to warm their toes, the better. Rugs are not the only use, I have made seat covers, wooden chairs can be a bit harsh on bony behinds and as wool is especially warm, car seat and push chair seat covers are good too. My son uses a roll mat to lie on for camping as wool is good insulation. My friend has made slippers. Spun wool can be used to make finer weave and can be made into heavy duty bags. I am sure you will all think of your own uses for peg loomed articles once you get going.

The Ingredients

Warp thread. Don't panic, I am not getting all technical here. You need a woven fibre of some kind to weave the fleece through. We used string and you will need a lot of this.

Weft thread. This is the stuff you actually weave with and you can use a wide variety of different fibres. In the photos we have used raw fleece. You can wash it if you get a bit fed of bits of meadow and worse all over your floor. The edges can look neater if you use spun wool for the first half centimetre of weave at the beginning. It gives a defined edge to your work.

The peg loom. The length and size of pegs you use is reflected in the finished product. The loom in the photographs is a good size to use to make the chunky rugs, bags and seat covers using unspun fleece.

You will need scissors and a bit of wire or unbent paperclip can help when you are threading the string through the holes in the peg loom at the beginning.

A carpet hook or bodkin can be useful for tidying the strings at the end. But that's it really.

The Technique

The pegs act as a rigid part of the string and the fleece is woven in and out of them. After you have woven backwards and forwards onto the pegs for a few rows the woven part is then slid, a bit at a time, onto the strings. (Don't panic, there are photos showing this further on in these instructions.) You work at one end and slowly slide the weave down to the other end.

To Start

These instructions are for working with double string weaving.

Decide on how long you want your finished weave to be and cut your string to double this length plus a bit extra so that you have room at the end to knot and tidy.

The width of the finished weave is reflected in the number of pegs you use.

Thread up your pegs in twos. Feed the string into the hole in one peg and then into the peg next to it. (Here's where the unbent paperclip can come in handy.) Pull the string through so that the cut ends are together.

The strings are very short in this photo, yours will be much longer. But this is what your double threading will look like.

Thread each pair of pegs until you have the width that you want.

Now there is no avoiding it, you have to now start weaving.

You can begin with your ready spun yarn which will give a neat edge. Start weaving it in and out along the length of the pegs. When you have done this backwards and forwards for several rows you can begin with the fleece. Twist it into and begin replacing the spun yarn.

I use raw fleece before it has been washed as I like the lanolin in the wool as it seems to help when pulling the wool to be twisted. I also like the fact that the fleece stays laying in line along its staple and is easier to pull out so that it lies along itself.

This is where it does start to feel like it is getting tricky but don't give up, it is a technique that can be quickly mastered. What you do with the fleece is pull out lengths of wool and twist it yourself, as if you were spinning it. As you twist and the length of yarn you have grows, continue to weave the twisted wool between the pegs. Remember to go round the outside of the end pegs to keep the width and ensure you are alternating the weave, that is, if it goes outside the peg in one direction, it should go inside it on the way back in the other direction.

The thickness of the rug is determined by the amount of wool you pull out for the twist. If you twist less, you can leave tufts of wool that get felted in the rug over time or you can put a tight twist in.

As you get to the end of the piece of wool you are twisting join another length into it by overlapping the ends of the length and continuing to twist the new one in. Always twist in the same direction.

This sounds more complicated than it actually is. It does not take long to get the feel of the kind of twist you need and to develop a rhythm while you do this.

Fancy bits or different colours can be laid in the weave to be more creative.

Here is the weave building up on the pegs (and you can see here that this would make a very narrow something or other...)

When you have built up a few rows, you pull the first pair of pegs out of their holes and gently slide the twisted fleece down the strings a little way. Replace the pegs back into the holes and do the same with the next pair of pegs. Work all the way along the loom and you will start to see your piece of weaving growing. The work builds up down the strings which lie on the table behind the loom.

Double string pull through.

The work grows onto the table with the strings hanging down in front of the loom.

Continue weaving until you come to the size of rug you want and now you need to secure the other end.

To do this tie the first three strings together.

Then all the middle ones in twos and then three together at the other end. For the double one you have to cut the pegs off the string.

To neaten up the ends use a carpet hook or large needle to pull the string through.

Push the hook into the rug from behind the end of the weave.

Catch the string in the hook

Pull it back through the rug

All neat, but you could be fancy and make tassels!

I am lucky in that I have a spring so I have a plentiful supply of water to soak and wash the rug as it can take several rinses but picking through the fleece as you go uses the nicest of fleece, although it is good to use the bits of fleece that is not so good to spin with. Drip dry for a while and again, I am lucky as I have a conservatory to dry it in. The quicker you dry it the better. Wash the fleece first if you want as it dries quicker as fluff and also makes it a cleaner craft for children and a tidier home.

Now all you need is to gather your things together and get started.

Enjoy, everyone is going to love receiving Birthday and Christmas pressies now from you now, no more jumpies that don't fit!

Single String Pegloomng

The warp thread can be put through just one peg at a time. This saves on string and as one end is secure there is less neatening to do at the finish.

The process is very similar but when you have built up a few rows of weave the peg is taken out and the string pulled through.

When your work is the correct length, pull all the pegs off the string and tie all the strings together in twos.