

Retro Rug

BY JO CALVERT

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NINA TEIXEIRA

Old wool blankets – especially those with the odd moth hole or mark that won't wash out – are bargain buys at flea markets. Cushy but durable, and available in a rainbow of solids and plaids, these blankets make the perfect materials for “penny rugs.”

Reminiscent of retro-'70s designs, the concentric circles of contrasting colours – in eye-popping arrangements of straight rows, alternating rows, diamond shapes or even flowers – belie this craft's true age. The appliquéd rugs made their appearance about two centuries ago. Backed with burlap or linen, they became bedcoverings, chair pads, scatter mats and table runners – and they're just as versatile and hardworking today. Coins – used as pattern pieces for the circles – have earned them the “penny” nickname.



YOU NEED:

Clean wool blankets or scraps of boiled or felted wool fabric

Matching or contrasting heavy-duty thread (if making floor mat)

Crochet cotton, fine yarn or embroidery floss (if making decorative mat)

Basting thread

Yard stick and set square

Coins or jar lids of desired circle sizes (to trace around)

Soft lead pencil or dressmaker's chalk pencil



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- Suggested story concept
- Designed and produced models for photography
- Researched and wrote story and instructions



TO MAKE:

1 Determine desired size of rug; add 8 cm (3 1/8 in) to each dimension for total width and length. With pencil, yard stick and set square, mark rug having total width and length on 1 blanket; cut out, approx 1 cm (3/8 in) outside line. With basting thread, sew vertical- and horizontal-centre lines, then sew lines between diagonally opposite corners, to use as guidelines when placing appliqué.

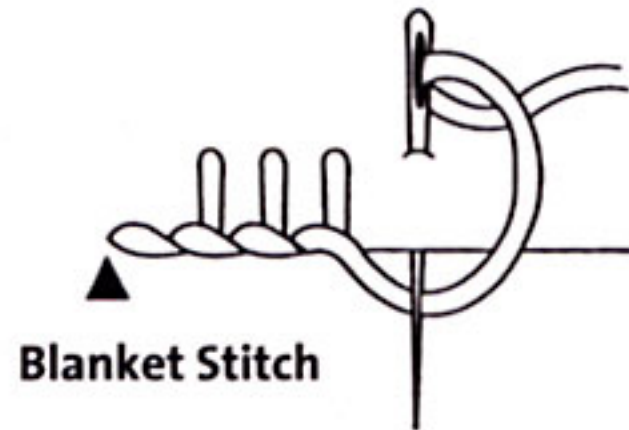
2 With pencil, trace around coins or lids to mark circles of desired number, colours and sizes onto contrasting blanket(s); cut out.

3 With heavy-duty thread or crochet cotton, blanket-stitch 1 small centred circle to each circle of next size up, beginning and ending stitching with secure knot on wrong side of work. If using 3 circles for each appliqué, blanket-

stitch each pair of sewn circles to 1 circle of next size up.

4 Placing at least 4 cm (1 5/8 in) inside marked line, arrange appliquéd circles as desired on rug; pin or baste in place, then blanket-stitch to rug. Remove all basting.

5 Trim rug along marked line. Turn up 2 cm (3/4 in) around edge, mitring at corners, and pin; blanket-stitch in place to bind edge (or, if desired, bind only long edges, then cut scalloped or zigzag "fringe" along each short edge).



DESIGNER'S TIPS

- Save mint-condition vintage blankets for the bed; those with marks or holes are better buys, and you can simply cut around the bad bits.

- As well as blanket stitch, other embroidery stitches – such as feather or herringbone stitch – can be used for both appliqué and decorative stitching.

- If you prefer to machine-stitch, use a wide machine zigzag, beginning and

ending stitching by pulling thread ends through to wrong side of work and securing with overhand knot.

- Before determining your final design, experiment with contrasting and matching thread, or try incorporating simple shapes, such as squares or triangles, into your appliqué.

- If using rug as floor mat, place on piece of nonslip underlay.

