

Make Your Own Braided T-Shirt Rug

Do you have a stash of old t-shirts you no longer wear? Try upcycling them into a beautiful rug, no sewing required. This activity is a bit time consuming, so it's great to pair with watching television or listening to music, a podcast, or audiobook.



Supplies

- T-shirts that you are willing to cut up (6-8 adult shirts for a 2-foot diameter rug)
- Scissors

Instructions

Designing Your Rug

Before starting, think about what you'd like your finished rug to look like. You may want to use different shades of one color, the colors of your school or favorite sports team, or a whole rainbow of colors. Neutral colors, like black and white, can help other colors stand out and tie your overall design together. Think about whether you want to use several strands of the same color to make solid stripes, blend colors together to make complex patterns, or do some of each.



Making T-Shirt Yarn

After you decide what colors you'll need and gather your shirts, you're ready to start making t-shirt yarn. You can cut all of your strips at once or switch between making yarn and braiding. Start with at least three to four strands of each color.

- Cut off the bottom hem and sleeves of the t-shirt and discard them or set them aside for another project.
- Place the t-shirt on a flat surface and begin cutting through both layers, from side to side, to create a loop of fabric.
- Remember, designs or writing on the shirt may be visible in your rug. If you don't want that, consider cutting out any printed sections and reserving them for other projects.
- Stretch the loops so that the edges begin to curl.
- Snip the loops to create long strands.

Braiding the Rug

- Choose three strands of t-shirt yarn and loosely tie them together, leaving 3-4 inches above the knot. If necessary, trim some of the strips so they are not all the same length— this will make it easier to extend the yarn later.
- Braid the three strands together until you have 6-8 inches.
- Wrap the braided part around itself, creating a flat circle with the knot underneath. For the portions that are not yet braided, take the strand closest to the braided portion and pull it all the way up from under the closest loop of the braid. Tug it so that there is no gap between the braided portion and the three strands.

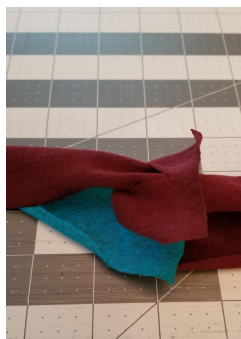


- Now braid the strand that is furthest away over the middle strand under the strand that was looped into the braid, and up through the next loop in the braid, keeping the whole braid flat, so you are creating a circular disk shape.
- After repeating a few times, instead of pulling the strand up through the **next** loop, consider pulling it through the **same** one you just used. This will help to maintain the shape of your rug as the diameter increases. As you braid, if you notice that it feels like it is a stretch to reach to the next loop, use the same one you did before.
- Repeat until your rug is the size you'd like. When you reach the end of any strand, follow the instructions in the next section to extend your yarn.
- If you're confused by any of these steps, check out one of the tutorial videos at the end.

Extending Your Yarn

Eventually, you will reach the end of the strips you're braiding. To continue, you can join another strand to your current strand.

- Select the strand you'd like to join. Cut small slits, slightly longer than the width of your yarn, in both the old and new strands. These slits should be around half an inch from the end of the strand.
- Pull the head end of the new strand into the slit in the old strand.
- Take the tail end of the new strand and pull it through the slit near the head end of that same strand.
- Pull the entire length of the new strand through and pull it tight. This should form a knot connecting the two strands. If you'd like to make the knot neater, you can trim the ends of the strands. Just be careful not to get too close to the slits!



Finishing the Rug

When your rug is the size you'd like, you're ready to finish it.

- Cut the three remaining strands (the ones you have been braiding) to 4-6 inches long. Flip the rug over and weave the strands into the rug.
- Undo the knot at the center of the rug and weave the ends in, pulling tightly to close any gap left from the knot.

Additional Resources

- This video shows how to make the t-shirt yarn, as well as another project that you can make with any leftover t-shirt yarn: <https://bit.ly/2YtHk0M>
- This video tutorial shows an example of extending the t-shirt yarn by joining two strands: <https://bit.ly/2YwLRj3>
- This video tutorial shows the entire process of making a rug from start to finish: <https://bit.ly/3aQCAqS>