



A Rug to Run From

**Be careful with this one.
It can cause all kinds of problems.**



By Lisa Wagner

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For the past decade, the quick advice for consumers on how to know a "better" quality wool pile rug over a mediocre one has been to look at the back. If the back clearly shows the design and knots, then it is woven. If the back is covered up with material, then it is tufted.

If you go to the mass-market rug retailer websites and pull up a "tufted rug" for sale, you will inevitably see the care comments along these lines: "Shedding is natural and may be heavy. Odor is natural and may get heavy if wrapped in plastic. Colors may fade."

None of these conditions are "natural" for a good quality wool rug. They are indicative of poor quality

wool, poor dyes and poor adhesive holding these tufted rugs together.

Due to the large amount of negative reviews on tufted rugs, especially the worst ones coming out of India, there has been a shift to try to find a cheap way to craft rugs that "look" woven even though they are actually poorer construction than the tufted rugs they mean to replace.

This new rug type that is becoming a headache for both rug owners and rug cleaners is called India "hand loomed" and India "loomed by hand."

These rugs are being presented as if they are hand woven rugs, and the prices imply they are good qual-

ity. However, these are wool and viscose rugs that more than any on the market today are being considered as highly flawed merchandise.

Corners are being cut

The structural problem with these “hand loomed” rugs is something that cannot be seen easily from the outside.

These rugs are crafted on a loom that is similar to a fabric loom, with levers pulling and pushing the fibers together, rather than a weaver actually “tying” (technically twisting) knots around two warps.

If you watch the “hand loom” process next to a “hand knotted” process you will see the construction quality differences. I encourage you to search YouTube for videos of both so you can see the processes with your own eyes.

A “hand knotted” woven rug will take months to weave, whereas a “hand loomed” rug can be crafted in hours. There are consequences of corners being cut in the quality.

With a “hand knotted” rug, the warps are the fringe tassels of the rug. Wool knots are twisted/tied around two warps across the width of the rug. Then a weft, or several wefts, is used to interlace in front and behind each and every warp in order to hold that row of knots solidly in place. Then the next row of knots is tied.

With a “hand knotted” rug, the fringe tassels often have a kilim (flatwoven base), or tassel knotting, to hold those ends securely in place. The wefts are wrapped around the outer cords so that the sides also are securely held in place.

This is important to know because both the fringe and side cord securing is absent on a “hand loomed” rug.

A “hand loomed” rug production presses fiber strands together, connecting them with quite thin threading, and with no proper securing of the ends or sides. They are produced as flat woven rugs and pile rugs. Here is how to spot them.

‘Hand loomed’ rug identifiers

1. All edges are the same. No natural fringe.

These rugs all have a simple wrap finish around all four edges. If there is fringe it will be clearly

added after the fact and NOT a foundation thread. These rugs are cut along the edges without securing. They may have glue along the edge or a thin yellow layer of glue all over the back side trying to hold the rug together.



Back corner of “hand loomed” rug. All edges look identical.



Back edge view, glue along the edge to try to hold the rug together.



Back corner of “hand knotted” rug. Fringe and sides are properly secured.

2. Easy to stretch. Stretch marks in field.

If you take any corner of these rugs you can easily stretch the rows and columns out of alignment. If the rug has been down on the floor for months you will begin to see “stretch marks” and wrinkles in the rug from it stretching apart.



Back view of “hand loomed” rug, very easy to stretch.

3. On flat woven “hand loomed” rugs you cannot roll them from all edges.

These rugs have an especially heavy foundation thread running in either the length or the width, and as a result you cannot roll them from one direction. It

acts like Axminster carpeting, which can only be rolled from one direction. A true hand woven flat weave will be able to be rolled from the end or the side equally.



Flat woven "hand loomed" rug cannot be rolled in every direction because the fibers are too stiff.

4. Grin open pile "hand loomed" rugs to see large loose foundation tracks.

Grin the rug from the front side with the length and with the width to see if you can see the large foundation threading. You can take tweezers, or even your nails, and easily move and pull at the thinner threads. The stability of these rugs is incredibly poor. Foot traffic also moves these threads and eventually pulls the rugs out of shape and tears them.



All grinning examples.

5. Easy to pull out tufts, and they are "V" shaped.

You will be able to easily yank out a wool tuft from the face of the rug, exposing that it is the shape of the letter "V." These tufts are pressed into place similar to how tufted rugs are, except that tufted rugs have glue applied on the back to hold them in place. In this case, nothing is holding these tufts

in place except the pressure of the neighboring threads, and as they stretch and move apart these areas shed as they lose those tufts.



Viscose tuft pulled easily from the front of a viscose "hand loomed" rug.



Wool tuft easily removed from a "hand loomed" rug.



A "hand knotted" rug is cut open to show the interior fibers and the wool knot that is tied around two warps. These knots cannot be pulled away from the rug without cutting it open first.

Problems with cleaning

These rugs are new to the market, and they exhibit problems after only months on the floor so they tend to come in because of wrinkling issues, tearing issues, shedding issues or accidental spills.



"Hand loomed" rugs stretch apart in traffic areas.



"Hand loomed" rugs develop wrinkling and stretch marks as they start to pull out of shape.

Due to the lack of stability in the foundation of these rugs you will be able to see the rug pulling loose and

apart in the traffic areas. You will also be able to see the edges pulling loose.

Due to the loose construction, any spills will be fully saturated through to the backside because these rugs have no repellency to liquids.

Vacuums, extraction wands and bonnets will cause damage to these rugs. They cannot take the agitation that other rugs can.

When the interior thick fibers swell in the washing process, it is easy to pull these rugs apart. If the thick fibers run the width of the rug, then they are likely to pull apart as the rug is pulled through a rinser/wringer, and can pull apart in a centrifugal spinner.

All other extraction tools also can be too much stress on those thin connecting fibers, and any shifting in the tension can lead to the rug literally coming apart.

This is one of the few rugs that is high on the list of most rug facilities' "rugs to run from" list.

Warn your customers

When you identify a "hand loomed" or "loomed by hand" rug from India, share your concern with the owner. They need to know that they have a rug that has structural flaws, especially if they paid thousands of dollars for it.

For your customers who are shopping for new rugs, you can give them a copy of this article to show them what to be on the look out for. These rugs are poorly made and a horrible choice for use in high activity rooms or in homes with pets.

No one likes to be ripped off, so you can be the hero who helps protect them from wasting thousands of dollars on a rug that may only last them a few months before they discover it is flawed. If you become the source of rug education for your customers, then you can help them choose a quality rug that you can clean for them for decades. ■

All images by Lisa Wagner
