

World of Wonder

EXPLORING THE REALMS OF HISTORY, SCIENCE, NATURE AND TECHNOLOGY
By Laurie Triefeldt

Indian rugs share many of the color and pattern characteristics of Persian rugs.



The **Pazyryk carpet** is the world's oldest rug. It was found in the Altai Mountains of Siberia and dates to between the 3rd and 5th centuries B.C. The original is very delicate and in tatters; this illustration shows how the design would have looked when new. The original rug is on display at the St. Petersburg Hermitage Museum in Russia. The Carpet Museum of Iran has a replica on display.

What's in a name?

The words "rug" and "carpet" are often used interchangeably. Both are floor coverings, but rugs are smaller than carpets and, in general, are no longer than 6.5 feet (2 m). Rugs usually have artistic designs, and some are so beautiful that they are hung as wall decor. Carpets are larger than rugs and in many cases are glued or tacked to the floor, covering a room from wall to wall. Carpets tend to use pile texture more than colors to create patterns. In the 1940s, wool carpets began to be replaced by modern fibers that were more stain-resistant, such as nylon, olefin and polyester.

Did you know?

The state of **Georgia** leads the U.S. in production of rugs and carpets, producing more than 70 percent of the nation's floor coverings.

"**Carpetbagger**" is a derogatory term for Northerners who tried to take advantage of the South's defeat after the Civil War.

Some beetle larvae, or **woolly bears**, have special chemicals in their stomachs that convert wool into sugar. These beetle grubs think wool carpets are yummy.

Melville Bissell invented the first vacuum cleaner, called a "carpet sweeper," in 1860.

Club soda can clean fresh stains on carpet. Pour some on the spot, let it soak for a few seconds, and then sponge it up.

The borders of some Oriental rugs were thought to protect those sitting within their magical confines.

SOURCES: *World Book Encyclopedia*, World Book Inc.; www.carpetandrugpedia.com; www.carpet-rug.org; <http://facts.randomhistory.com>

CARPETS & RUGS

Rugs and carpets are woven fabrics used as floor coverings. They add beauty, comfort and warmth to a room, and they help absorb sound. Today, most rugs and carpets are manufactured with machines, though some Oriental and Native American rugs are still traditionally woven by hand.

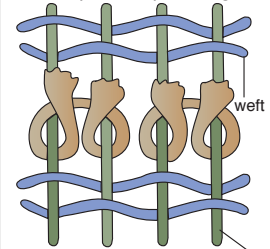


Oriental rugs

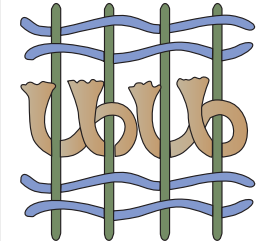
Oriental rugs are hand-knotted in Asian countries, such as China, India, Iran and Turkey. These rugs have been prized for centuries for their beauty and the time and skill needed to weave them.

Wool and silk are the most common yarns used to make Oriental rugs. There are two main kinds of knot used to make these rugs: the asymmetric Persian knot and the symmetrical Turkish knot.

Symmetric knot Turkish (Ghiordes) Knotting



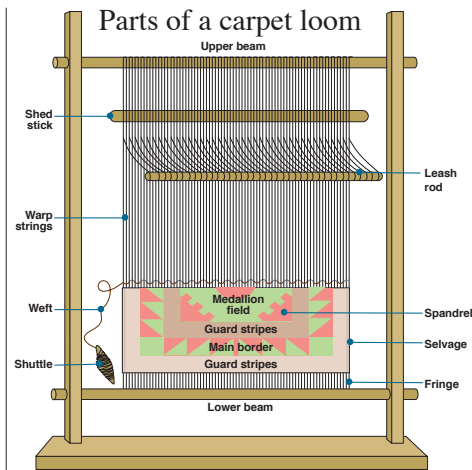
Asymmetric knot Persian (Sennah) Knotting



Most Oriental rugs have from 50 to 500 knots per square inch (8 to 78 knots per square cm). Because tightly woven Oriental rugs take longer to weave, they are usually more expensive. Age, condition and color are also important considerations when determining a rug's value.

Oriental rugs are woven on simple, vertical looms. Small rugs are usually woven by one person, but most large ones are worked on by many weavers.

Today, most rugs are made with yarns colored with chemical dyes. Older rugs used yarn colored with natural vegetable dyes. Naturally dyed yarn can be unstable, degrading and changing color with time and exposure to light.



A rug or carpet consists of two parts: The **skeleton** (back) of the rug is formed by vertical and horizontal threads called **warp** and **weft**. The raised layer is called the **pile** of the rug, which is made by knotting different colors of thread.

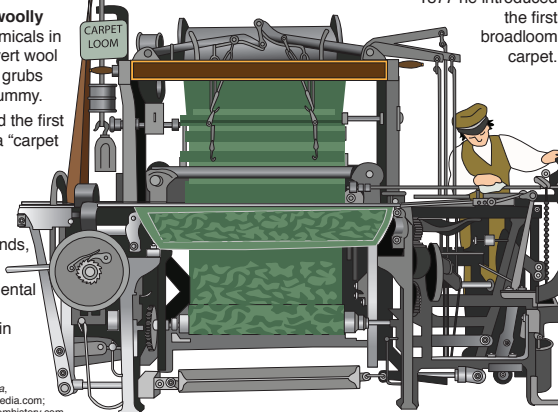


The power loom

In 1839, an American named Erastus Bigelow changed the carpetmaking industry forever when he invented the power loom for weaving carpets. Bigelow's loom doubled carpet production in its first year and tripled it by 1850.

Erastus Bigelow (1814-1879)

During his lifetime, Bigelow was issued 35 patents, and in 1877 he introduced the first broadloom carpet.



Prayer rugs are generally large enough for an adult to fit comfortably when kneeling or prostrating. Modern, commercially produced rugs are often made of silk or cotton and may be woven or embroidered.

Prayer rugs incorporate a pointed or arch-shaped pattern. When Muslims pray, they place the rug with the pointed design facing Mecca, their holiest city. The rug also serves as a way to ensure the cleanliness of a prayer space and helps to create an isolated area for prayer.



Turkish rugs are known for their rectangular and geometric patterns.

There are many different kinds of carpet, and nearly all are recyclable. Most can be broken down and used to make a new product.

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