



Erindale Tapestry Studio

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Crochet a Basket from Sheets, Instructions



Welcome to this colorful and unique crochet project that allows you to upcycle traditional or flannel sheets into useful, washable vessels! Once you get started with this project, no sheets will be safe, and there are so many ways to use these baskets.

What you will need for the project:

- Size Q 15.75 mm crochet hook (yes, it's big)
- Fabric Scissors or rotary cutter with mat
- Tape measure or ruler
- Sheets of your choice:
 - For regular cotton sheets, typically 5 (depending on size)
 - For flannel sheets, typically 3 (depending on size)

While it is possible to mix and match very diverse textiles for making the baskets, this grows easier with practice. For now, plan out your first basket or two with fabrics that are of similar material. This will make the transition from one sheet to another while you are working not cause noticeable structural change in the basket. Some fabrics work up much firmer than others, so just bear that in mind with your fabric choices.

Aged and worn fabrics can work well for this project. However, be wary of fabrics that are so degraded that they feel as though they are disintegrating (such as too much solar damage), as these may try to fall apart on you as you work them. Fabrics that have been torn, if not too shredded, can be used, especially if the tears make sense with the way you'll be stripping the fabrics. Pillowcases can be used too! However, the longer your strips are, the easier it will be to work, so fabrics that will cause frequent corners in your strip or only provide very small lengths of strip will make the process cumbersome.

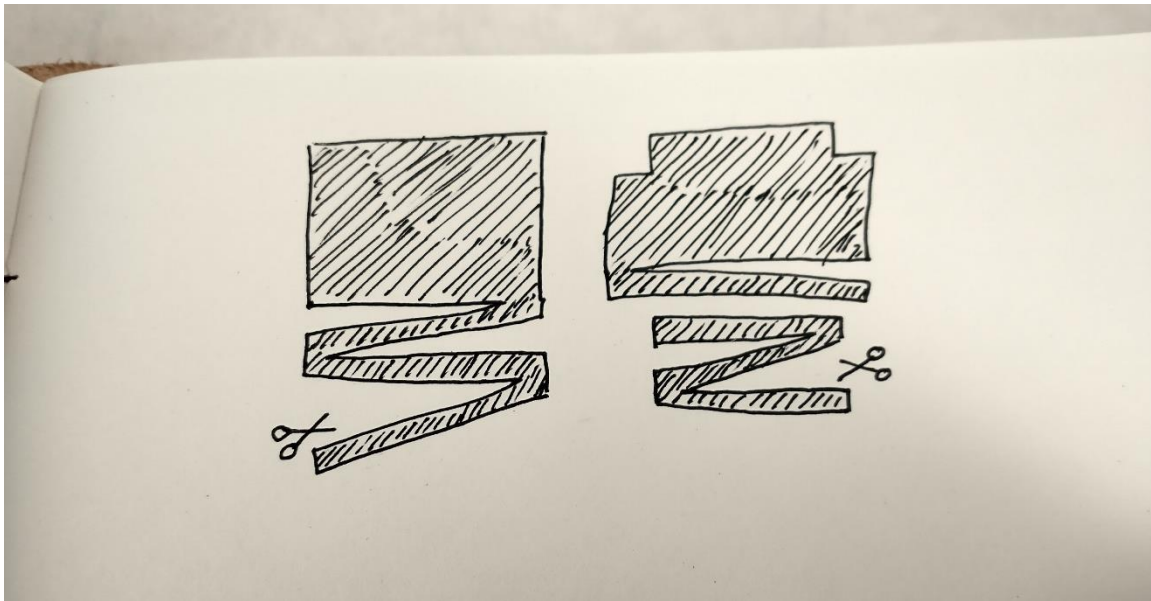
Be playful with the process and experiment with alterations after your first few. Adjustment ideas and tips will be noted near the end of this handout.



First, trim off all seams. You may prefer a fabric scissors or a rotary cutter with mat. If you like using a ripper, taking out some hems will offer you a little bit more fabric, but I usually just go straight to lopping them off. Here, I'm taking off a binding with elastic in it on a fitted sheet. Removing all the seams will give us strips that work up more uniformly and don't get bound up in the stitch-making process.



On fitted sheets, you will also want to take out the corner seams. This will give the corners a notched appearance when the fabric is released, but now the fabric can lay flat, which is what we want. If you are taking apart pillowcases, look at how they are seamed before cutting. Sometimes the fabric has been folded on one side, and you can remove the seams only, allowing it to open up into a larger rectangle of fabric.



Now it's time to turn our liberated fabrics into strips! I am not a fan of spending hours at the sewing machine, attaching strip ends together. Instead, I use a technique I learned from a rag rug weaving resource that allows you to transform fabric into a continuous strip using a zig-zag cutting and tearing approach, as I have drawn here.

On the left, you can see a rectangle piece of fabric. The first cut/tear starts at the left but stops before reaching the edge of the fabric. Then a new cut/tear is started at the right, also stopping before it reaches the edge. Continue this process back and forth to create the strip. Later, I'll show you how these turns are folded when crocheting to keep the strip smooth.

At the right, a trimmed fitted sheep makes a large cross shape. Sometimes, you get lucky and the strip can continue through the whole piece, but often you'll find that the grain of the fabric is such that you end up with three pieces of strip. That's ok, and as we go, I'll show you my favorite splicing technique for connecting one strip to the next as you go.



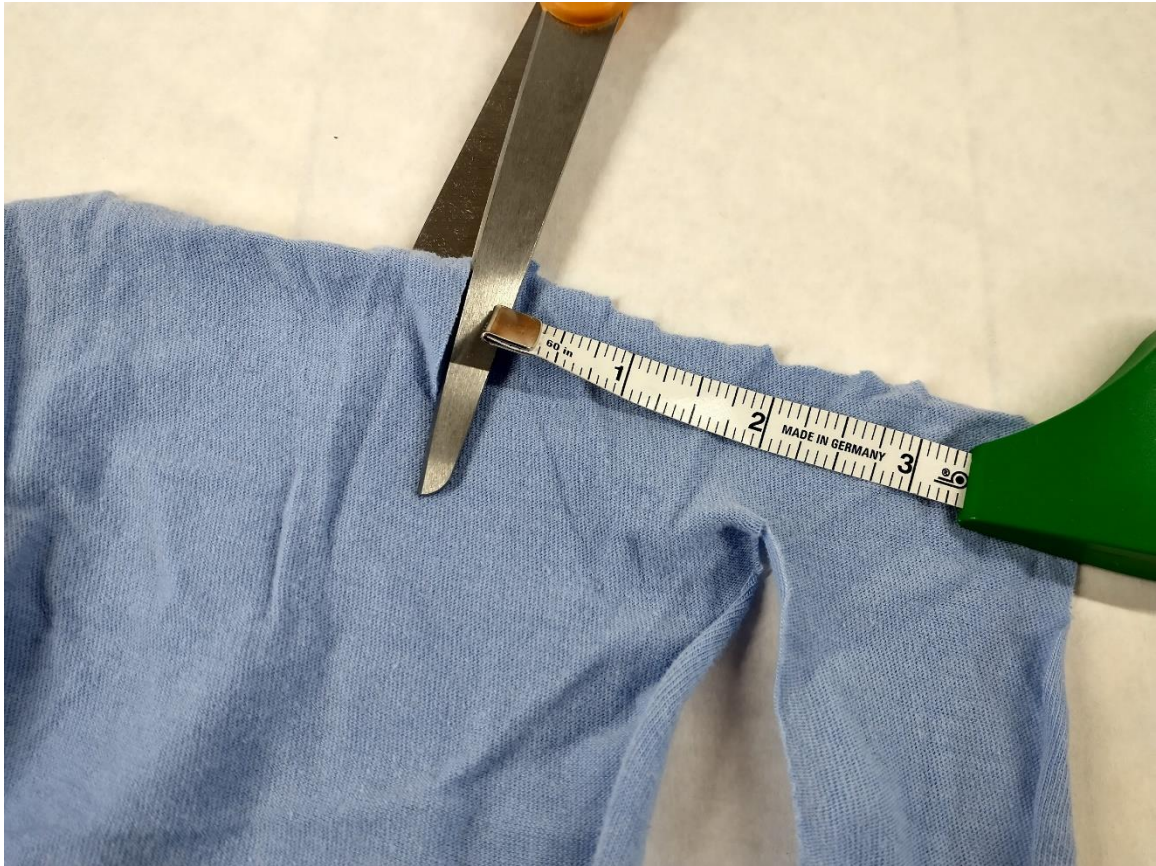
For a regular cotton sheet, cut strips that are approximately 3 inches wide. We're not making a quilt, so the measurement doesn't need to be exact. However, general uniformity of strip thickness will create a more enjoyable crocheting experience.

Here, I've worked the first cut and tear and I'm making the second cut. I like to start by snipping, then tearing the fabric with my hands, stopping about 1.5 to 2 inches short of the other side. Tearing keeps the "cut" with the grain of the fabric. This does create some dust and a few loose strands, so if that is not your preferred look or style, you may wish to use a rotary cutter and ruler to make the strips. However, give the tearing method a try as it can feel very therapeutic and works up fast. Most of the loose strands will work into the basket just fine, and you can trim wayward ones later.



For flannel sheets, work the fabric in the same method, only make your strips approximately 2 inches wide. Flannel fabrics are thicker and bulk up more quickly as a strip, so a 3-inch flannel strip would be much too dense to crochet well.

If you are working with another type of fabric and are not certain how wide to cut the strip, snip off some and twist it in your hand. This simulated the density of the strip when crocheting. For instance, an upholstery fabric might only need 1.5 inches of width because it's so much thicker. I would not recommend working with fabrics lighter than a cotton sheet, however, as it will be hard for it to gain enough substance to hold up the structure of the basket (unless you are working on a miniature scale).



Here, I'm turning the corner on making my strips in flannel, creating that first cut before tearing. You can also see where I stopped tearing on the previous strip.

If you get carried away and accidentally tear all the way through your fabric, don't panic. You can still use that strip! Just try not to tear all of them off this way, or you will spend all your time splicing.

I like to use one of my sheet baskets to hold my strips as I'm tearing. I start with the fabric I plan to use last, and end with the fabric I plan to use first. That way, all my strips are easy to tote around and are ready to be drawn out in order! Tada!



Let's start by making a straight-sided basket. I'll discuss shape variations later in the handout. Mastering this shape first will help you gain confidence in the technique and help illustrate how the variations are adaptations on this basic shape.



Now we are ready to begin!

Create a slip knot, as you normally would in crochet, and chain 3. Keep your stitches loose for the chain.



Draw the chain around in a loop and slip stitch into the first chain. This will form a ring.



After this point, everything in this project will be worked as a spiral. You may find it very helpful to use a row marker (I use a piece of contrasting colored fabric) to help keep track of when you've made it around the spiral.

Row 1. Working through the middle of the ring (not picking up individual chain stitches), work 6 single crochet stitches into the ring. This will create a button-like shape.





Now, let's discuss what happens when you reach one of the corners in the cutting of your strip. Here, the "corner" of the cut is very near my recently completed stitch. I've folded the material beyond that so that it curls around the strip. This will be able to work fairly smoothly into the next stitch.

Sometimes, a corner of fabric will pop out on a stitch, especially at these intersections. Often, you can tuck it back into the stitch or a hole between stitches. If it's still being persnickety, once the piece is finished, you can carefully trim off these bits. They also add character and texture, so you might enjoy them as is!



Row 2. For this next round in the spiral, work 2 single crochets into each stitch around, so that you now have 12 stitches. Place the stitches as you normally would, using both front and back loops from the stitch below.

It may be tempting to work your stitches very tightly. This is not actually helpful for your basket or your body. The basket will not want to lay flat on the bottom, and you can hurt your wrist or elbow. Instead, allow stitches to remain a little relaxed, which will make it easier to pick up your stitches in following rounds.



Row 3. In the next round, work 1 single crochet in the first stitch, then work 2 single crochets into the next stitch. Repeat the sequence all the way around, so that you now have 18 stitches. Keep moving the row marker with each row, so it's easy to see when you've made it all the way around.



Row 4. Work 1 single crochet into the first stitch, then work 2 single crochets into the second stitch. Work 1 single crochet into each of the next 2 stitches, then work 2 single crochets into the next stitch. Repeat the 2 each in their own stitch, then 2 in one stitch pattern around, ending with one single crochet on its own. This is a partner to the first of the spiral. This round has 24 stitches.

For these concentric spirals, we want the increases (two stitches worked into one stitch) to be offset from one another. If they stack, we'll create a hexagon instead of a circle. You'll notice that rounds with an odd number of stitches between the increases work the full number at the start of the round, while the number is divided on even numbered ones at the beginning and end of the round.

You can use this principle when expanding the coil, either to make a larger basket or to use this technique to create a round crocheted rag rug.



Row 5. Work 1 single crochet into each stitch for 3 stitches, then work 2 single crochets into the next stitch. Continue with this pattern all the way around, so that you now have 30 stitches.

Row 6. Work 1 single crochet into each stitch for 2 stitches, when work 2 single crochets into the next stitch. Work 1 single crochet into each stitch for 4 stitches, then work 2 single crochets into the next stitch. Continue with the 4 and 2 pattern around, ending with 2 single crochets each in their own stitch, so that now you have 36 stitches.

Row 7. Work 1 single crochet into each stitch for 5 stitches, then work 2 single crochets into the next stitch. Continue with this pattern all the way around, so that you have 42 stitches.

You have now finished the spiral base!



Splicing fabrics is essential to the process, as I haven't yet found a sheet large enough to make an entire basket! Here, I'm showing a splice between colors, so it's easier to see. The new strip is folded in half the long way, with the 3 to 4-inch tail of the old strip tucked inside. These will be worked together into the next stitch, which will hold the splice fast.



Row 8. Continuing to work in a spiral, this round will make the transition from the bottom of the basket to the side. Flip the spiral so that the back side is facing up, which will make the “wrong side” face the inside of the basket and the “right side” face outwards.

To aid in the transition from bottom to side of the basket, we will still be using the single crochet stitch, but we will be picking up different parts of the stitch from the row below. I call this the “pivot stitch.” Instead of going through the front and back loops of the stitch (as we have been so far), I’m picking up the back loop and another loop off the back side of the stitch. This will help keep the stitch strong as well as allow it to transition to aiming upwards.

Work 1 pivot single crochet in each stitch around.



Here is how the pivot single crochet looks when held upwards (viewing “right side”). The green strip is the new row, while the tan is from the spiral. Because I’m not picking up the front loop of the stitch, it creates a nice rim along the bottom edge of the basket.

If you choose not to work the pivot stitch method at this transition, your edges will come up gradually, and the basket will have a pot-bellied appearance.



Here I have made it all the way around with the pivot stitch, and already the basket is starting to turn upwards. We only work this stitch on this one round. Next, we will learn a new stitch for the sides.



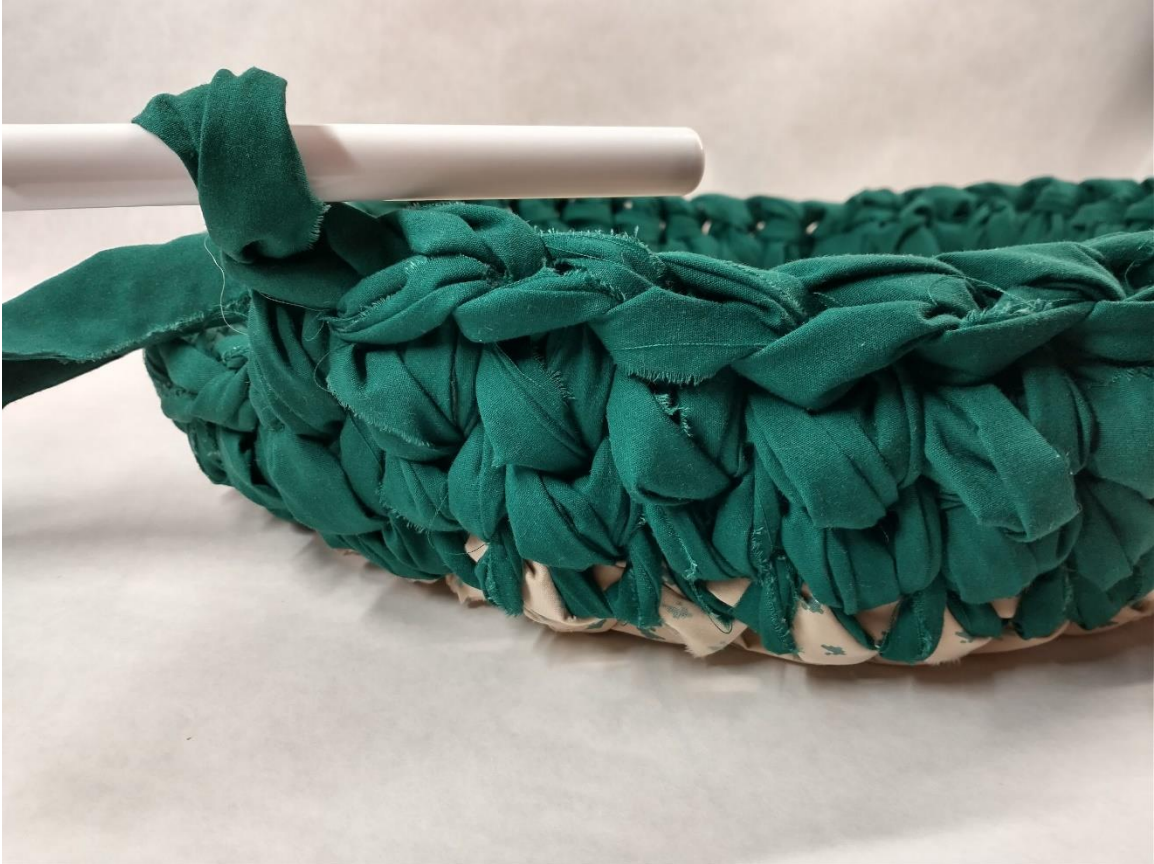
Row 9. For the sides of our basket, we want them to be strong and durable, able to stand up well on our own. Working a single crochet stitch in the usual fashion does not create that result. Instead, we will be working ours as a “flat single crochet” stitch.

For a flat single crochet, instead of going into the loops, we insert our hook into the body of the stitch, between the two legs that form a V shape directly below loops.

Work one flat single crochet in each stitch around.



The trick with working a flat single crochet is to pull upwards enough when drawing back through the body of the stitch. Here you can see how I've drawn the fabric strip up level with my original loop. If you miss this step, your stitches can become too tight, and then it's very hard to insert your hook into the stitches the next time around.



Here are how the flat single crochet stitches look as they begin to stack on top of each other.

You will notice how much denser this feels than typical single crochet work. Continue working round and round until you have reached the height you desire the basket to be **WHERE THE HANDLES START**. We will be adding two more rows of height on top of the handles, plus the rim edging.

I worked a total of 8 rows of the flat single crochet on this basket before pausing for the handles.



Tip: if you are working with a printed fabric that has its design on one side, you can fold the strip so that the design is mostly on the outside. Or, if you like a more mottled look, you can let the fabric fold up as it will and the pattern will show here and there in a more random way.

Either way can look lovely, depending on the fabric. In this basket, I tried to keep these pretty leaves mostly to the outside, as the back side of the fabric looked nearly white.



Handles come next! While these are certainly optional (you might like yours without handles, and if so carry on stitching until your desired final height, then pick up the directions again with the rim), they are part of what makes the baskets so handy to tote around.

I've started my handles row in a new color, so it's easy to see from the row below, but you can carry on with you same color or whatever color you choose. Work 2 flat single crochet stitches normally, then chain 5. Skip 4 stitches from the row below, then start working flat single crochet stitches again.

Because you might make baskets of different sizes, here is a calculation for knowing how many stitches to work between your first and second handle: take your total number of stitches for the round, minus 8, divided by 2.

If you have 42 stitches, minus 8 would be 34, divided by 2 would be 17. That means you should work 17 flat single crochets along the edge before starting your next handle (chain 5, skip 4), then carry on with flat singles back to the first handle.



For the second row of the handle, work 5 single crochets around the chain. This will give the handle a much better feel as you grip it than trying to put the stitches into the chain.

Work flat single crochet stitches between handles, then work 5 single crochets around the chains in the second handle. Carry on with flat singles back to where you started the round.



Now we're ready to work the rim!

Rim, Round 1. First, slip stitch into each stitch, all the way around. Be careful not to stitch too tightly, as this can force the top edge of the basket to draw inwards.



Rim, Round 2. For extra sturdiness around the top edge, I work a second round of slip stitches, working them into the first slip stitches. This picture shows where the hook goes to catch these stitches. It will cause your new round of slip stitch to appear below the first round. This round is optional, but the added rigidity is quite noticeable, and I like the stability it adds to the basket.

Once you make it all the way around, bind off and bury your tail.



Ta-da, your straight-sided basket is complete!



The view inside



The finished rim.



The finished handle.

Straight-Sided Basket, Just the Directions

This pattern is worked as a spiral. A row marker may be helpful.

CH 3, SLST in first CH to form a circle

Spiral Bottom:

Row 1, work 6 SC in circle

Row 2, work 2 SC in each ST around (12 SC)

Row 3, *work 1 SC in 1st ST, then 2 SC in next ST. Repeat from * around (18 SC)

Row 4, *work 1 SC in 1st ST, then 2 SC in next ST, then 1 SC in next ST. Repeat from * around (24 SC).

Row 5, *work 1 SC in each of first 3 STS, work 2 SC in next ST. Repeat from * around (30 SC).

Row 6, *work 1 SC in each of first 2 STS, work 2 SC in next ST, work 1 SC in each of next 2 STS. Repeat from * around (36 SC).

Row 7, *work 1 SC in each of first 5 STS, work 2 SC in next ST. Repeat from * around (42 SC).

Turn

Place right side of spiral down (wrong side facing upwards)

Row 8, work PSC (pivot single crochet) in each ST around, catching the back loop and second back part of ST.

Sides

Row 9+, work FSC (flat single crochet) in each ST around. Continue to desired height below handles.

Handles

Round 1, work 2 FSC, CH5, SK4, work enough FSC to reach placement of second handle (total number of stitches, minus 8, divided by 2), CH5, SK4, work FSC back to starting point.

Round 2, FSC in FSC, work 5 SC around handle chains on both sides.

Rim

Round 1, SLST in each FSC around.

Round 2, SLST in each SLST (faces downward) around. Bind off, secure ends.



Adjusting Notes: The Tapered Basket

The straight-sided basket can be made with either classic cotton sheets or flannel, but because the tapered basket is a bit more of a structural challenge, I recommend using flannel. It will work up stiffer and hold up better.

Work the same as the straight sided basket, stopping after 3 rounds of the flat single crochet (sides). Increase by working 2 flat single crochets in a stitch after 5 regular stitches around (6 increases). Work 4 more rows in the regular manner.

Increase again after 6 stitches around (dividing the first group into 3 at the beginning of the round and 3 at the end, as we did the increases in the spiral), creating 6 more increases. Work 1 more regular row before starting the handles.

You could certainly experiment with just one round of increases for a gentler taper, or two rounds but with only 3 increases per round. Too much taper, and the sides will flop over.



Adjusting Notes: Smaller, Rounded Baskets

While this design can only get so large before it won't stand up, it can certainly be made smaller! This bowl-like basket was worked stopping the bottom coil after Row 6.

There are only 6 rounds of the blue side stitches.

The colorful strips at the top were cut a bit thinner, which naturally makes a smaller stitch. This caused the top rim to draw in, creating a curved appearance. I also opted not to create handles on this one.



Adjusting Notes: Knit Fabrics

Sometimes, you will have the great fortune to find large pieces of knit fabric that you can turn into strips. Sometimes knit fabrics will tear (like this one did), and sometimes they won't and you have to cut all the strips.

The advantage to using knit fabrics is that once stripped, they curl up and don't create shredding like sheets do. This can make the stitching process feel very slick. However, keep in mind that when the fabric curls, you're looking at the wrong side of the fabric. If you find a knit fabric you want to use but you're married to the way the right side looks, save it for another project. It will not want to lay facing outwards.

For this fabric, the right and wrong sides looked the same, so it didn't matter.



Adjusting Notes: Yarn Baskets

The design is so versatile, you don't have to only make it with fabric! For this smaller project, I used a bulky wool/acrylic blend yarn and a size K crochet hook to create an adorable basket for holding balls of yarn.

You could also use hemp or sisal rope, plarn (plastic yarn made from stringing grocery sacks together), and so much more. Be creative and experiment! You may also have to experiment to find the right crochet hook size to match the weight of the material you are using to make the basket.