

Blocking

Why Block?

It is my considered opinion that blocking of any project is very important. This is for the following reasons:

1. Contemporary crochet patterns tend to use complex combinations of stitches. When used together, these stitch combinations sometimes need some encouragement to settle together. For example:
 - a. Front and back post stitches – depending on your tension (gauge) these very often need to be gently coaxed to lay in the correct position. This is particularly true if you tend to work quite tightly.
 - b. When crocheting particularly dense stitches, e.g. tapestry crochet (back loop only single crochet – blo sc), the work will tend to pull to one side. This is easily remedied with a gentle blocking. The fact that we work in the blo allows flexibility in realigning the stitches.
2. There is an argument that says that all the benefits of blocking will be lost the next time you wash the item. I disagree, however, I must add here that I believe that all treasured handmade items should be treated with love and respect every time they are washed. I block my treasures after every wash. It only takes about 10 minutes of my time and is well worth the effort. I don't always use pins at this stage, but I do lay the work flat to dry and gently coax it into the correct shape.
3. Whilst working on a project, I tend to block frequently. I do what I call a "quick block". I simply pin it into shape while it is dry and then give it a light spray with water. It dries quickly, because it is not saturated. This is beneficial for the following reasons:
 - a. You will very quickly pick up tension (gauge) problems that may arise. We all work at different tensions. Your tension may be very different to mine especially when working with textured and single crochet stitches. It is far better to realise that there is a problem earlier in the process. It is easy to adjust hook sizes to counteract any tension problems that may arise.
 - b. Your work will look its very best. This is very motivational. Far too many projects land up in the naughty corner, because they don't come up to expectation and never get completed. All too often a gentle blocking would make all the difference.

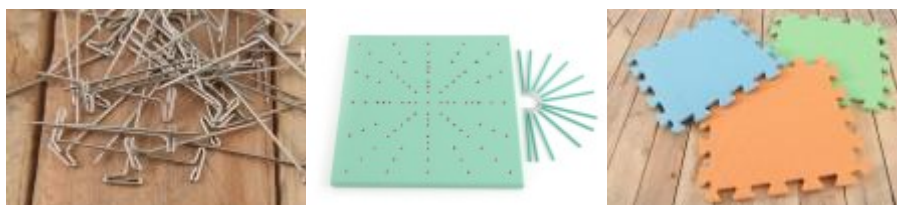


Materials for Blocking

It is not necessary to buy expensive blocking materials. A bed or a clean carpet will suffice. If you can afford the specialist materials and have the necessary space (I use my dining table mostly), then by all means invest in these. There are various options available, from interlocking puzzle pieces for the larger projects to wooden blocking boards for squares.

- For our international members, [Woolwarehouse](#) has a good selection.
- South African members will find interlocking puzzle pieces at places such as West Pack Lifestyle stores or Toys r Us.

Always use rustproof pins! This is very important to avoid staining your project.



Wet Blocking

This blocking method works well for acrylic, cotton and bamboo/cotton blends.

- Always check the labels for washing information before proceeding.
- Thoroughly wet the item. This can be done with a spray bottle, gentle hand wash or machine wash on a delicate cycle (I place the item in a mesh bag when I machine wash). My preference is to machine wash, but I always check the label first.
- Gently squeeze out any excess water. Do not wring or twist!
- Lay the item out flat. I use foam puzzle pieces, but you can do this on other surfaces, e.g. on a bed or on a carpet (cover with towels or blankets first).
- Pat and shape it in a nice symmetrical shape. Be gentle.
- Pin securely in place using rustproof pins. Use the pins around the perimeter, but also use in the body of the item, e.g. when blocking an item comprising of multiple squares - use a pin at the point where the corners join. This will help to keep the lines nice and straight.
- Leave to dry. Use a fan to speed up the drying process. Underfloor heating is also great for speeding up drying.

Steam Blocking

This blocking method works well for smaller items and can be used for acrylic, cotton and bamboo/cotton blends.

- Lay the dry item out flat. I use foam puzzle pieces, but you can do this on other surfaces, e.g. on a bed or on a carpet (cover with towels or blankets first).
- Pat and shape it in a nice symmetrical shape. Be gentle.
- Pin securely in place using rustproof pins. Use the pins around the perimeter, but also use in the body of the item, e.g. when blocking an item comprising of multiple squares - use a pin at the point where the corners join. This will help to keep the lines nice and straight.
- Use steam to set the project into shape.
- Be very careful not to bring the steam too close to the item, especially if you are using acrylic yarn. Acrylic yarn will melt if it gets too hot.
- A hairdryer, if used very carefully, can also be a good way to block smaller items.