

# HOW TO CHOOSE AN ORIENTAL RUG

You've finally decided to purchase a rug for that space that has been too long empty. You've started to shop and found there are a bewildering array of styles, colors and most important prices. We at Safavieh understand your situation and have put together this short guide on how to choose a rug. While this will not make you an expert, it will give you the basic information to make an informed judgement.

Watch as Safavieh's [Arash Yaraghi helps Martha Stewart choose a new rug](#) for her home in East Hampton.

**Pile rugs can be made by three basic methods -handknotting, hand tufting or by automated machine.** Each method has it's positives and negatives, a summary of which follows.

Machine made rugs, also called power loomed, are produced by a electronically driven machine whose pattern is controlled by computer or a punch card system to produce a repetitive pattern. As such, these rugs can be produced quickly and at a low cost. However to limit cost, the amount of detail and color is also reduced and in many cases the quality of the basic materials is limited by the stress of the machine.

Hand tufted rugs (also called hand made) are produced by punching individual yarns through a fabric sheet using a device called a "tufting gun". Once the rug has been completed a second fabric is glued to the back to hold the yarns in place. Hand tufted rugs required more time to produce, generally contain higher quality materials and can be more detailed. However because they are looked at as a "step up" to machine made products at a modest premium they also tend to lack detail, are a compromise in materials, and if not finished correctly may have durability issues.

Hand knotted rugs are the cream of the rug world. These rugs are produced using ancient techniques, have unlimited design and color variations and may have investment value in years to come. Hand knotted rugs are made on a vertical frame called a hand knotting loom. Columns of threads are stretched from the top to the bottom of the loom. These are called the warp threads and are the foundation of the rug. They also form the fringe ends of the rug and are very important to it's longevity.



Once the warp threads are arranged up and down the loom, the actual production process begins. First the weaver begins by making a flat or non pile weave. This is intended to secure the knots which will form the rug from coming out at either end. After 10 -12 rows or more of flat weave are completed, the weaver begins the knotting process. He consults what is called a “cartoon” a graph paper on which each square represents a single knot tied in a specific color of yarn. The cartoon has been constructed by a master designer who may wish to produce an ancient pattern or create a vision of his own. The weaver ties individual knots in the specified color to the warp threads across the entire width of the loom – and then begins a second row of knots again corresponding to the cartoon. Every row or few rows of knots the weaver inserts a “weft”, a flat woven thread which holds the knots below in place. This process continues until the entire rug has been produced and the end is finished with a flat woven area similar to the one where the process began. Depending on the type of knot, the pattern and the number of knots required this process may take up to a year to complete. Once completed the rug is then “sheared” to produce a uniform surface, hand washed to develop luster and finally dried (some in the sun for authenticity).

Safavieh is a leading producer of hand knotted rugs from a variety of countries including India, China, Pakistan, and Nepal. In addition, the company has a large selection of higher quality hand tufted products from around the world. We invite you to browse our selection by clicking on the web site button marked ” Rug Collections”, by contacting us directly via the web site, or by contacting one of our many fine dealers who will assist you. Here, should you choose to continue, are a number of frequently asked questions and the answers.

### **HOW CAN I TELL A HANDKNOTTED RUG FROM OTHER TYPES?**

Look on the back. A handknotted rug shows the same pattern on the back as on the front. Hand tufted rugs almost always have a plain backing or show a glue residue on the back. Some machine made rugs tend to show a hazy pattern on the back. If you are unsure, the handknotted rug is the only one that can be folded in either direction (like a handkerchief) all others must be rolled.

### **HOW CAN I TELL THE QUALITY OF A HANDKNOTTED RUG?**

The most important( but not the only) determinant of quality is the knot count. Generally the finer the knot, hence the more knots per square inch, the higher the rug quality. However wool quality, design, luster and dye method all play a role. The best way is to ask one of our professionals at Safavieh or visit one of our many qualified dealers across the country. We or they will be happy to assist you.

### **WHAT TYPE OR DESIGN RUG SHOULD I GET?**

Study your decor and the feeling you wish to achieve. Contemporary designs go well with straight line clean furnishings, old world designs with more traditional rooms. However don't be afraid to mix, some of the most beautiful rooms combine today's looks with things of the past.

### **HOW CAN I DECIDE?**

Ask your Safavieh dealer to bring the rug to your home on a trial basis. In most cases he will be more than happy to assist you in this process.

### **HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?**

Buy a book on the subject, Persian rugs have been around for roughly 3000 years. There are many fascinating stories about them. We suggest "The Splendor of Persian Rugs" by E. Grans-Gruedin. Or if you would like to hear some legends word-of-mouth, ask your salesperson. Tabriz, Kashan, Mashed, Heriz, Bohkara, Qum, Isfahan, Sarouk and Kerman are all names with which you will become familiar and will heighten the enjoyment of whatever style you choose.