

Crochet Along

by Stylecraft



UK Terms

Blocking and Pressing Instructions

Frida's Flowers Blanket

Designed by Jane Crowfoot

Crochet Along*

BLOCKING AND PRESSING

Blocking and pressing is the term used to describe the process of laying out your crochet pieces and then either steaming or moistening them with water in order to make sure they look neater and more even before you begin the process of joining your pieces together.

I think the term 'pressing' is extremely misleading as it implies that you should put something heavy onto your crochet and smooth out your stitches, in the same way that you would iron a crease out of a cotton shirt. In my time as a consultant and tutor I have seen many examples of knitted and crochet pieces that have quite literally been pressed beyond recognition. If you are not careful, pressing a crochet piece with a hot iron will destroy the fibres within your yarn and make your stitches flat and your yarn shiny – in some cases (when dealing with man made fibres) you could even melt or burn your yarn. Once the fibres within your yarn are flattened they will not recover, much in the same way as you can't un-shrink something that you have washed too hot.

Working through my Crochet Along project you will put a lot of time and effort into creating your crochet pieces in order to produce what I hope you will think is a beautiful lap blanket, which you can take pride in and others can admire. With this in mind I suggest that you take plenty of time to make sure that all your pieces are finished in the nicest way possible and so, once you have sewn in all your yarn ends, I suggest you use the following blocking steps.

PREPARE A BLOCKING BOARD

A blocking board can be as simple or as elaborate as you want it to be. You can buy special foam jigsaw blocking mats, or pick virtually the same things up in a toy store at a fraction of the cost. You can use the top of your ironing board or a bath towel. I use a folded towel on my work surface in the kitchen. I have a chequered tea towel, which I then lay over the top.

PIN OUT YOUR PIECES

When blocking out a flat piece, such as a granny square for example, I would lay my piece face down on the tea towel, however, because of the 3D nature of this project I suggest that you lay your pieces the right way up so that you can see all the flower petals and leaves.

If you have a clean chequered or striped piece of fabric or tea towel like mine, you can pin your crochet pieces out in line so that you ensure they are straight. Use a tape measure to ensure that you are blocking to the right size. If you have a plain background you can mark out the size with pins, or even sew in a tacked framework.

Use long, large headed pins to pin the crochet piece out. You should stretch the piece very slightly and put the pins in as flat as you can – I work from the centre out, marking the central point of each side first, then working towards each corner.

USING STEAM OR A WATER SPRAY

If you have a steam iron that you know you can trust and that can produce steam without spurting boiling water, you can steam your crochet pieces, but be sure to hold your iron a few inches above your crochet to ensure it doesn't get too hot.

I use a cold-water spray. I have an old pump action hairspray bottle, which is filled with clean cold water and I spray my crochet pieces until they are nicely damp, but not soaking.

Once the yarn has taken in the water I leave the pieces to dry completely before I remove the pins.

NOTE

Crochet pieces love to curl up so there is no point blocking each crochet motif as you complete it because by the time you come to put your pieces together they will have curled up again and will need re blocking.

A NOTE ON WASHING

Stylecraft Classique Cotton DK, Life DK and Special DK are fabulous yarns – they are hard wearing and easy to wash, however I would suggest that you avoid machine washing this project if at all possible. The tumble and spin actions on many modern day washing machines can be quite destructive to hand made products and, if you put your completed crochet project in with other wash items, you could find that you get snags and catches caused by things like Velcro fastenings or clasps.

Once your project has been put together you may want to wash it. I find that washing a completed piece can make a really big difference to the finished appearance of it. Seams become flatter and stitches become more even. I always hand wash my knit and crochet items in a liquid specially formulated for that purpose, such as woolite or soak. It is wise to avoid biological liquids or powders as they can contain brighteners, which can destroy the yarn fibres, cause bobbles and shade changes.

Once the piece is washed I place it in a tied pillow case and give it a short spin in the washing machine to remove as much water as I can – don't use a really fast spin as this can cause the piece to stretch and throw in a couple of bath towels at the same time to minimise the amount of movement the project will have, the towels will also help absorb water. Remove the project from the pillow case and lay your crochet project out on bath towel or large soft flat surface to dry. Don't place in direct sunlight or over a radiator and do not tumble dry. If you have a trampoline in the garden this is an excellent drying place, so long as you keep your pets well away!