

Not all groups are created equally!

So, several of your friends have seen your rug work and are now pestering you to “get a group together so we can learn how to hook”; or perhaps you are frustrated by be so isolated that you do all your hooking on your own and decide to start a group just to have a bit of company.

What do you do next?

Groups of people come together for a variety of reasons and operate in different ways, so the information here is intended to give you some general ideas and things to think about before you set up your group. You are encouraged to explore all the options!

Why do you want to start a group? In other words, what kind of group do *you want*?

- A casual group of friends have asked you to teach them how to hook?
- You want to “spread the word” about rug hooking to a wider audience?
- You would like to teach rug hooking as part of your business?
- You would like to be with other fibre artists to expand your knowledge about ways to “push your limits”?
- And the list goes on.

Do you need to start a group yourself, or is there a similar/related group you could join?

The issue here is to not ignore the obvious! Don't reinvent the group wheel unless you really want a group that only does hooking. You may find another group in your area that has a range of spinners, weavers, sewers, knitters, etc. who would be delighted to have an new, traditional craft added to their mix! If you were seeking company while you do your craft work, this might be a good first step! It is quite possible (and probable) that people within an existing fibre art / handcraft group would be interested in what you're doing (and you can always barter for some of that wonderful wool *they* use)!

Your group structure may be determined by your venue!

Depending on where you hold your group meetings (now that you have decided to start your own group) you may need to “refine” or “fine tune” the way your group will, meet and run.

The simplest and easiest first option?

Simply invite the interested people – your friends probably - to your home!

Stage one:

- Invite any interested friends to your home for morning tea or a shared lunch and talk about rug hooking and demonstrate how to do it! Congratulations! You’ve just started a rug hooking group! After meeting for a few weeks or months your group may decide to rotate the meeting place just to “share the load” and vary the location. Easy, huh?

Stage two:

- Your group may never want to move to this stage and that’s just fine! However, if over time, your group would like more of your time and even some structure lessons, you will need to consider whether or not you will charge them – and how much. Remember: if you are going to offer regularly offer workshops for a fee, you will need to be sure your home’s public liability insurance will cover them in the event of an accident (check your policy). It might be easiest to simply charge each member on an annual basis to cover the cost of any additional public liability insurance you may have to add (or fact the cost into your workshop fees). If your group meets on a rotation at various members’ homes and no fees are charged then you are simply a group of people meeting at a friend’s home the public liability issues doesn’t rear its ugly head! (This of course assumes that you carry general public liability insurance anyway!)

Using a venue other than your home: What kind of group are you?

Community Group formed through a Council

Some groups are set up within existing Council-supported organisations, like arts and crafts groups, or fibre and textile art groups. If you decide to join one of these existing groups or to start a new one with Council approval in order to access to the venue you need, you will probably find they have a number of regulations and requirements that you and your group must follow. Don't let this discourage you, but do take the time to find out how you can access the facilities and what you need to do to be part of the community structure. You may find that for some organisations you will be expected to make items "for the community good" or some such. After all, you are a "community" group using community resources. This can be a good thing and serve to give you, your members and the craft a good public profile. Just be aware of what the advantages and disadvantages of working through this avenue.

Again, make sure you are clear on the public liability issues for your group. Are you covered through the Council or do you need to still have your own public liability insurance? Most forms you complete will make this answer very clear.

Members of the Community using Council facilities

This is different from being a "community Council-supported group". In this case (for example) the Council library may have a community meeting room available for use by "members of the community". It may be that you need to give your "group" a name – which you would probably do anyway – and then arrange for your group to use the community room on a regular basis. Since this is not a Council recognised group (in that they are providing any support) you will probably have more freedom in your projects and would not be expected to produce items "for the community" although it might be a good idea at some point to produce a "gift" rug / wall hanging for the library just to let them know what you are doing!

Once again, you will be confronted by the public liability issue. It is up to you and your group to decide if you want to take on additional insurance to cover any incidents or accidents that may occur within the group – the Council and library

would still have offer the usual protections to you when it is a library accident as opposed to (for example) someone tripping over a frame during a group session. This is an issue you will need to discuss and decide for yourselves.

Your group meets as the arm of another organisation.

Your group might decide to join the CWA (Country Women's Association) or the local historical society so you can be another "arm" of these groups. Again, you may find that as members of the larger organisation you might be expected to take on organisational work (work the cake stall, serve as a tour guide, keep minutes of your meetings, or other organisational duties). Again, this is not necessarily a bad thing, you just need to be aware of their internal structure and how they operate before you decide. Any organisation that receives money for their group (of which you are a part) generally has a legal obligation (at least in QLD) to keep records and maintain a file of minutes of how funding is used (acquittal forms) and the activities of their organisation. So, beware that you might have to have a bit more "structure" about your group and its meetings that you may want.

Again, check on whether your group is covered by the organisation's public liability insurance. You would assume that you are if you are under their "umbrella" of activities but don't assume this is true!

No matter what kind of group you start...enjoy yourself! You can't have too much fibre in your life!

I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way--things I had no words for." **Georgia O'Keeffe**