

Hula Hoop Weaving: Turn Old Shirts into a Cool Rag Rug!

Lesson Details

- **Grade Level:** Ages 8+ (with adult supervision for cutting)
- **Subject:** Art, Life Skills, Environmental Science (Upcycling)
- **Time Allotment:** 60-90 minutes (The project will not be finished in one session, but the skills will be learned)

Materials Needed

- 1 standard-sized Hula Hoop
- 3-5 old, clean T-shirts in various colors (non-stretchy cotton works, but stretchy jersey knit is easiest)
- 1 "special" T-shirt for the center circle (this will be the "warp")
- Fabric scissors or a rotary cutter (adult use only)
- A small clip or clothespin (optional, but helpful)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Prepare old t-shirts into "t-shirt yarn" for weaving.
- Set up a hula hoop as a circular loom.
- Demonstrate the basic "over-under" weaving technique.
- Explain how turning old things into new things helps the planet.

Lesson Plan

Part 1: Introduction (10 minutes)

Hook: The Magical Transforming T-Shirt!

Educator says: "What do you usually do with a t-shirt that you've outgrown or that has a little stain on it? (*Allow for answers.*) What if I told you we could use magic to turn those old shirts into a super cool, cozy rug for your room? It's not magic, it's a craft called **upcycling**! Upcycling is when we take something old and turn it into something new and even better. Today, we're going to become upcycling artists!"

Setting the Goal

Educator says: "Our goal today is to learn how to weave using a hula hoop. We are going to learn three main things: how to make yarn from our t-shirts, how to turn our hula hoop into a giant spiderweb for weaving, and how to do the special over-under weaving pattern. We probably won't finish the whole rug today, but you will learn all the skills you need to keep working on it yourself!"

Part 2: The Body - Let's Make It! (40-60 minutes)

Step 1: Making T-Shirt Yarn (I do, We do)

Educator's Talking Points (I do - Demonstration):

- "First, we need to turn our t-shirts into long strips, like spaghetti. We'll call this 't-shirt yarn'. Watch me first."
- "I'll lay a t-shirt flat and cut off the bottom hem. We don't need that bumpy part. Then, I'll cut strips across the shirt, about 1-2 inches wide. I'm stopping before I get to the other side, leaving a little bit connected, like a book spine."
- "Now for the magic part! I'll open it up and cut diagonally from the bottom of the first cut to the top of the second cut. Watch... this turns all our loops into one super long noodle of yarn! Let's pull on it a little, and it curls up perfectly."

Guided Practice (We do):

- "Now, let's do one together. You can pick the color. If you're using scissors, remember to keep your fingers out of the way. I'll help you with the tricky diagonal cuts." (*Guide the learner through making one continuous strip of t-shirt yarn.*)

Independent Practice (You do):

- "Great! Now you try making yarn from another t-shirt. Remember to ask for help if you need it. Let's make a few colorful piles of yarn."

Step 2: Setting Up the Hula Hoop Loom (I do, We do)

Educator's Talking Points (I do - Demonstration):

- "Now we need to get our hula hoop ready. This will be our loom. A loom is a tool that holds threads tight so we can weave."
- "We'll use our 'special' t-shirt for this. Let's cut 10 loops from it, without turning them into one long strip. They should be like big rubber bands."
- "Watch me. I'll stretch the first loop across the middle of the hula hoop, like a belt. Then I'll take the second loop and make a giant 'X' over the first one."
- "We'll keep adding loops, stretching them across the center, so it looks like we're cutting a pizza into slices. We want our 'pizza' to have an even number of 'spokes' or slices. We made 10 loops, so we'll have 20 spokes."

Guided Practice (We do):

- "Let's put the rest of the loops on together. You stretch one across, and then I'll do one. We want to make sure they all cross in the very center." (*Work together to complete the loom setup.*)

Step 3: Starting the Weave (I do, We do, You do)

Educator's Talking Points (I do - Demonstration):

- "This is the best part! Grab your first color of t-shirt yarn. We're going to tie it right onto the center where all the spokes cross."
- "Now we weave! The pattern is simple: **over, under, over, under**. It's like a little snake wiggling through a fence."

- "Watch me. I go OVER the first spoke, UNDER the next one. OVER the third, UNDER the fourth. I'll keep doing this, going around in a circle. When I go around, I'll gently push the yarn towards the center to keep it nice and tight."

Guided Practice (We do):

- "Okay, your turn to try, and I'll help. Let's say the pattern out loud together as you do it: 'Over, under, over, under...'"
- "What happens when you run out of yarn? Easy! We just tie the end of a new piece to the old piece with a small knot and keep on weaving. The knot will hide inside the rug." (*Practice tying a new strip on together.*)

Independent Practice (You do):

- "You've got it! Now you can continue weaving on your own. You can decide when you want to change colors to make a pattern. I'll be right here to help if you get stuck." (*Allow the learner 15-20 minutes of independent weaving time.*)

Part 3: Conclusion (5-10 minutes)

Recap and Share

Educator asks:

- "Let's pause for today. Show me your amazing work! What was the trickiest part to learn?"
- "Can you tell me in your own words how to do the weaving pattern?" (*Listen for 'over-under' or a demonstration.*)
- "Why is making a rug like this a good thing for our Earth?" (*Listen for ideas about reusing, not throwing away, saving things from the trash.*)

Reinforce Takeaways

Educator says: "You did an incredible job today! You learned how to turn t-shirts into yarn, set up your own hula hoop loom, and started weaving a real rug. You are officially an upcycler! This project takes time, so you can work on it a little bit each day. Soon, you'll have a beautiful, soft rug that you made all by yourself."

Assessment Methods

- **Formative (During the lesson):**
 - Observe the learner's ability to follow the steps.
 - Ask questions like, "What comes next after you go over this spoke?"
 - Check the learner's over-under pattern and the tension of their weaving.
 - **Summative (End of the lesson):**
 - The learner can successfully demonstrate 2-3 rounds of the over-under weaving pattern without assistance.
 - The learner can explain the basic concept of upcycling.
 - The partially completed woven center serves as a physical product demonstrating the skill.
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Differentiation and Adaptability

- **For Learners Needing More Support (Scaffolding):**

- Pre-cut all the t-shirt strips ahead of time.
- Use fewer spokes on the hula hoop (e.g., 8 loops making 16 spokes) for a simpler weave.
- Work hand-over-hand with the learner for the first few rounds of weaving until they feel confident.
- Use very different and bright colors to make it easier to see the over-under pattern.

- **For Learners Needing a Challenge (Extension):**

- Encourage creating a specific color pattern (e.g., two rows of blue, one row of yellow, repeat).
- Introduce a new weaving technique, like using two strands of t-shirt yarn at once for a chunkier look.
- Challenge them to plan out their entire rug design before they begin, sketching the color pattern they want to create.