

# Welcome Mats

*Step-on pads, made of canvas or carpet to protect deck surfaces and collect shoreside dirt when boarding, are easily constructed with these binding and padding tips.*

Sunbrella "carpets" with Sunbrella 3/4" (19mm) binding as seen on a boat at the 2006 United States Sailboat Show.

Story and photos by Jim Grant

We all spend a good deal of time on our brightwork and a good deal more cleaning up after visitors who track all sorts of debris onboard. One way to reduce maintenance chores is to use carpets, mats or pads (we will henceforth refer to all as "carpet") to protect deck surfaces and, at the same time, collect dirt for later disposal. With a little care, these useful items can be constructed so they offer an eye pleasing touch over several years of use.

I like to use 72" (182cm) Boat Blanket (available in blue, gray, beige and black at US\$19.95 per running yard) for such a project. It's extremely durable (even in an abrasive environment) and it lets water run through rather than soaking it up. Alternatively, you could use indoor-outdoor carpet or, for light-duty use, choose acrylic canvas like Sunbrella (available in many colors for US\$13.75 to US\$16.95 per running yard) or Surlast (myriad colors



(bottom to top): Fabricated Stamoid vinyl facing; prefolded Stamoid vinyl 1" (25mm) bias binding; centerfold 7/8" woven acrylic (22mm) binding; 1" (25mm) webbing; and prefolded 3/4" and 1" (19mm and 25mm) Sunbrella acrylic binding.

for US\$13.95 per running yard). Canvas' advantage, in addition to a colorful offering, is that it's easily folded into a very small bundle for storage.

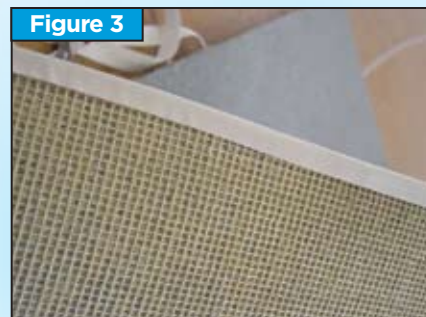
Cut your chosen material to fit between the opening gate stanchions. The most pressing problem with carpet construction is to prevent raveling

Figure 2



Sewing a vinyl facing good side down along the 1/2" (12mm) fold edge to Berber carpet. Notice binder in swing away (unused) configuration.

Figure 3



Vinyl facing glued to underside of Berber carpet.

Figure 4



Finished carpet edge bound with a facing.

Figure 5



Using a swing-away binder to install 1" (25mm) binding on Boat Blanket.

along their edges. A binding, which is a long strip of fabric with folded or sealed edges and lapped over carpet edges, prevents this. There are many binding methods but the following steps are common in canvas work.

Jan Mundy

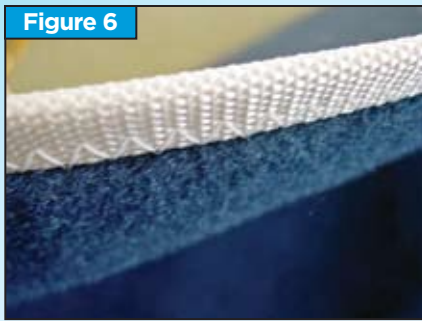


Figure 6 Edge of Boat Blanket finished with 1" (25mm) nylon webbing binding.

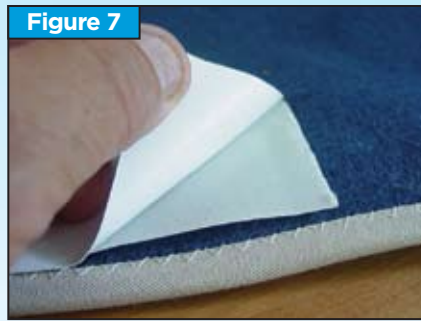


Figure 7 Removing the backing paper from adhesive-backed Velcro hook on the underside of Boat Blanket. The binding shown here is Sunbrella.

## Facings

Tapes used to make 2' (50mm) wide facings are cut 3-1/2" (88mm) wide and then the edges are folded 1/2" (12mm) on one side and 1" (25mm) on the other (as shown in **Figure 1**, bottom sample). They are sewn with a straight stitch with the right (front) side down along the edge (**Figure 2**) and then folded out over that edge so the stitches are hidden. This "unfolded" edge is then glued in place along the back (wrong) side of the carpet (**Figure 3**). Sailrite stocks a special acrylic glue stick (part #102210, US\$1.95 per stick) for bonding these facings. Just squeeze out a bead of glue, 12" (304mm) or so at a time and fold the binding over, holding it in place for a few seconds to secure it.

Facings are prefabricated with folds glued in place and are available in many colors of vinyl (e.g., Stamoid at US\$.60 per 12"/304mm) or acrylic (e.g., Sunbrella at US\$.65 per 12"/304mm). They are especially appropriate for binding thick carpets that may be exposed to heavy use, such as car mats. It's possible to make your own facings from any synthetic fabric, just be sure to cut edges with a soldering gun to seal them.

## Bindings

The most common binding used for thin carpets is a 3/4" or 1" (19mm or 25mm) prefolded vinyl or acrylic tape (Stamoid and Sunbrella at US\$.30 to US\$.35 per 12"/304mm) as shown in **Figure 4**. You can fold this tape down its center and install on an edge with a bit of care but there are mechanical folders (**Figure 5**) that make the work much faster and more accurate (Sailrite part 100102 to 100105 from US\$45 to US\$69).

Clothing manufacturers usually use a bias binding, which is cut on the diagonal across the cloth with seams every 54" (137cm) or so. It's easily shaped to go around corners with relative ease since the stretch of bias cut cloth is easily 10 to 20 times that of cloth tape cut on the thread line. Since seams can cause weak points in canvas work and the bound edges for boat carpets are mostly straight, the tapes used are generally not cut on the bias.

For really sturdy edging on relatively thin carpet, use light weight nylon webbing (**Figure 6**). It's awkward to fold it accurately but, when sewn with a 1" (25mm) binder, it provides an excellent reinforcement for any edge.

Sailrite also offers a centerfold 7/8" (22mm) binding (lots of colors available at US\$.30 per 12"/304mm)

made of an acrylic fiber that is woven so it's more accurately installed on an edge without the use of a binder tool. Again, it's limited to use on relatively thin carpet, such as those made of canvas.

## Finishing

To help keep thinner carpet in place, especially Boat Blanket carpet, you may want to consider adhesive backed Velcro hook strips (US\$.40 to US\$.65 per 12"/304mm). When Boat Blanket is laid over Velcro hook adhered to the

deck surface at strategic places, it sticks quite securely (**Figure 7**) without the need to sew. Other carpet material can be similarly secured if Velcro loop strips are sewn to their undersides so they will mate with the hooked strips. For canvas mats, adding a weighted line sewn into the edge seams and plastic clips that fasten to stanchion bases, ensures your carpet stays put. 🐾

About the author: Jim Grant is the founder of Sailrite (sailrite.com), a supplier of specialty marine fabrics, component hardware and tools, sewing kits and sewing machines. All materials mentioned in this article are available from Sailrite.

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