

CAMP ETIQUETTE? NO, IT ISN'T A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

By an Anonymous and Addicted Camp Follower (aka Wool Groupie)
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Every once in a while, it is good to review a couple things that many of us take for granted. One of those things is camp etiquette. If you follow these basic principles, you will have a grand time at camp and be chomping at the bit to go to the next one—if the pocketbook allows it!

Like me, if you attend several rug camps a year, I bet you have horror stories of things you have seen happen in camp. Most of the time, the perpetrator is not even aware of the faux pas she has committed. She should not be condemned; her teacher at home should have taken the time to make sure she understood the unwritten rules of camp etiquette. Once new hookers understand, they are embarrassed and say they wish they had known. Here are a few things to think about.

1. Bring to camp equipment you need. It may be okay to borrow someone's cutter to cut a few strips of wool, but it is not okay to depend upon using another person's cutter for your entire rug or week at camp...especially a stranger! There are of course exceptions to this—two friends in the same class agree to only take one cutter or you make arrangements with the teacher, camp director, or with someone else in class to borrow or rent a cutter (or some other piece of equipment) because you are flying cross country. It is okay to ask someone if you can try their cutter or frame—especially if it is one you are thinking about buying. Most people do not mind you trying their equipment, but you put them in a horrible position when you assume you can use their equipment as if it is community property.
2. Be aware of food and drink regulations. If you are allowed to bring food and drink into the hooking room (many camps don't allow this), make sure you keep food away from wool because moths love dirty wool! Make sure you take the proper preparations for your drink—cup with a lid or closed container or a bottle you keep closed when not in use. Coffee cups, especially those with sugar and cream, just scare the daylights out of me when I see them on the hooking tables. Accidents happen.
3. Before camp, quickly and completely answer your teacher's letter or email. If you don't hear from your teacher, contact the camp director and let her know. The camp director should take appropriate steps on your behalf without embarrassing or preaching to anyone. That is part of her job—to make sure camp runs smoothly and preparation helps. If this is your first time to ever go to camp, make sure you tell your teacher that this is your first camp. She is not a mind reader. If you have been to other camps, but not this specific one, mention that to her. She may have some words of wisdom that will make your life much easier. If you don't respond to your teacher's letter in a timely manner, you are setting yourself up for a disappointing experience at camp.
4. Bring your pattern, color samples (if needed) and some of your own wool. However, don't bring every piece of wool you own. Imagine what the hooking room would look and feel like if everyone did that. If you need to bring lots of different wools, cut off a small amount and make note that you have more at home or in your suitcase in your guestroom. Under this category, I would be wise to mention *that you should not come to camp with your rug completely color planned and all wool dyed by your home teacher.* Aren't you going to camp to learn and to enjoy the techniques of a new teacher? If your home teacher color plans and dyes your wool, you might as well sit there and hook it with her. 2) Some people may not realize it, but most teachers make most of their income from the wool they sell at camp. Some camps pay adequate salary, but some do not. Yes, they love what they do—but they must be able to carry and replace inventory and still be able make a little profit. Most teachers teach because they love it; the money is just like icing on a cake. If you are like me...wouldn't you rather have your cake with icing? *** And please don't embarrass yourself or your teacher by showing up with a pattern you have copied. Copyrights are like locks. They protect the

artist's work. If you copy an artist's work without permission, you are breaking the lock—or in other words—stealing. Your ethical teacher will tell you that she cannot teach that pattern. So, rather than worrying about copyrights, either buy your patterns from designers or design your own. If you have any questions, ask your teacher before camp.

5. If you are a teacher at home, let the camp teacher teach at camp. Even if you think you are a better teacher, keep your mouth closed for one week. In fact, it is best to insist that your students take a teacher different than the one you take. That will solve many potential problems. They won't see if you agree or keep looking at you for encouragement. Let them spread their wings without you.
6. Write down all your purchases of wool, books, hooks or other materials, and pay your bill without requiring the teacher or camp director to chase you down. Most camps operate on the honor system in the classroom. You simply have a page in a book or a sheet of paper that you write down what you want to buy. If you are in doubt about the price of a specific piece, ask the teacher. Most teachers try to make this process as simple as possible and usually explain it at the beginning of the class, but don't be afraid to ask if you did not understand. Many teachers even allow you to tally up the items and leave the payment on table or in their designated spot. Remember that most teachers are artists and not certified accountants. Some teachers and some camps do not accept credit cards, so make sure you take enough cash or checks. Can you imagine showing up at camp with one check? We usually end up buying wool from every teacher at camp or at least more than one and then don't forget about the camp store and the lodging payment.
7. Turn your cell phone off or to vibrate. If you get a call or need to make a call, take it outside.
8. After camp, if you had an exceptional time or the director went out of her way to help you, drop her a line. We all like to be appreciated. If a camp runs smoothly, you can bet the director did a lot of ground work ahead of time. If you have a problem at camp, don't sulk or tell every Dick and Harry. Go directly to the camp director. That is what her job is—to solve problems. You may be making her aware of something she had no idea was happening. She is a director, not God.