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TWO GREY HILLS - A bordered rug using tones of white, brown and black, which includes an array of geometric groupings. A classic design with high weft counts. Two Grey Hills weavings contain two geometric diamonds in the middle and four corner design blocks. Larger weavings will have middle side design blocks.

STORM PATTERN - A rectangle in the center of the rug represents the center of the storm. Zigzagging lines symbolize lightning bolts, which flow to smaller rectangles in the four corners of the rug. There is usually a water bug and snowflake design between two corners with a sacred arrow on the side.

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SHOP WISELY...TIPS FOR BUYING

◆ Research before you purchase. Familiarize yourself with the styles and types of Navajo weavings, and the materials and other indicators of a well-made, handcrafted weaving. There are many

websites and books about Navajo (Diné) weaving that can provide additional guidance, including *Navajo Textiles: The Crane Collection at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science* (2017).

- ◆ If you are unable to purchase a weaving directly from a weaver, it is important to buy from a reputable dealer or gallery. They will provide you a written guarantee or written verification of authenticity. They will also know:
 - The age of the weaving.
 - Whether it is a traditional or contemporary weaving, and the differences between them.
 - The design of the weaving and some history of the design.
- ◆ Be aware of terms like “Navajo inspired” or “Navajo designed,” as these terms usually indicate a non-authentic weaving.
- ◆ Get a receipt that includes the price, weaver’s name, and weaver’s tribal affiliation (i.e., Navajo).
- ◆ Realize that authentic handmade pieces may be expensive. If the price seems too good to be true, be sure to ask more questions about the item and maker.



A



B

In the imported blanket (A), the edge cordage consists of one twisted braid of yarn attached at the corner (see arrow). An obvious ridge can be seen where the warps were sewn back into the weaving and the warps and wefts are very coarse. In authentic Navajo blankets (B), edge cordage should consist of four to six strands of two to three-ply yarn woven into the body of the textile (see arrow). Edge cordage should be present on all corners of a Navajo rug.

BALANCE AND BEAUTY

Navajos practice Hózhó, a state of order, and this concept informs their way of life. They do not separate the arts, culture, religion/spirituality, daily life, or their connection to the earth, because all of these things are Hózhó.

Navajos strive for the four values of life:

- ◆ The value held for life itself.
- ◆ Their work—for weavers, it is weaving.
- ◆ Their family, extended family, friends, and communal relationships.
- ◆ Their views of growing, acquiring and passing on knowledge.

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YOUR RIGHTS AS A CONSUMER

If you think a business or individual is selling a non-authentic Indian art or craft product, the action may be in violation of both federal and State laws regulating the industry.

For more information, or to file a complaint, contact the IACB at the address below, or visit the IACB website at: www.doi.gov/iacb



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Whether you are in search of a treasured memory of your visit to Indian Country, or you are an avid collector of Indian art and craftwork, you want to know that a Navajo (Diné) textile is authentic. Having some knowledge about Navajo weavings can help you get the most for your money. Because authentic Navajo textiles are prized and often command high prices, unscrupulous sellers may misrepresent imitation weavings as genuine.

INDIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS ACT

Under the Indian Arts and Crafts Act (Act) of 1990, it is illegal to market any art or craftwork created after 1935 as “Indian,” “Native American,” “Alaska Native,” or as the product of a particular Indian tribe if it has not been made by a member of a federally or officially State recognized tribe, or by an individual who is certified by an Indian tribe of their direct lineal descent as a nonmember Indian artisan.

For example, a rug or blanket advertised as “Navajo” that is not produced by a member of the Navajo Nation would be in violation of the Act. The Indian Arts and Crafts Board (IACB) offers this brochure to provide guidance on identifying an authentic Navajo (Diné) blanket or rug.

NAVAJO (DINÉ) WEAVING HISTORY

Navajos believe that Spider Woman, one of their most important deities, gave the gift of weaving to all Navajo people. For hundreds of years, weaving has thrived in the American Southwest, especially in the Four Corners area (New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado), where the Navajo pastured their sheep. The earliest Navajo weavings were traditional textiles—Chief blankets, shoulder blankets, women’s dress, and children’s blankets. These early textiles were woven on vertical upright looms, and warp and weft yarns were finely handspun in natural wool colors, including off-white, black, brown, and grey. Additional yarn colors were limited to native dye plants, and most reds were respun from unraveled bayeta trade cloth. In the mid-1800s, aniline dyes and Germantown yarns became available to weavers through trade, and the color palette increased significantly.

NAVAJO WEAVINGS

Authentic Navajo weavings may be either traditional or contemporary in style and materials. Traditional Navajo weavings use 100% wool warp and weft yarns, and are hand-woven on vertical upright looms with continuous warps. The weft and warp yarns of traditional weavings may be handspun or commercially spun, and the weft may be vegetal or aniline dyed. Side selvages (edge cordages) are used, and edge cordages appear on the top and bottom of these textiles. Contemporary Navajo weavings may incorporate a variety of wools or yarns, as well as designs influenced by both modern life and traditional family designs. Contemporary weavings are usually made on vertical upright looms with continuous warps or (rarely) woven on horizontal looms.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

The following information may help you with identifying a Navajo weaving:

- ◆ The highest quality Navajo weaving, which is the most expensive, features natural handspun yarn and vegetal dyes, is uniform in size, lies flat, and has warp and weft selvages (edge cordage).
- ◆ Navajo blankets are finely woven and generally lighter in weight than imports. A lighter weaving weight (i.e., blanket weight) could indicate both the fineness and authenticity of the rug. A good Navajo weaving has 30 or more wefts per inch—the more wefts per inch, the finer the piece.
- ◆ Navajo rugs are typically woven of hand-carded, handspun, and single-ply wool yarn.
- ◆ Non-authentic Navajo-inspired weavings, or “knock-offs,” are frequently woven on horizontal looms by weavers living outside of the United States, or are machine-made. These weavings may have double ridges every two to four inches on the top and bottom, as the warps are sewn back in. The warp and weft yarns are often coarse, or mixed with acrylic yarns.

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NAVAJO REGIONAL STYLES

Popular traditional weaving designs include:

GANADO - The central motif is usually a bold diamond or cross. A deep red is very prominent in every rug, although some modern rugs use burgundy and multiple shades of grey, instead of red.

YEI - A colorful weaving that depicts Navajo ceremonial figures, but it has no religious connotation. It is usually small-to-moderate in size and the figures are tall and slender.

YEIBECHAI - A bordered rug, usually illustrating Navajo dancers impersonating Yei figures. It is colorful and small-to-moderate in size.

TEEC NOS POS - A colorful, busy, and intricate rug using zigzags, serrated diamonds, triangles, and boxes. Bright colors such as green, blue, orange and red may be used in small amounts throughout the rug.

CRYSTAL - A rug featuring bordered designs with crosses, diamonds, terraces, hook and fork patterns, along with whirling logs and arrows. Modern rugs are borderless and use earth-tone colors. The rug’s pattern features stripes and bands with an intervening “wavy line” of contrasting colors.