



Plied, Dyed & Woven

An Artisan Sale by the Weavers Guild of Minnesota

Frequently Asked Questions

We're happy to share this compilation of wisdom and experience from the many artists who have participated in the Guild's annual sale over the past 50 years.

I'm brand new! Why should I participate in the sale?

Here's what's special about the Plied, Dyed & Woven (PDW) WGM experience.

- It's an incredible feeling when someone purchases a skein of yarn you spun, fiber you dyed, or a towel you wove on your loom! Selling your items can be so meaningful.
- At some point, your family and friends will have enough scarves and towels. Selling your excess inventory can pay for new fiber and yarn!
- We're here to support and encourage you – we're not your competitors. The goal is for everyone to do well.
- Selling at PDW is fun, easy, and economical.
 - PDW is structured as a collaborative joint sale for our members, where you bring your finished item(s) and leave the rest to skilled volunteers.
 - We include your works with those from all participating artists. Your yarn or towel or rug will be attractively merchandised with others like it.
 - The cost to you is the lowest you'll find in any market in the area! As a first-time artist, your entry fee is only \$25. (*First-time artist means you have not previously sold at Fiber Fair*)
 - You don't need to pay for space or a tent, or worry about display fixtures, handling payments or collecting sales tax.
 - Costs are so low because every participating artist volunteers at or before the event. We offer training so you feel prepared for your shifts.
 - PDW is a great way to test the market for your creations. A typical sale offers more than 3,000 items for our buyers to choose from!

- o All artists take an active role in making PDW successful by promoting the sale to friends and supporters. We'll even help you do that too, with Facebook and Instagram posts you can share.
- You'll meet new fiber friends! It's a festive atmosphere, and the perfect way to meet guild members who share your interests. Many of the participants have developed lifelong friendships--and look forward to sharing the experience with new members.

What's NEW and different for this year's sale?

Over the past 2-1/2 years, a team of new and experienced members have been re-envisioning the Guild's annual sale. These changes are based on feedback we've heard from past participants and customers and is also based on surveys and focus groups:

- **Name** - The sale gets its name from the fiber traditions our guild supports: Plied (spinning), Dyed (dyeing) & Woven (weaving). Objects at the sale bring these arts to life for our shoppers and the new name reflects this.
- **Venue** – PDW will be held at the Minnesota State Fair's beautiful History and Heritage Center. We're so excited about this centrally-located, large, light-filled space. With a ton of parking just a few steps away!
- **Marketing** – Our marketing efforts must take advantage of digital media platforms to reach the greatest number of consumers.
 - o Defining and figuring out how to sell to our target market was one of our biggest learning spaces. We thank new members of our team who are experts in this area.
 - o To have a successful sale, **we need everyone involved to pitch in with marketing**. Our Marketing team will create materials you can share online.
- **Categories of goods for sale** – Categories have been narrowed to ensure that the work for sale represents the Guild's mission. This came from two factors:
 - o We outgrew our space (again!). After considering over 20 venues, we were priced out of any space larger than 4,500 square feet. We needed to examine our product mix and space requirements.
 - o Our customers told us we were straying from the guild's mission: to preserve and advance the arts of weaving, spinning, and dyeing. We have re-focused on selling objects which exemplify these arts.
- **Registration fees** have increased slightly to offset increased costs.
- **Compensation for items sold will ONLY be by mailed check**. When you drop off your items for the sale, you will need to supply a Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope (letter size please) or pay a \$2 fee. This greatly simplifies the process for the Guild and makes it easier for new sellers.

- **Tags & Sales Inventory Sheets** –There's a new Category number and tag.
 - o We've added the "Category Number" to provide a consistent way to identify the 3,000+ items we sell. Now we can accurately report back to you on what's selling and for how much.
 - o Tags - The size has been reduced by about half. We heard you loud and clear that the tags were too big.
- **More changes to come!** – There is a long list of things still on our list to examine in the coming years to ensure the sale's continued success. This includes streamlining the sale processes and applying technology to lessen the workload.

What types of items sell the best?

Over the past 5 years, the top 5 sales categories have been:

Category	Avg Annual Qty Sold	Average Selling Price*	Pricing Range
1. Towels	195	\$ 32.50	\$ 28 - 60
2. Yarn (Handspun and/or Hand Dyed)	150	\$ 27.00	\$12 - 48
3. Scarves	100	\$ 56.00	\$40 – 160+
4. Rugs	55	\$ 82.00	\$60 – 400+
5. Hats & Mittens (Handspun and/or Hand Dyed)	45	\$ 35.00	\$30 - 90

**NOTE that each of these categories has a significant range in pricing – do not use the average shown above to price your work.*

How should I price my items?

Pricing is a perpetual challenge, but there are some rules of thumb. In general, PDW encourages keeping sale prices predictable and consistent, while appropriately valuing your handcrafted efforts. Here's how artisans who regularly sell their products think about it.

- A range of prices is appropriate to reflect differences in materials or complexity of design.
- Pricing may also reflect level of skill. For instance, a professional weaver who sells their work may know through experience that their market audience will pay more for their items.
- Many new sellers underprice their work, using national retailers and catalogs for mass-produced items as a gauge for pricing. Mass-produced items often

have lower craftsmanship, and the pricing does not reflect the true cost of the item produced.

- We encourage you to price your items considering the following. As an individual artisan, you ...
 - have created your item with your own hands
 - have selected and purchased fibers and colors
 - spun and plied, or dyed, or woven, a one-of-a-kind item
 - spent countless hours honing your craft, purchasing equipment, and learning through mistakes to become the maker you are today
 - are offering a unique item for the consumer, one which reflects your story and experience
- Unique and quality handcrafted items command a good price for the artisan. Lower prices tell a customer they are getting the same thing at the PDW Artisan Sale that they could buy at local chain stores. We market your work as handcrafted – not mass produced.

An example for pricing for standard size Towels at PDW:

- A towel made of 100% 8/2 unmercerized cotton often sells for \$35-40.
- The same towel made of 50/50 linen/cotton will sell for \$45-50 recognizing the higher cost of linen.
- A 100% linen towel with hand ladder stitching in the hem can sell for \$60 or more, recognizing the additional skill required.

Where can I find out what the typical sizes are for towels, kitchen linens, scarves, etc?

- WGM instructors are terrific sources
- Handwoven Magazine's "The Weaver's Companion" spiral-bound book
- Long Thread Media (publishers of Handwoven Magazine) has two websites which may be helpful: longthreadmedia.com and handwovenmagazine.com.
- There are many online Facebook groups for spinners, dyers and weavers whose members are eager to answer questions

What trends should I consider?

- **"The Story"** – Most retailers know it's often the "story" that sells an item. That can be the story behind the creation of an individual item or your own story as a fiber artist. If your piece has an interesting backstory, taking the time to create a unique tag can make all the difference in a sale. The customer will tell that story many times over.

Example: An artist had taken a photograph of the Oslo, Norway Opera Center at night, with the lights shining on the water and snow. The many shades of blues, grays, and metallic yarn used in the shawl replicated the feel of the photo. Attaching a small color photo of the Opera House with the item helped sell the shawl at \$160.

- o Including a business tag gives the consumer a place to find out more about your process and make a connection to you or your work. Many shoppers return to PDW looking to support artists whose work they are familiar with.
- **Color & style** - Visit your favorite clothing, furniture, home furnishings websites, Instagram, Pinterest, and retail stores for current color, texture and finishing trends. Also consider:
 - o Reference the Pantone web site for color trends – both their Fashion and Home Furnishings predictions
 - o Colors come into favor and go out. In 2010 one found virtually no home fashions in any color of blue. Today, in 2021, blue is everywhere! Capitalize on color!!
- **Natural dyes and fibers** continue to be strong sellers.
- **Scarves** are trending longer and larger over the last several years – many are a cross between a scarf and a shawl
- **Cooler fall weather** at PDW helps sell warmer hats, mittens and scarves.
- **Holiday décor and gifts** - Customers are thinking about holiday décor and gifts as they consider purchases.
- **“Life on the go”** items are popular- items related to computers, e-readers, cell phones, drink cups, water bottles, etc.
- **Pet lover** items: collars, leashes, sweaters, etc.
- **Bags** - Totes, backpacks, and diaper bags sell well

What items have our customers asked for that we haven't carried enough of?

- More handspun, hand dyed yarn
- Men's scarves
- “Outlander” inspired scarves, cowls, shawls (Tartan plaids)

What standards do experienced artists use?

- Towels are generally hemmed, rather than fringed, for durability. Towels are washed and ironed.
- Fringes on scarves or table runners should be twisted fringe or durably braided – they need to stand up to cleaning without unraveling.
- Scarves should be washed as its care label suggests and ironed as appropriate for the fiber type.
- Rugs have some specific durability considerations, as they are often subjected to hard wear and repeated washings.
 - o Cloth / rag wefts should be prewashed and dried
 - o Wool rug yarn makes a beautiful and long-wearing weft (80% wool / 20% nylon) and does not require pre washing
 - o While unspun fiber is rarely used for weft, this type of construction should be washed after weaving and finishing to the point of felting