

learn how to felt 4 free projects using needle felting and wet felting techniques

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If you want more texture in your artwork, one of the quickest and most satisfying ways is to incorporate felting.

Felting is among the oldest of textile techniques, the product of a magical combination of raw materials and simple manipulation with friction or needles. Wet felting and hand needle felting are experiencing a renaissance as artists enjoy creating their own artisanal textiles. The advent of the needle-felting machine, also known as an embellisher, not only allows artists to create new, unique textiles, but to do it quickly.

In our free eBook, **Learn How to Felt: 4 Free Projects Using Needle Felting and Wet Felting Techniques** from CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS, we give you techniques for incorporating felt and felting into your mixed-media projects.

In "Adventures in Felt Making for Embroidery and Mixed Media," Sarah Lawrence will tutor you in wet felting, using nothing more than wool roving and kitchen supplies. Once you have your felt base, you can go on to

embellish your piece with foil, beads, wire, and found objects.

Hand needle felting is a low-tech process that allows you to create felted motifs. Kelli Perkins shows how easy it is to make your designs pop with colorful roving, hand needle felting, and embroidery floss in "Fiber Effects: Hand Needle-Felted Trading Cards."

Beryl Taylor is a huge fan of the needle felting machine. In "Fun with Needle Felting," she creates a mixed-media scroll and book combining fibers, fabric foils, rubber stamps, and fusible webbing.

If you've ever wondered how you could use half-completed knitting projects or yarn scraps in a mixed-media piece, Beate Knapp will show you. Her "Autumn in the Forest" tutorial is a creative exercise in machine needle felting with fibers, embroidery, and found rusty bits.

Making your own felt projects is so much fun and so satisfying. We know you will enjoy **Learn How to Felt: 4 Free Projects Using Needle Felting and Wet Felting Techniques from Cloth Paper Scissors**, from CLOTH PAPER SCISSORS, and creating with the information provided by these creative artists.

Warmly,

Jenn Mason
Editor, Cloth Paper Scissors

cloth paper
scissors COLLAGE ARTISTIC
MIXED-MEDIA DISCOVERY

Learn How to Felt: 4 Free Projects Using Needle Felting and Wet Felting Techniques

presented by

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Where mixed media
artists come to play



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adventures in feltmaking

for embroidery
and multimedia

felt is the oldest textile known, and its history is fascinating. It is a non-woven fabric that pre-dates the spinning of fibers and weaving of cloth. It has been made by the nomadic tribes of Central Asia for thousands of years. These nomads herded sheep, goats, camels, and horses, and therefore had a ready supply of wool and hair with which to make felt. It was used to cover shelters and for making headdresses, bags, and clothing. There is evidence of felt being made in Britain in Roman times. Traditional feltmaking continues in countries throughout the world, including Turkey, Afghanistan, and India, where feltmakers all have their own way of working. I have had the privilege of travelling to Kyrgyzstan where there is still a living culture of feltmaking. My method is a variation on the rolling methods used by many people in the Middle East and Central Asia, both past and present.

MATERIALS

- 1 piece of bubble wrap (about 20" x 20"), with small bubbles
- Felting net or fly screen from hardware store (same dimensions as piece of bubble wrap)
- Bar of soap (A low-suds soap, such as an olive-oil based one, is easier to work with because it produces fewer suds.)
- 4–8 ounces of Merino-type wool roving tops (mixed colors); Corriadale wool is also a good felting fiber.
- A plastic bag
- Warm water
- Sponge
- Small bowl
- Old bath towel

note: When you have finished felting, your piece will have shrunk to about half of the size of the bubble wrap piece you started with.

Above: "Single Heart"—Felted base of Merino wools, silk tops, and bits of dyed silk chiffon embellished with free-motion embroidery and beading. The central motif was stitched intensely with free-motion embroidery and then gold leaf and metallic paints were applied.

BY Sarah Lawrence



For a colorful piece of felt, try felting different colors of Merino wool together.

Felt is made when fibers (generally wool or hair) are laid down and encouraged to interlock and crimp together. This is achieved by adding heat, agitation, and pressure or by changing the acidity of the fibers. This process can be readily demonstrated by putting a woolen sweater in the washing machine by mistake!

The instructions below will start you on the road to felting. Once you have seen how the fibers react and how the process works, try experimenting. Add scraps of fabric, threads, silk fibers, chiffons, and so on, to your felt. This method of making felt results in a soft felt which is particularly suitable for further stitch or textile embellishment. In the next issue, I will be demonstrating various ways to embellish your felted surface.



directions

1. Lay the towel on your work surface.
2. Place the bubble wrap on top of the towel, bubble side up.
3. Choose one of your Merino-type fibers and hold it in one hand, about 5" to 8" from one end.
4. With your other hand, gently pull some fibers loose from the wool roving (or tops) and lay them on the bubble wrap, starting 3" to 4" from the edges. It is important to leave
5. Repeat the process, laying out the fibers and overlapping them slightly, much as tiles are laid on a roof. All these fibers should be aligned in the same direction.
6. Lay out a second layer of fibers on top of the first, but at right angles to the first layer. This layer could be the same color as the first layer, or you may choose a different color. You now have 2 layers: one running north-south, and the other east-west.

Bits of silk tops can add sheen and a silky texture to your felted piece.

"Multiple Hearts"—Felted base of merino wool, silk tops, and bits of dyed silk chiffon. Edges were given a three-dimensional effect by combining multiple layers of free-motion motifs. Gold leaf and metallic paint were applied around the smaller hearts, then the entire piece was beaded.



7. Now take some fine strands of wool roving in other colors and lay them randomly across your piece. At this stage you can also add thread snippets, silk fibers, and so on, to create an elaborate surface on your felt. You can be as creative as you like.
8. Lay the felting net over the piece.
9. Use your sponge to wet down the fibers through the net with hot water to the touch (not scalding). Two applications of water with your sponge should be enough, but be prepared to add more if required. It is essential that all of the fibers are wet.
10. Lightly rub the bar of soap across the surface of the net, and then gently stroke the net with your hands. This will start to work the soap into the fibers. Use a plastic bag over your hands for this step to protect your hands and help to minimize pilling.
11. As soon as the fibers appear to “pill” through the net, remove the net and continue to rub the fibers gently by hand for about one minute or so.
12. If you would like a more defined edge to your felt, fold the bubble wrap over so that the irregular edges of the fibers are folded back onto the piece.
13. Now roll up the bubble wrap with your piece still inside it, forming a tube. Keeping the “tube” intact,

gently roll the tube back and forth to continue the felting process.

14. Unroll the tube, turn the bubble wrap and piece 90 degrees, and roll it up in the new direction. Gently roll the tube back and forth to continue the felting process. The piece has now been rolled both top-to-bottom and side-to-side. It is important to rotate the felt because it shrinks in the direction that you are rolling it.

By now you will have a piece of felt in the “pre-felt” stage. Note that several things have occurred:

- The fibers have started to mesh together.
 - Colored fibers laid on top have started to migrate through to the bottom, and the fibers from the first layer have moved towards the top.
 - The piece has shrunk as you have felted it.
15. Repeat step 14 several times until your felted fabric has shrunk to about one half of its original size, or it is sufficiently felted for your needs. Rinse in warm water, then gently squeeze out the excess water.

Allow your piece to dry.

note: You can adjust the size and shape of the felt while it is wet by either continuing to roll it to shorten it, or by carefully stretching it if it has shrunk too much.

These last steps are part of the hardening or milling process. Traditional methods involve fiercely rolling the wool fibers in hand-woven reed mats or “mother felts” so that the fibers shrink and mesh together to produce a durable, robust fabric. I prefer to have a soft felt to work with, one which is not fully “hardened.” When felt is destined for further embellishment for decorative purposes such as wall hangings, pictures, adornments, it obviously doesn’t need to be as strong as the felt used by the nomads for clothing and shelter.

Don’t be afraid to experiment. The experience you have in making your felt will give you the confidence to make this process your own. If you would like to further embellish your felt with beads, stitching, and mixed media, watch for my second article in the next issue of *Cloth Paper Scissors*TM. ●

Sarah Lawrence is a contemporary textile artist based in Newark, Nottinghamshire, England. Visit her website: sarah-lawrence.com.

fiber effects

colorful needle-felted trading cards

big, fluffy bundles of carded wool, lamb-soft tails of curling top, and silky strands of intense hue beckon spinners and knitters. Who can resist dye-batch names like “lollipop,” “hot peppers,” and “moon goddess”? If owning sheep is not your cup of tea, there is undoubtedly someone in your community who thrives on it. My semi-rural town is rich with family-owned operations producing a delicious artist’s paint box of hand-dyed, unspun fibers. But what if you’re not gifted with the tools to turn roving into yarn? You can still join in the fun by learning the inexpensive art of needle felting.

With a variety of fibers, you can create a painterly effect. Subtle differences in color allow shadows and highlights, just as if you were creating with watercolors. If you’re truly ambitious, you can purchase plain wool or silk roving and dye it yourself. Be sure to use dyes appropriate for animal material, such as acid dyes. Each type of material requires a different dye process in order to create rich color and washable results. There are even

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BY Kelli Perkins

new plant-based alternatives to wool and silk, like soy silk and hemp, as well as sustainable green fibers made from bamboo and other materials.

MATERIALS

- Ruler
- Scissors
- Felt pieces
- Felting needle
- Foam felting block
- Roving (assorted wool, silk, soy)
- Fabric pieces
- Fusible webbing
- Iron

optional

- Embroidery floss
- Beads
- Sewing machine and thread
- Oil pastels

This simple artist trading card (ATC) project is a great introduction to the craft and a good excuse to indulge in some ultra-soft roving.

preparation

1. Choose a felt color for the background of your artist trading card. Both wool and synthetic felt work nicely for this project, so choose whichever gives you the feeling you want.
2. Cut backgrounds slightly larger than ATC size (2½" × 3½"), as the surface will shrink a bit as you felt. It's better to start larger and trim when you are done than to end up with an undersized card.
3. To speed up the process, you can cut a template out of cardstock and zip around it with a rotary cutter. I keep a bunch of pre-cut felt bases with my supplies, so I can start a new one without missing a beat.

4. Gather some fibers for your project. Any loose fibers will do; I combine natural and synthetic fibers on my ATCs. You will see wool spinning fibers referred to as roving, top, or sliver (pronounced with a long "i"). These should form the base of your image because their fibers will more easily become entangled with the base felt, creating that familiar felted look. But throw in some other fibers for fun, like tussah, silk hankies, or throwster's waste. You can mix them up with the wool or use them on top for an added splash of color.
5. Determine what kind of image you want to create on the front of your card. Start with larger, less complex shapes and work towards more intricate designs as you gain experience. A simple heart or flower is a nice beginning.

needle-felting basics

Here's a quick introduction to needle felting. It's much less intimidating than traditional soap and water felting; the first time I saw a demo, I was entranced. It's so easy that it feels almost silly. But the results are beautiful and look very much like traditionally felted designs. You'll need a special felting needle, but they're very inexpensive. They are usually shaped like an "L" with an extremely sharp point on the long side. Notches are cut along the shaft and the resulting barbs cause the fibers to get trapped on the back side of the base felt.

There are other types of felting devices available, with four, six, or more needles attached, or you may have seen the



popular electric needle-felting machines, which look like sewing machines and make needle felting a breeze.

note: Hand felting needles come in various gauges and each will be suitable for a different type of roving or project. Try several to determine which you prefer. A middle-of-the-road 36- or 38-gauge is useful for most things.

The only other equipment you need is a piece of thick foam for felting into. You can find it with the other felting supplies, or improvise, but make sure the foam is thick enough to prevent the needle from reaching the bottom (and a body part!).

felting

1. Place a pre-cut felt base on the felting foam.
2. Pull a small tuft of roving and fold or roll it into a loose ball roughly the size of the image you want to create. Lay it on the felt and poke the needle into it a few times to secure it to the foam.
3. From that point, poke the needle into the roving repeatedly until it begins to form a bond with the base. Be extra careful to know where your fingers are in relation to the needle at all times. After poking for awhile, pick the base up from the foam and move it to another position. You'll see that the roving has migrated to the back of the felt base.

note: It is only necessary to push the needle into the foam $\frac{1}{2}$ " or less.

4. Continue poking the roving, tucking and folding the edges over with the needle as you go to form the image you are trying to create.

5. Once you've outlined the basic form, select small tufts of different colors and place them on top of the already felted area, then felt over them again to meld them into the picture. You can create highlights and shading with various shades of wool or silk. Go ahead and mix different kinds of roving and even lengths of fun fibers and yarns. Many things will felt up nicely.
6. Add embroidery stitches, machine stitching, or beads to finish your project. You can also add more highlights or shading with oil pastels, but use a gentle hand so that you don't tug at the fibers.
7. Once you've finished the front, stretch the ATC with your fingers to make sure it's flat and not bunched up. Measure and trim it to the correct size, $2\frac{1}{2}$ " \times $3\frac{1}{2}$ ".
8. Cut a piece of backing fabric the same size and iron it to the back of the ATC, using fusible web.
9. Create a blanket stitch border with floss or fancy machine stitches. ●

felting tips

- Be sure to insert the needle directly up and down and not tilted to the side or it may bend or break.
- Felting needles are very sharp! Watch what you are doing at all times.
- Spread your fingers wide to hold down the piece of felt while keeping your fingers as far away as possible from the felting area. There are nice chunks of foam available from felting suppliers, but a piece of foam rubber works fine as long as it's deep enough to absorb the full length of the needle. The foam will eventually become compressed and worn out and will have to be replaced.

Kelli Nina Perkins is a mixed-media artist and librarian living on the shores of Lake Michigan. She is the author of *STITCH ALCHEMY* and host of the Quilting Arts Workshop™ video "Stitch Imagery." Visit her blog: ephemeralalchemy.blogspot.com.



fun with needle felting

many art quilters have succumbed to the machine needle-felting craze, and mixed-media artists aren't far behind. There are a number of exciting effects mixed-media artists can achieve with a needle-felting machine (and no, you don't just have to needle-felt wool—pretty much any assortment of soft fabrics and materials can be machine needle felted together).

From a distance, a needle-felting machine looks like a sewing machine, however it doesn't sew. Instead of a top thread and a bobbin thread, a needle-felting machine has a cluster of very sharp needles whose sole task is to

punch fibers and fabrics together when you press down on the presser foot. Machine needle felting is really easy to do, and the results can be so beautiful, it gives that sense of instant gratification. I was so inspired when I saw some of Jean Littlejohn's needle-felted pieces in person that I recently tried my hand at my own mixed-media, needle-felted scroll, shown here.

MATERIALS

- Needle-felting machine (I use a Babylock® Embellisher.)
- Cotton velvet for base
- Scrim in colors of choice
- Acrylic felt
- Bits of silk roving, waste (Oliver Twist Strata Packs are ideal for this.)
- Painted WonderUnder® cut to same size as base (painting method below)
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Iron
- Fabric foils
- Chiffons and other light fabrics
- Rubber stamp with text imagery
- Black inkpad
- Thick silk thread and needle for hand stitching

directions

1. To make the background interesting, needle felt a layer of scrim onto the cotton velvet.
2. Cut circles of acrylic felt and needle felt them into place.

tip: If you feel that you've overdone your needle felting and have lost too much of the motif, simply flip your piece over and needle felt from the back to bring the colors back through to the front.

BY Beryl Taylor



Right: Small strips of a printed rayon fabric were needle felted to create a colorful background for this spread.

Below: For this little needle-felted book I used a variety of silks and light novelty fabrics to create interesting pages. Once the foundation of fabrics was needle felted together, I embellished the pages with beads and ephemera and then stitched the pages together to form a book.



3. Cut a smaller piece of silk waste and place it in the center of each acrylic felt circle. Needle felt from the front and from the back to integrate.
4. Take your piece of painted WonderUnder and place it painted-side down on top of the needle-felted piece. With your pencil, mark on the release paper side where the felted circles are underneath the WonderUnder and cut these circles out of the fusible. (This is so the painted WonderUnder won't cover up the felted circles.)

With your iron set at the cotton setting, iron the WonderUnder on top of the entire piece. Pull back the release paper from the WonderUnder.

5. Needle felt areas where you have fused the WonderUnder. This will help to give the piece an aged effect.
6. Take 1 or more foils, and iron the foil onto the WonderUnder in various areas.

7. For added depth, needle felt bits of chiffons or other light fabrics in the areas without foil.
8. Take your text rubber stamp and stamp randomly.
9. Embellish the piece with a running stitch using a heavy silk thread. ●

Beryl Taylor is a mixed-media fiber artist, teacher, author, and host of two Quilting Arts Workshop™ videos in which she shares her techniques. Visit her website: beryltaylor.com.



how to paint WonderUnder or other fusible webbing

1. Take a metallic paint such as a Lumiere® by Jacquard®, and slightly water it down with water.
2. With a foam brush, lightly paint the fusible side of the WonderUnder.
3. Allow it to dry overnight.

autumn in the forest

A creative exercise in machine needle felting

Creativity helps me to be happy and healthy; it helps me to love who I am and what I do today. I have tried to make quilts—I love quilts—but I felt that was not the right way for me to express myself.

BY Beate Knappe

I always loved to do things my own way. Finally, I found the needle-felting machine—a tool that gives me the freedom to do what I want to do, with the materials I want to use, and in the way I want to use them. Working with the needle-felting machine is like a meditation for me. I allow the materials to “talk” to me and my work is the answer. If I am doing a mixed-media piece with this tool, it is all about mood and emotion.

Since I started working in mixed media I have learned that I don’t have to be perfect, because art is not perfection. Art, for me, is somehow the opposite of, “Hold on tight and don’t let go.” Letting go is what I have to do when I’m machine needle felting.

What I had in mind when I started this piece was autumn in the forest—the sun and the colors at that time of the year. I love walking through the forest in autumn.

When starting a project, I first make up my mind about the materials I want to work with. In this case, I selected wool roving in a color mix of green, red, and blue; strips of hand-dyed scrim, ramie, and silk; and a piece of stinging nettle fabric (you can also use a piece of burlap).

Because I spin my own threads from wool roving and linen fabrics, I was able to use different embroidery threads in green, yellow, and red. For special effect on this piece I used some leftover knitting and little pieces of rusty materials that I found.

tip: Iron your felted piece patiently before you start to embroider.

directions

1. Create a base fabric. I wanted the edge of the piece to have an organic effect, so I placed felted pieces, different fabrics, and knitted pieces on my nettle fabric (or burlap) and punched them with the machine until I liked how it looked.

2. Add more roving and fabrics until the piece is the size you want. I felted this piece for a very long time and only punched from 1 side, the back; the piece includes 4 fabrics.

3. Add yarns and pieces of scrim; felt them onto the piece to give it depth. I used yellow linen yarn and hand-dyed scrim.

4. Iron your felted piece.

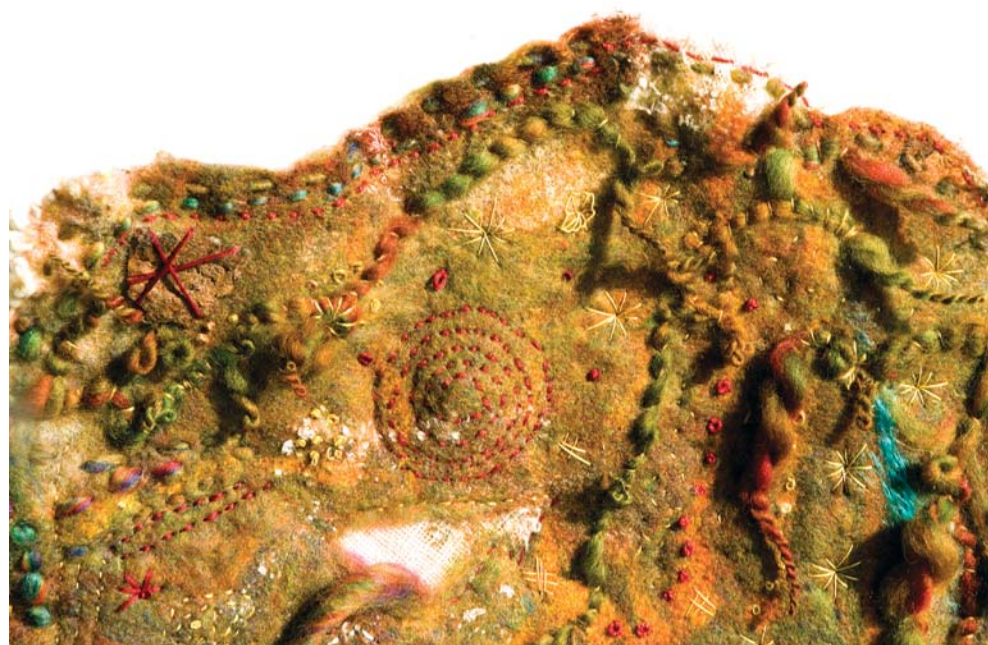
5. Create the border. Using embroidery threads and yarn in different thicknesses, I made a running stitch around the piece.

6. Add more stitching. I twined the end of some hand-spun yarns and let them hang over the edge of my piece on the left side. Then I added

odd stitches all around my piece because I liked the way it looked. I also scattered some German knots in different colors all over the piece.

7. Attach found objects. I fastened on 3 pieces of rusty materials using embroidery threads. ●

Photographer and mixed-media fiber artist Beate Knapp lives in Germany. Visit her blog: beates-fabric-art.blogspot.com.



MATERIALS

- Wool roving in different colors, dependent on your theme
- Strips of hand-dyed scrim, ramie, and silk
- A piece of burlap
- Yarns and embroidery threads of choice
- Leftover felting or knitting scraps from other projects
- Found objects, such as rusty bits
- Needle-felting machine (I use a Baby Lock® Embellisher.)