



FELTMAKING STARTER KIT

How to Make a Basic Flat Felt

Introduction:

Felt happens when we apply moisture and friction to wool fibres. The scales on the wool open and begin to matt together.

You will need an old towel, warm water, soap, bubble wrap; an old piece of net and a bamboo table mat are useful but not essential.

Laying Out:

- Put the towel on a table and place the bubble wrap (bubble side up) or a bamboo mat, on top.
- Hold the end of a piece of wool lightly in your hand, then using your other hand pull off sections of wool about 10cm long. Lay these out evenly in one direction, overlapping slightly, there should be no gaps. A square of about 25cm is good to start with.
- Lay out the next layer in the same way but at 90°.
- A third layer may be laid if required, in the same direction as the first. This gives a thicker stronger felt.

Decorating:

- The piece can now be decorated using contrasting colours of wool, silk and other yarns in any design you like; it is time to let your creativity and imagination flow!
- If using non-wool yarns or materials that will not felt you may need to place a fine layer of wool over the top to help keep them in place.

Felting:

- Carefully sprinkle hot water over the dry fibre right up to the edge – you can use a plastic milk bottle with holes made in the top for sprinkling. Gently rub the surface with soap. You can use a soap solution instead.
- Cover with net or bubble wrap, bubble side down and gently rub and press the wool to remove the air and incorporate the water/soap solution. You will need to wet the surface if using bubble wrap to allow your hand to glide.

- Gently at first, rub the surface with a flat hand, in a circular motion. After 2-3mins you can gradually increase the pressure checking every so often to see how much it is felting. This is done by pinching the piece to see if the fibres are beginning to come together.

Fulling:

- Once it is felted roll the piece up in the mat or bubble wrap. Gently squeeze out any excess water
- Wrap it in a towel to prevent slipping when rolling and roll it back and forwards like making pastry.
- After a few minutes open it out and you will see that it has begun to shrink.
- Now turn it by 90° and roll it again. Keep turning and rolling and turn it over and roll it so as to create even shrinkage.
- Turn and roll in this way until the piece has shrunk and stiffened to the desired amount. This depends on the intended purpose for the felt.

Completing:

- Once you have finished rolling unwrap the felt and you can scrunch it up in your hand and throw it into the sink or other hard surface. This will give the fibres a final shock into place.
- Now rinse in warm water using a splash of vinegar in the final rinse to neutralise the soap and then leave it to dry naturally.
- It is interesting to measure and compare how much your felt has shrunk.

You have now made felt; easy!

If you would like more information about feltmaking workshops please contact:

Mairi Stones
Inverlochan
Letterwalton
Benderloch
Argyll
PA37 1SA

mairistones@f2s.com
01631 720118

Suppliers:

<http://www.winghamwoolwork.co.uk>
<http://www.twistfibrecraft.co.uk>

<http://www.texere.co.uk>
<http://www.fibrecrafts.com>