

Having Fun With Making Felt

- ***Felting is a Magical Process.***
- ***Trust your fingers.***
- ***It's the movement that makes the felt.***
- It's the repeated movements that make the felt.
- The direction of the repeated movements influences the shape of the felt.
- Water lubricates the fibers, which facilitates the movement of the fibers.
- Soap acts as a wetting agent for the wool fibers.
- Soap also seems to act as a lubricant – making the fibers move more easily.
- Too much soap; too much lubrication & the fibers don't 'grab' one another. They tend to float around freely – impossible to control.
- ***Always begin with fine, gentle movements.***
- As the felt gets harder, the movements can be firmer.
- This is a mechanical process, based on movement of the fibers into a zillion knots.
- Wetting the fibers and letting them dry, does Not make them into felt – *it's the movement that makes the felt.* A partially felted piece can be dried and wet again later to continue work.
- To lay out flat felt, use at least two layers, with the layers at right angles to one another.
- You can cover flat felt or nuno felt with nylon voile before you wet it – this helps to keep the fibers in place as you add the water. Drip the water over the voile & press down flat with your hands. Don't start rubbing.
- Using Bubble Wrap: start with the bubble side down.
- Felting has 2 stages: felting and fulling. Felting forms the wool into a 'fabric' that hangs together. The hairs knot together as they travel among each other with repeated movement. Fulling *shapes* the felt, making it *smaller*, tighter, firmer and stronger. Fulling tightens the knots in the direction you want.
- Hot water makes the felting go faster – it's especially helpful for the fulling process.
- Using a washboard: starting with fine, gentle movements, roll the piece along the washboard. Do not rub the piece back and forth on the washboard – that would just abrade the surface fibers. Keep turning the piece over, sideways, inside out – moving it in different directions.
- The direction in which you move the felt is the direction in which it gets smaller. (Repeated movements in the same part of the felt, determine the shape of the piece. The fibers are drawing closer together in that direction.)
- Embellishment fibers can be 'trapped' into the felt by wisps or veils of the wool as you lay out your piece.
- Short staple, carded wool is great for making balls, cording & shaped or sculptural pieces.
- Long staple, combed wool is great for making nuno felt, color shading and just about any felt except for small sculptural detail. It can be cut and recarded for that.
- Do not use Superwash or any machine washable wool. It's been chemically treated to *prevent* felting.
- Especially when using a wool or fiber you haven't used before, experiment/sample.
- ***Have Fun! The Right Way is the way that works for you.***