



Tips for Working with Wool Felt

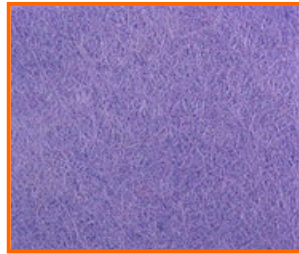
What is Wool Felt? The wool felt I use for my patterns is either a 20/80 percent or a 35/65 percent wool/rayon blend and is manufactured by [National Nonwovens](#), a company located in the United States. It is made by matting and compressing woolen fibers. You can find wool felt at local fabric and craft stores and on the internet.

Although I have seen wool felt used for almost anything, I do not use it for projects that get a lot of wear and tear, such as a hooked rug or bed quilt. Instead, I use wool felt for penny rugs, table runners, candle mats, wall quilts and other projects that will only need occasional spot cleaning or dry cleaning.

Why Use Wool Felt? You will love wool felt it is beautiful, inexpensive and fun to work with! It currently comes in nearly 100 different colors and can take on the look of “boiled wool” which is explained below.

How Do I Prepare Wool Felt? I often use wool felt in its smooth, original form exactly as it comes from the manufacturer. Unwashed wool felt has more body and it is easier to see the stitching and embellishing details. You may find your wool has folds or creases from being rolled on the bolt or folded to fit the package. Creases are easily removed by misting lightly with a spray bottle of water and ironing with a press cloth and a low steam setting.

On the other hand, washed wool takes on a wonderful bubbly texture and can be made to look like expensive “boiled wool”, which is often used for traditional penny rugs, etc. You can expect washed wool to shrink from 3” to 5” in length and 2” to 4” in width per yard, so be sure to take that into consideration when planning yardage for your project. Here are before and after photos of wool felt straight off the bolt and felt after it has been washed:



Before (Straight off the Bolt)



After Washing

To get the boiled wool look:

- Soak the wool in very warm water until the color stops bleeding from the wool (usually at least 15 minutes). Be sure to soak each color separately. Also, do not use a washing machine or you will get excessive pilling.
- Squeeze out as much water as you can, but do not wring or twist the felt or it will stretch out of shape.
- If you have very small pieces of felt, lay them on a towel to dry (they will not be quite as bubbly, but they won't shrink as much). Otherwise, dry larger pieces of felt in the dryer just until slightly damp. Be sure you put only one color at a time in the dryer, or the colors will bleed together and slightly marble (unless that is what you *want* to happen!).
- Remember, *wool felt shrinks* and the amount of shrinkage you get will depend on the fiber content, temperature of your water and dryer and the length of time you washed and dried the felt. Obviously, you are going to get more shrinkage and bubbling with a 35/60 wool/rayon blend than with a 20/80 blend.

Now What? We're getting down to the good part! Whether or you choose to pre-wash or use your wool felt straight from the package, you don't have to do anything with the edges--it cannot fray! Here's how to use it:

- Trace your shapes onto the smooth non-waxy side of freezer paper (you can find freezer paper in the grocery store). I do not recommend using fusible web, as it makes the pieces too stiff to stitch through.
- Loosely cut around the shapes, leaving a small margin around each one. Iron the freezer paper onto the wool felt. The waxy side will temporarily stick to the felt, but will not leave a residue. Cut out the shapes on the traced lines.
- Remove the freezer paper and position the shapes on your background. Use a *small* amount of washable fabric glue to tack the shapes to the background.
- Use embroidery floss, DMC perle cotton or wool threads to stitch the shapes to your background with any number of fun, decorative stitches such as the blanket

stitch, whip stitch, primitive stitch, etc. I often use embroidery floss because of the huge array of colors it comes in and because I already have tons of it. In fact, I used embroidery floss in the photo at the very top of this instruction sheet.

How Do You Care for Your Project? If you wanted the “boiled wool look” and properly pre-washed your felt, it should no longer bleed and you should be able to gently soak it in cool water for a short time and lay it out to dry. A *very light* steaming using a protective cloth will restore your project to its original form. Be careful not to over-iron or it will remove the bubbly texture. If that happens, gently re-soak your project and let it dry again. *There is one exception: If your project is made with highly contrasting colors, such as white and red, I recommend you only spot clean or dry clean your project to avoid any possible left-over bleeding.*

If you did not pre-wash your felt and used it straight from the package, it is important not to soak it now or the colors will bleed. Instead, dry clean or gently spot clean with a soft cloth. Again, wrinkles and creases are easily removed by misting lightly with a spray bottle of water and ironing with a press cloth and a low steam setting.

Where Can You Find Patterns and Wool Felt? Many of my appliqué patterns can be made with wool felt. Visit me at <http://www.americanpiedesigns.com> to see my line of patterns and what you can do with wool felt!



Although you can usually find limited colors of wool felt at fabric or craft stores, it comes in nearly 100 beautiful colors over the internet! I specifically recommend <http://www.woolfeltcentral.com> or <http://www.commonwealthfelt.com>. They carry every color manufactured by **National Nonwovens**, shipping is lightning-fast and they are super to work with.

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