




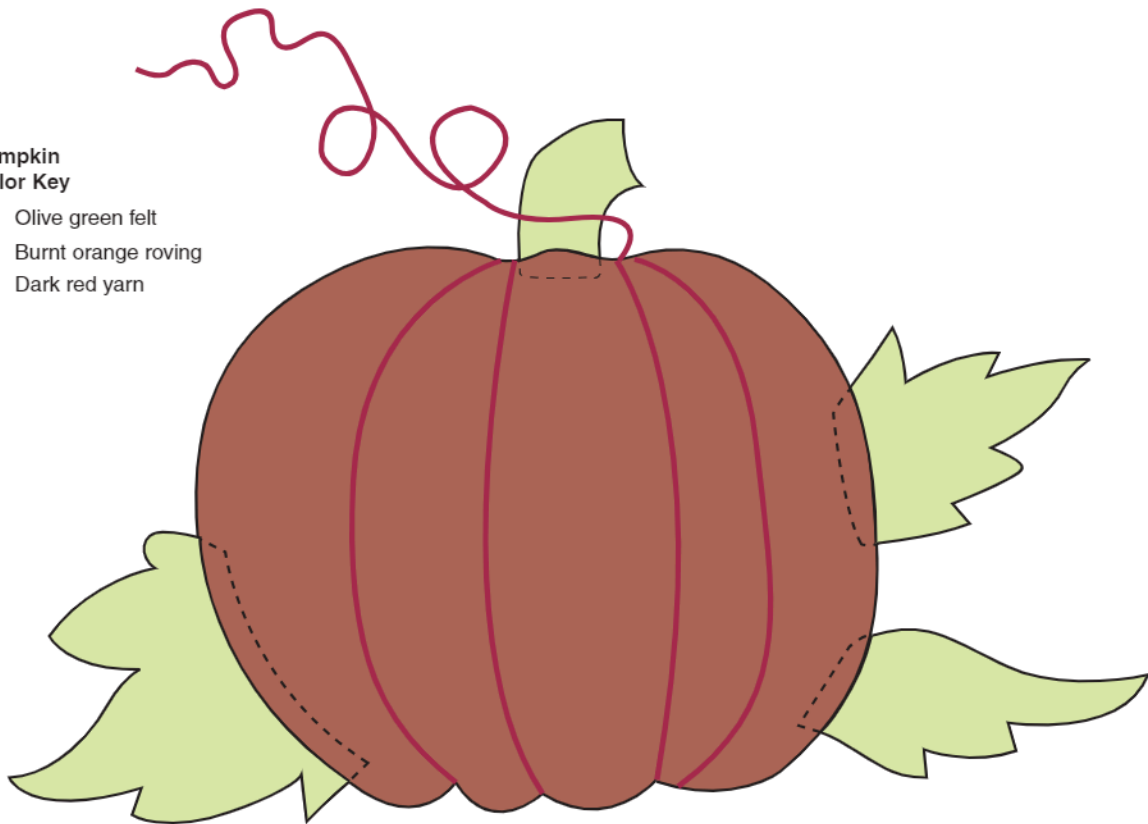
Pumpkin

Needle felted on goldenrod felt base fabric.



Pumpkin Color Key

-  Olive green felt
-  Burnt orange roving
-  Dark red yarn



Needle Felting Basics

Felting is the method by which wool fibers are interlocked to create a dense and durable fabric. Wool can be felted with hot water and agitation or by using a felting needle. Needle felting is also referred to as dry felting because no water is required.

Needle-felt designs can be applied to a variety of base fabrics, including commercial non-woven felt, hand-felted wool and various fleece fabrics. Wool sweaters, either hand- or

machine-knit, can also be shrunk into felted fabric. All base fabrics should be tested to determine suitability for accepting needle-felted decoration.

Needle felting is done with needles that have tiny barbs which catch on individual fibers in the appliqué fabric as well as the base fabric and mesh the two materials into a single layer. The needles are very sharp, and great care must be taken to keep

fingers out of the way. Single needles are available as well as multi-needle tools that contain several needles and cover a larger area.

When using the felting tool the base fabric must be on a surface into which the needle can sink. It must be deep enough to protect the work table surface and dense enough to support the fabric. Foam pads and brushes made specifically for this purpose should be large enough for the design and small enough to fit



inside a project if necessary. The fabric can be moved easily as the design progresses, and it is best to work the complete design before making the base fabric into a finished project.

Materials for Base Fabric

The base fabric used depends on the final use of the design. Commercial non-woven felt comes in many colors and sizes. Felted woven materials will sometimes show a frayed edge after felting. Hand-felted wool knits make thick fabric, good for purses and heavier projects. Fleece material (commonly used for sweatshirts and jackets) works very well for wearable projects. Always test the fabric first. Needle felting will distort the base fabric, so work with a piece of fabric larger than is actually needed, then trim the fabric to its final size when the project is finished.

Felting Materials

Felt, either non-woven wool or synthetic, in a variety of



Photo 1

thicknesses can be used. Felt is good for cutting out more complex patterns. Always test to make sure the material will needle felt successfully. Wool roving is made from wool fiber that has been carded but not spun. It is available undyed or in many colors. It can be shaped by being rolled in one's hands. Damp hands help to keep the fibers together.

Tools

In addition to felt and roving, there are only a few tools necessary for needle-felting projects:

- Felting needle
- Felting pad or brush
- Tracing or tissue paper

Using Felt Fabric for Appliqué

Trace the design onto thin tracing (tissue) paper. (Photo 1) Pin the pattern to felt fabric and cut out the shape.

If the paper pattern will be used several times, cover the traced lines with transparent tape before cutting to make the pattern stronger.

Applying Roving First Method

Shape pieces of roving to fit the printed pattern in the book. (Photo 2) While maintaining their shape, move them onto the base fabric. Then lightly tack them into place with the felting tool. Most shapes start with a pinch, large or small, of roving that has been rolled into a ball or a long snake. Cut to the correct length then twist or trim into pattern shape.



Photo 2

The roving material should be about twice as thick as appears to be necessary since quite a bit of the material “disappears” to the back of the base fabric. If the finished color is too transparent, add more roving and needle felt on top of the original shape.

Second Method

Cut out a window template from tracing paper. If the design has many circular shapes, a plastic circle template may be useful. Lay template in place on the base fabric then tack roving in place, easing the edges into shape. (Photo 3)

Tack felt or roving lightly in place until all parts of the design have been added. Then do the final needle felting. Remember, more felt or roving can be layered on if the color is too transparent.

Hint: The felting needles are very sharp, so keep your fingers away from where the needle is being inserted. A long pin, toothpick or heavy needle can be used to hold small pieces in place while working on them.

Transferring the Patterns

Use the book patterns as guides for the final design. To mark the base fabric for placement, trace design and mark base fabric by poking a sharp pencil through the paper. For example, mark the points of leaves or centers of flowers.



Photo 3

Overlaps are indicated with a dotted line. Beads and buttons are shown with circles for placement.

Add yarn or narrow felt strips for outlines or stems. Curve outlines or stems to match pattern, then felt in place. Yarn can be stitched in place through the base fabric, then felted. To add beads, buttons and other embellishments, finish all needle felting, completely steam piece to flatten the fabrics, and then sew on the final touches.

Hint: To make swirls with yarn, twist the yarn until curves and swirls are formed naturally.

Embellishing Materials

Yarn of almost any type can be used for linear designs, such as flower stems or vines. Embellishing yarn does not need to be wool, and some of the novelty yarns work quite well. Ribbon can also be used and can be basted onto the base fabric before needle felting. When working with yarn or ribbon, hide the ends under part of the design.

It is a good idea to test yarn and ribbon on a scrap of base fabric before starting the project to see if you like the results.

Additional embellishments can be added to the final design: beads, buttons, bells, charms—the possibilities are endless. ●

Project Instructions

Coasters

1. Cut two layers of base fabric 5 inches square. The excess material will be trimmed when coaster is finished.
2. Trace circles and leaf shapes onto tracing paper. Pin tracing paper shapes to felt appliqué fabric and cut out appliqués.
3. Checking pattern (pages 7 and 8) for placement, arrange appliqués on one piece of base fabric. Add roving to center of flower.
4. Tack into place (with a few pricks of the needle-felt tool), rearranging if necessary. Needle felt in place.
5. Tack yarn details onto flowers, then needle felt until the design is completely merged into the base fabric. Needle felt onto second layer of base fabric.
6. Steam flat and trim to 4 inches square.
7. Thread a needle that fits through the beads with two strands of embroidery floss. Knot ends and bring from back to front near edge. Work Blanket Stitch as in Fig. 1, threading a bead onto needle and moving it down to edge before each stitch. Use about 17 beads per side. Add a few extra stitches to hold beads at corners.

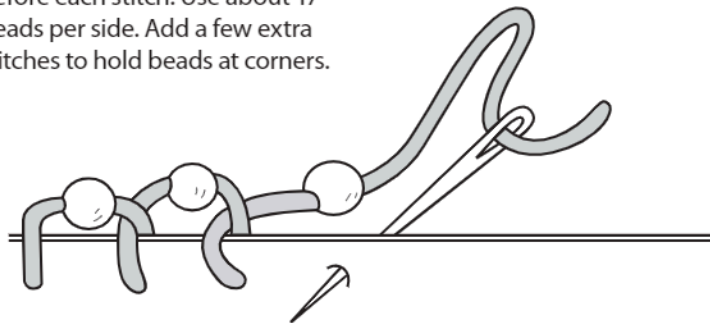


Fig. 1
Blanket Stitch

Pillows

1. Cut two layers of base fabric larger than 10 inches square. The excess material will be trimmed when pillow is finished.
2. Trace circle and square shapes onto tracing paper. Pin tracing paper shapes to felt appliqué fabric and cut out appliqués.
3. Checking pattern (pages 9 and 10) for placement, arrange appliqués on pillow front fabric.
4. Tack into place (with a few pricks of the needle-felt tool), rearranging if necessary. Needle felt in place.
5. Arrange strips of roving to match pattern. Needle felt until the design is completely merged into the pillow fabric.
6. Steam flat and trim both pillow front and back to 9 ½ inches.
7. Placing right sides together, machine-stitch sides of pillow with a ¼-inch seam. Leave an opening on one side to insert fiberfill stuffing.
8. Turn right sides to outside and insert stuffing into pillow cover. Hand-stitch the opening closed.

Purse

1. Cut two pieces of base fabric 10 inches square, and using base fabric as a pattern, cut two layers of felt for purse lining. The excess material will be trimmed when purse is finished. The photographed model is made with fabric cut from a wool sweater felted in the washing machine. The lining is non-woven felt.
2. Baste an 8-inch square on purse front fabric for a pattern guide. Mark the center point on each side of square. Following pattern (page 11), tack yarn diagonal lines into place (with a few pricks of the needle-felt tool), rearranging if necessary. Pull yarn ends through to wrong side of fabric.
3. Trace oval shapes onto tracing paper and cut from felt appliqué fabric or roll roving shapes to fit pattern (page 11).
4. Arrange felt appliqués and roving shapes on intersections of yarn grid to match pattern.
5. Tack into place (with a few pricks of the needle-felt tool), rearranging if necessary. Needle felt in place.
6. Steam flat. Sew on button centers using embroidery thread.

- 7.** Attach store-bought handles using doubled strip of base fabric. Stitch one handle securely to top edge of front (Fig. 2) and second handle to top edge of back, taking care to center handles.
Carefully trim the top edge of purse front, purse back and both linings evenly.

- 8.** Lay purse front on lining, wrong sides together, purse back on second piece of lining and sew top edges of linings to front and back.
9. Line up handles so that front and back pieces, including linings, are even. Pin to hold in place and stitch around sides and bottom of purse. Trim evenly.

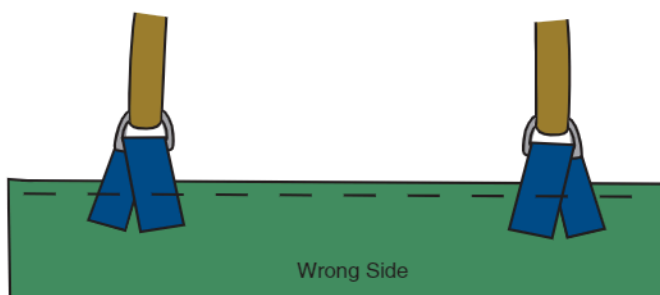


Fig. 2

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank the following companies who generously supplied products for our projects:

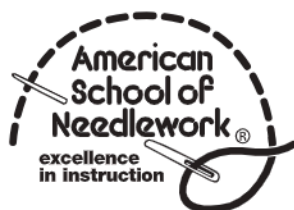
National Nonwovens, www.woolfelt.com: Shaded Wisps Needle Felt wool roving

Clover Needlecraft, Inc., www.clover-usa.com: felting needle tool, refill felting needles, felting needle mat

The Colonial Needle Co., www.colonialneedle.com: felting needle tool

Eyeglass Case

- 1.** Cut one piece of base fabric 9 inches square; and cut one piece of felt for lining to same size as base fabric. The excess material will be trimmed when eyeglass case is finished. The photographed model was made with cream non-woven felt.
- 2.** Baste a 7-inch square and the fold line, according to pattern (page 12), on base fabric for a pattern guide.
- 3.** Checking pattern for placement, arrange yarn stem swirls on one half of the base fabric.
- 4.** Shape roving to form leaves and flowers, and place on base fabric, according to pattern.
- 5.** Tack into place (with a few pricks of the needle-felt tool), rearranging if necessary. Needle felt in place.
- 6.** Steam flat. Glue on rhinestone flower centers.
- 7.** Lay decorated piece on lining fabric, placing right sides together. Sew top edge only, on the basted line. Trim and turn right side out. Press seam.
- 8.** Pin or baste fabric and lining together, matching the outer basting lines. Fold on center line and match basting lines. Sew around sides and bottom. Trim evenly outside the stitched line. ●



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