

ART KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER: Skills 3 - Felt Making

Equipment for wet felt making:

- 1 Bubble wrap
- 2 Wool fibres – mixed colours
- 3 Washing up liquid
- 4 Towel
- 5 Net curtain material
- 6 Water

The felting process

Step 1. Cover the whole piece – in a piece of net curtain.

Add some hot/warm water to the middle of the piece and some washing up liquid. Work outwards from the centre of the piece – pushing with your hands and smoothing down the fibres until they are flat. The design will move around if you are too heavy handed – but this can add to the fun!

Step 2. Rub vigorously – using the palm of your hand all over the piece mop up any excess water as you go. Gently peel away the net from the wool – if the design lifts lay back down and rub further. Some of the wool may travel through the netting – don't worry this is normal!

Laying down the fibres

Step 1. Tease out the fibres – from a piece of white wool and lay down onto the bubble wrap with the fibres going in the same direction. Build up layer by layer changing direction of the fibres at the end of each layer.

Step 2. Build up about four layers – (depends on the thickness of the final piece) – making sure that there are no gaps and that you can see no mat below.

Step 3. Add a coloured layer – create your design in a range of colours – don't worry about any direction at this stage, but don't lay down thick pieces as they will be hard to join together. Make lines, dots or marks by twisting the wool or separating the wool.



Assessment Objectives

AO1	Develop ideas through investigations, demonstrating critical understanding of sources
AO2	Refine work by exploring ideas, selecting and experimenting with appropriate media, materials, techniques and processes
AO3	Record ideas observations and insights relevant to intentions as work progresses
AO4	Present a personal and meaningful response that realises intentions and demonstrates understanding of visual language

The final part - Shrinking

Step 1. Remove the netting and roll up your bubble wrap with the felt inside.

Step 2. Hold the roll – over a sink or bowl and gently squeeze out the excess water.

Step 3. Unroll the mat – then re roll tightly using elastic bands to hold the bubble wrap in place. Lay a piece of cloth or t-towel around your mat and wrap it up. Use the palm of your hands to roll the mat to and fro – you are creating friction at this stage and this helps the felt to shrink

Step 4. Unwrap – you will see that the pattern has shrunk – tug the edges if it need to be pulled back into shape. Turn the felt through 90° and wrap up again in the mat and then the fabric. Roll again the more you roll the more it will shrink! Squeeze out any excess soap or water as you go. Rinse out in cold water and hang or layout to dry.

Needle felting

- **What is needle felting?**
- Have you seen needle felting and wondered how the wool magically turns into a fox or a hare? It's not as magic as it seems! In fact, anyone can learn how to needle felt in a matter of hours.
- Felting needles have tiny barbs at the end that, when pushed through wool (and some other fibres), the individual fibres come together forming a solid material. With needle felting, you can create almost anything by manipulating the wool into the shape you want and then stabbing it with a felting needle.



Felting needles

These come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but you can't go far wrong with a 38-gauge star needle which is a great all-rounder. If you really get into the craft you might want to try some other sizes but it's often not necessary.



Wool

100% sheep's wool works best for needle felting, and some wools work better than others depending on what you're trying to make. Bulkier wools such as Corriedale or Shetland are great for sculpting and shaping, whereas finer wools like Merino or Blue Faced Leicester are good for adding layers of colour and getting a fine finish. You can also felt with other fibres such as Alpaca, Yak and even some plant based fibres.

Foam or other working surface

You need something to work on that isn't your lap or a table. The foam needs a surface it can go into so that they don't snap, and you need something to protect your fingers from the stabbing! Dense foam is great, or other surfaces such as rice bags can also be a good alternative.

Other useful bits and pieces

You may also want to look at getting a needle holder – I recommend one that can hold 1-3 needles at a time, but only start with one needle. You can progress to using more when you've done a few projects.