

NEEDLE FELTED



Felting is considered the first textile goods humans ever created, with some samples of felt dating from the Neolithic period. Needle felting is much newer, originating in the 19th century, with the first patent for a needlepunch machine awarded in 1859. These machines were used to making batting and insulation on an industrial level using shredded woolen garments and hides from slaughterhouses. Needle felting as a craft only dates back to the 1980's and is largely attributed to the Stanwood family in California, who are credited with designing the notched needle we use today.

Sources: Britannica.com; feltbetter.com; sweetpeadolls.co.uk

What is Needle Felting?

Needle felting requires wool roving (processed wool not yet spun into yarn) and a special needle. A felting needle has tiny notches cut into the shaft. As you repeatedly stab the wool roving these notches catch on the microscopic scales that make up the fibers, causing the scaly fibers to grab each other and interlock, similar to Velcro. As the fibers mat together, or is felted, it becomes firm and takes shape.

How to Needle Felt

- Gently pull wool roving apart to separate the fibers.
- Roll into basic shape.
- Insert and remove needle at the same angle, do not twist or turn needle.
- Not necessary to insert needle all the way through the object.
- Keep turning the object as you punch to evenly felt all sides.
- Make complex objects by joining simple shapes together.

Resources

Needle Felting for Beginners Tutorial, Felts by Philippa

youtube.com/watch?v=PnkVLApVejc

Easiest-Ever Needle Felted Pumpkins, Lincolnshire Fenn Crafts

lincolnshirefenncraftsblog.com/2022/10/07/make-easy-needle-felted-pumpkins-and-diy-autumn-decorations/

Guide to Felting Needles

Felting needles come in different gauges. The gauge number refers to the diameter of the needle. The higher the number, the finer the needle, so a 40 gauge needle is finer than a 36 gauge.

Different needles come with varying numbers of barbs. The more barbs, the quicker the felting but less barbs will give you more accuracy with fine detail work.

Begin with a larger needle for bulk work and shaping, and move on to finer needles for surface and detail work.

Triangular Felting Needles - Barbs on 3 Sides

32 Gauge - This is a sturdy needle good for working with course fibers and firmly attaching pieces. Not great for detail or a neat surface.

36 Gauge - A good needle for making the bulk of a 3D piece and again, attaching pieces well. Not good for any detail work.

38 Gauge - A good all rounder needle good for doing bulk work and adding some detail. Good for sculpting with but not so good for course fibers.

40 Gauge - A fine needle for detail work and getting a neat surface. Best not to use it when working with course fibers or for rough sculpting/bulk work.

42 Gauge - An even finer needle generally reserved for adding fine hair, tiny wisps of wool, etc.

Star Felting Needles - Barbs on 4 Sides

36 Gauge - This is good for quick firm felting, for using with courser wools and for joining pieces together.

38 Gauge - Similar to the 36 Star but also good for slightly finer work and finer wools. This is a great all round needle which works well for doing bulk sculpting work and adding detail.

Spiral Felting Needles - Barbs that Twist Around the Needle

38 & 40 Gauge - The barbs on these needles twist around the end. This makes them felt quickly and gives a neat finish minimizing the surface holes you can get with other needles. They are not as good for doing bulk sculpting work.

Reverse Felting Needles

Barbs on these needles go the other way, pulling the fibers out rather than pushing them in. This creates a fluffy finish on a well felted piece.