

Handi Felting Foot Kit

Techniques and Tips

What is Felting?

The Handi Felting Foot Kit puts a modern twist on an old way of creating embellished fabric by meshing fibers together so they interlock and become one. The kit includes a needle body that holds 5 barbed needles that will punch the fibers and mesh them together and a special foot that will protect your fingers and hold the fibers in place as you work.



Select Fibers

Needle felted cloth is fun, easy and quick to create. All that is needed is a base fiber and bits of other fibers to add to the base. The fibers can be anything that can be penetrated by a needle: silk, yarn, wool or silk roving, tulle, cheese cloth, ribbons, fleece, lace, felt, burlap, sheers batting. Some fibers work better than others for this technique, experimentation is key. At least one of the 2 fibers you wish to combine needs to be fibrous, like felt or wool. Trying to felt 2 layers of a smooth finish fiber like quilting cotton or 2 layers of sheers doesn't work well. You must play with your yummy fibers and textiles!



Machine Prep

Once you have your assortment of fibers, refer to the **Handi Felting Foot Instruction Manual** to get the needles and foot attached to your machine. If you quilt on a movable machine it is helpful to attach your ruler base to provide a flat surface for laying out your fibers. Remove the bobbin case from the machine and set it aside. Felting creates huge quantities of lint. Be sure to clean the bobbin area frequently while felting and when finished clean thoroughly and oil the bobbin race before starting a quilting project.



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Machine Settings

Set the machine to manual mode. Go slow when first starting until you have a feel for how it goes. I like the machine speed to be about 500 SPM. This allows me to move at a nice moderate pace. You want to keep moving, staying in one place too long can create a hole or can push all the fibers to the back of the piece. Different fibers require different amounts of felting to meld the fibers together.

Set your needle to stop in the up position so that you can move away and add more fibers without having to raise the needles



Mounting the Fabrics

If you needle felt with a movable machine you can mount your base fabric by attaching it to the leaders. If the piece is not large enough, simply baste some muslin or scrap fabric to the edges and attach that fabric to the leaders. Mounting to the leaders is not necessary however, you can always use channel locks to keep your machine stationary and use the ruler base to give a surface to support the fabric. That allows you to move your fabric under the needles just like you would do on a stationary machine. It works well for very small pieces.

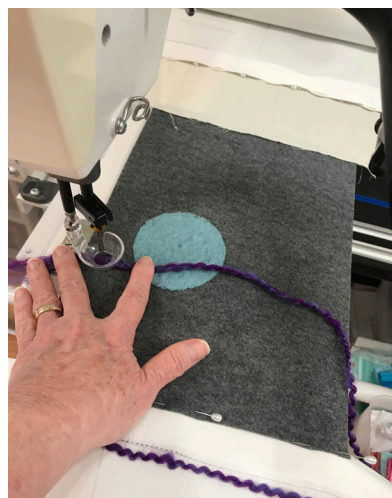


Getting Started

Start simple with two layers of craft felt. Use one piece for the base and cut out a simple shape from another piece. Lay the shape where you'd like it on the base fabric. Move the machine over the shape and start by lightly going over the entire shape to tack it down starting in the center and moving out to the edges. Once tacked in place go back and felt securely. You will quickly see how fast or slow you need to move to get the desired results.



Next try some yarn. Use caution so as to not get your fingers near the needles. Needle felting is a very organic technique so don't be too worried about being exact. Try felting the yarn as it comes from the skein and also try separating the fibers.



Add as much or as little you'd like. Once you take it off the frame you can trim it and add a piece of felt or cotton batting to the back, running a line of stitches down the center. Fold over on the stitch line and you've got a fancy little needle book to use for those hand stitching projects.



Now play with some different fibers and different substrates. The possibilities are endless.



Burlap, craft felt and yarn



Tips

Broken needles

Using the proper size needle for the fibers you are felting helps to prevent needle breakage. Refer to the chart in the Instruction Manual. If you do break a needle be sure to change it right away. Continuing to felt with a broken needle can cause larger holes in your project. Also, check for broken needle parts in your work and in the bobbin race area.

Needle Felting small pieces

Secure smaller pieces with a plastic stiletto or a bamboo skewer using caution to keep the holder away from the needles. Slow the machine down and move carefully to prevent broken needles.

If you have some very small pieces, secure by hand with a single needle. Place a piece of foam under your base fabric and felt the small piece by poking the needle by hand. An alternative might be to cover the smaller pieces of fiber with a sheer fabric and felt through all the layers.



You've Got This

Since you are already a longarm quilter, you already have the feel for free-motion quilting and needle felting is very much the same motion. You might not be accustomed to running your machine in manual mode. Since there are no “stitches” to show, it doesn't matter and the smooth sound of the machine at a constant speed helps you to move smoothly. One thing you want to remember is to have the machine set at a faster speed and you should move the fabric (or the machine) at a slow rate. This will help prevent breaking needles. Also remember to have the needle stop set for UP.

Hand Work

Is hand a 4 letter word for you? If so skip to the next section.

If you enjoy a little hand stitching from time to time, felted fabric is a lovely substrate for hand stitching. Add some stitches to your needle felted pieces to add detail. You'll love it!

Back It Up

If you have a very loosely woven base, you might want to try needle felting from the back. Fibers get punched through loosely woven fabrics easily. So start from the back and punch through to the front. You can get some really unique looks this way.

Speaking of backing it up, when you needle felt with a felt or wool fabric in order make a bag or purse or pouch that will get used, you may want to consider lining the item with a woven fabric to add some strength. Felted fabric can stretch easily so the lining will hold the contents of your bag and the felted fabric will give it style!



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