

## Working with Felt

Felting woven wool and wool sweaters:

1. Look for items that are 100% wool. These most likely will be marked dry clean only. Thrift stores usually have a good selection, but garage sales can also be a good source. Do not worry about any holes in the wool, as many will disappear or you can cut around them.
2. Woven wool in old suits or pants can be used. If you are working with a suit jacket, it can be very time consuming to remove the interfacing, so check the inside of the coat to see how much there is. A well-made suit coat may have a lot of interfacing, but you can get some great color selections from suits.
3. Prepare the wool for felting by cutting apart clothing items. When working with knitted items cut off seams but keep them and felt them too. Sort items by color. The felting process creates a lot of wool fuzz and if you mix the colors, some will migrate from one item to another. This is not much of a problem for dark colors, but other colors will look muddy.
4. Place the items of each color into a zippered pillow protector. This will minimize the fuzz in your washer and the colors from migrating. Most wool items have not been washed in water previously, so I always put in a color catcher sheet in with the load. Wash similar colors in the same load. Set the water temperature to hot and the clean level to dirty to get the most agitation. If you have a front load washer without an agitator, put something like washable shoes or tennis balls in the load to help create friction. Add a normal amount of soap as this helps the process.
5. One wash and dry cycle is often enough, but if the fabric does not appear tightly locked together you may have to run it through a few more times. I have had to run cashmere and alpaca wool items through several times to get them felted. Some people air dry their wool, but I have found that the added agitation of the dryer is helpful. Just make sure you stop the cycle when the items are still slightly damp.
6. The more times you put the wool through the process, the tighter and thicker it will get. If you are felting woven wool for applique, one time through should be enough. Just check the edge to see that it is not raveling.

Sewing the wool:

1. Joining strips of felted wool can be done by hand with a whip stitch, but I prefer to use a bridging stitch on my sewing machine. Place the two pieces side by side – no overlap, and either use a bridging stitch or a wide zigzag to join. This works best if the pieces are of similar thickness. I then cover the seam with wool roving using a felting needle.
2. When using the wool for applique, there is no need to turn under a seam allowance as the felted wool doesn't ravel. Use wool tapestry yarn or embroidery floss. There is much greater color selection with embroidery floss. There are many stitches to choose from to sew on the applique. Using the blanket stitch is popular, but using a whipstitch is all that is required.