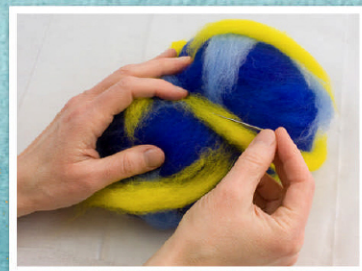


Learn to Make Felt Covered Soap

by
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*These step by step felting projects are an ideal way to get started with wet felting. They were developed to be included in my book *The Complete Photo Guide to Felting* but were not included, as the publishers felt that would make the book too long. Therefore, these projects assume that you have at least beginning felt making experience and understand the basic terminology of wet felting. The projects are graded from easy, intermediate and more complex. If you're a beginner, choose the easy projects first and then as your skills develop, you will be ready to try the more complex projects. Don't feel that you need to use the same colors as shown or even the exact same type of wool. Use similar wool as the type suggested for your first try but feel free to experiment. If you don't have the exact equipment that is suggested, that's OK. Use what you have and substitute tools as needed. The important part is to get your hands wet and have fun playing with the fibers! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.*



Soap encased with an exfoliating layer of felted wool is wonderful in the shower and is great for gardeners and mechanics. The felt acts like a loofah and scrubs your skin at the same time the soap foams up. Your soap will last longer with a felt coating and the felt shrinks down as the soap is used. Felted soaps make colorful gifts and are an easy felting project to begin trying wet felting techniques.

You Will Need

Bar of Soap

1/4 ounce (7 grams) fine to medium fine wool
(such as merino) in your chosen base color

Small amounts of contrasting colors of wool
for embellishment

Nylon stocking or panty hose

Water

Size 36-38 Felting Needle - optional

1. Open a new bar of soap. Use any variety.



Quick Tip: Rounded bars are easier to cover. Shave off the square corners to make the soap more rounded if you have a square/rectangle bar of soap. The left over pieces of soap can be saved to make a soap jelly for later felting projects.



2. Take the base wool and layout one layer of fibers. Lay out enough fibers for one complete wrap of the soap bar. Wrap the fibers around the bar of soap.



3. Repeat with two more layers of the base wool. Place the layers so the fibers lay in the opposite direction from the prior layer. Turn the soap bar over with each wrap so the wool is wrapped evenly instead of all on one side of the soap bar.



4. Add the embellishment fibers on the top layer of the base wool.



Quick Tip: Don't try for too much detail as the fibers will move easily and fine details will be lost. If you want finer details and the fibers to stay in place better, needle them lightly in place. Avoid sticking the felting needle into the soap by needling at an angle.



5. Hold the wool carefully in place with one hand and put the entire wrapped soap into the toe of the nylon stocking. Tie a knot in the stocking close to the soap. Avoid catching bits of wool in the knot. Check to make sure that the wool hasn't shifted and left any soap exposed. Move and straighten the wool as needed.

Quick Tip: Once you have tried one, make more than one at a time. Just follow steps 1-5 and fill the stocking with as many felted soaps as needed.



6. Dunk the nylon covered soap into warm water. Clasp the soap in your hands and gently press the wool flat against the soap bar. Keep wetting and squeezing the soap until the wool is completely wet.



7. Begin rubbing all over the soap gently with your hands to begin the felting process. Avoid aggressive rubbing. The wool will feel very mushy but just keep gently rubbing and working the soap in your hands.



8. Continue gentle rubbing until you notice the wool fibers starting to migrate through the nylon stocking. Gently peel the nylon stocking away from the wool. Make sure that the nylon stocking is loose and not stuck to any part of the wool covered soap but don't remove the stocking yet.



9. Increase rubbing pressure as the wool begins to hold together. The wool will feel like it is becoming less mushy and will begin to shrink around the soap.



10. Perform the pinch test through the stocking and check that the wool is holding together well over the entire soap's surface. If the wool is holding together, proceed on to step 11. If the wool pulls apart easily, continue rubbing until the pinch test shows that the wool has felted.



Pinch Test: The pinch test is a method to determine if the felt is holding together enough to begin fulling. Pinch the fibers and pull up and away from the piece of felt. If the fibers pull loose, the piece is not felted enough.

If the fibers pull taught making a tent shape but hold together in a solid piece, it is time to begin fulling.



11. Remove the nylon stocking from the wool covered soap.



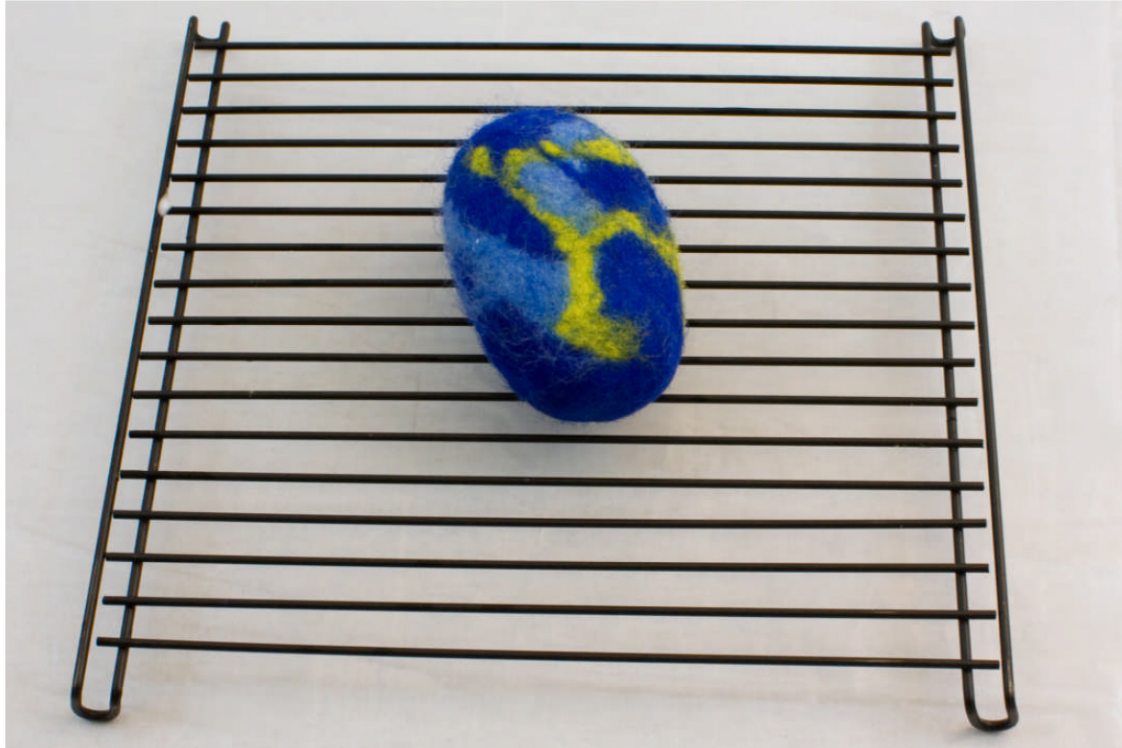
12. Rub the felted soap more aggressively, making sure all the wool surrounding the soap is felting and that no stray fibers are loose. Make sure to move the soap in all directions in your hands.



Quick Tip: Use needle felting to secure any loose fibers. Avoid sticking the needle into the soap. Then rub the needled area until the fibers are completely adhered.

13. Shock the wool by alternately dunking the felted soap in containers of hot and cold water.

14. If the wool still feels loose around the soap, keep rubbing vigorously until the felt shrinks up against the soap. Keep repeating steps 13 and 14 as necessary until the wool has completely shrunk to fit the soap.



15. Let the soap dry on an elevated rack so that the bottom portion is not sitting in water.

16. Don't worry if you aren't sure how hard the felt should be. It will continue to felt as it is used.

I have spent a lot of time and effort in writing these tutorials. Please respect the content of these tutorials and understand that it is for your personal use only. All contents of this tutorial are Copyright © Permutations in Fiber/Ruth Lane. Photos by Dennis Green. All rights reserved.