

# Making Simple Needle Felts

Steffi Stern



Hawthorn Press

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40 Inspiring Seasonal Projects



Hawthorn Press

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# Foreword

It was an honour to be asked to write the foreword for Steffi's second inspirational needle felting book, *Making Simple Needle Felts*. As an active member of the Facebook group 'Needle Felting UK' that I set up four years ago, Steffi always offers insightful advice, tips, tutorials and supplies to both beginners and experienced fellow felters alike.

In the increasingly popular world of needle felting, Steffi and her business have gone from success to success, and with over fifteen years of felting experience she is the perfect person to guide us through the fascinating world of felting. She attends many fibre festivals, offers friendly tutorials and workshops, is a craft channel star and has now written her second book. Now, along with her business partner Sophie, Steffi has extended her business online with the fabulous fibre shop, *The Makerss*.

Steffi's second book makes needle felting accessible to everyone. Full of clear instructions, colourful photos and jam-packed with advice and techniques, it's perfect for anyone beginning their own addictive needle felting journey.

My own journey began in 2011 when I attended a local felting workshop. The tutor emptied out her wool supplies and out popped an incomplete bunny and from that moment on I was addicted to the magic of turning wool into 3D creations. Four years later, Needle Felting UK has over 11,000 group members, and needle felting has truly taken over my life, and I love it!

I know Steffi's energy and enthusiasm will enable her brilliant needle felting business to continue to blossom. Her motto, 'Everyone a Maker', is ideal for this book and I know it will be loved by beginners and experienced felters alike.

Happy felting everyone!

**Sarah Brown, Needle Felting UK (Facebook)**



# Needle felting in a nutshell

Over the last five years needle felting has become a more and more popular craft activity for all abilities. This is partially due to the fact that it is so easy to learn. Most people are self taught either by just trying it out or watching an online tutorial or perhaps going to a workshop. I hope that this book can put into words and pictures the magic that happens when stabbing a needle into this wonderful commodity called wool!

The wool that is used most commonly comes from sheep. However, you can use alpaca or other animal fibres for needle felting. Some people use dog hair and cat hair from their pets though not all of them are suitable for felting. For the purpose of our projects I have almost exclusively used sheep wool. Over the fourteen years I have been needle felting I have preferred using wool batts for most of my animal and 3D project shaping.

## Wet felting versus needle felting

The principal of the felting process is identical in both wet and needle (or some people refer to it as 'dry') felting: the fibres get tangled up and compact together, air gets pushed out and you end up with a matted felt. Wet felting causes this process to take place with the help of water, soap, heat and/or movement. Think of your favourite woolly jumper accidentally shrinking in the wash because you washed it on a hot or on a non-wool washing cycle. Needle felting achieves the felting process by the needle tangling up the fibres when stabbing it into the wool.

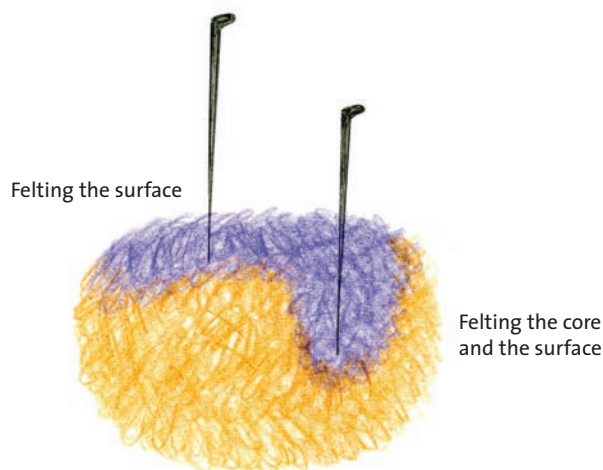
The main difference between the two methods is that by wet felting you can more easily make large flat pieces with fewer small details. It is therefore the preferred method for large pictures, items of clothing such as jackets, hats and slippers. As a rule, long fibres that have been turned into wool tops (or roving) are the preferred materials for this because they make a stronger felt, which is necessary if you are making large or utilitarian items. You can also combine the two by wet felting the main part and adding details with the needle later.

Needle felting is more suitable for making small three-dimensional objects, as you can sculpt more easily with a felting needle and add details to it, such as eyes, stripes, spots etc. on a small scale. The wool that works best for needle felting comes in batts and is my all-time favourite. I refer to it as the 'quick felting wool'. If you imagine that the needle tangles up the fibres, by using wool batts, the fibres are already 'pre-tangled' whereas wool tops in general have long fibres running side by side in a neat way. To tangle up long parallel fibres with a needle takes a lot longer than using wool batts.

On the other hand, using really short fibres when needle felting means that you may not be able to create a really solid core or base as the fibres don't reach far enough to tangle up together, for example Cape Merino or the Portuguese Merino. A medium length and coarse fibre works best and there are plenty about: New Zealand Merino, Mountain Sheep, Shetland, Gotland, Ryeland, South German Merino.

## When is my feltie finished – and how firm should it be?

This is entirely up to you. Some people struggle to create a solid felted object that can remain soft but still sculpted. Some people make such a solid felt that it is hard in the end to sink a needle into it.



From the very beginning till the very end, make sure that you sink your needle all the way through the whole object rather than just working at a surface level. This way, you continuously felt the centre as well as the outside of your felted item. If you do not sink the needle right through the wool (even all the way out the other side), you are just felting the surface firmer but the centre stays soft and therefore you create less shrinkage.

## Scaling your objects up and down

The measurements in this book are given so that you have an idea about how much wool you need to make a certain size. However, if you are somebody who does a lot of 'surface felting' then your object may be larger. You can reduce your sculpted items in size any time if the centre has been left soft. Sometimes we want the object to be soft. There is no real right or wrong. However, if you're making a toy I would recommend felting the shape down solidly so that it cannot be pulled apart.

You can make your project smaller or larger if you wish by using the very same instructions but just varying the amounts of wool. It helps if you remember what the felting process is all about – it squeezes all the air out by tangling up the fibres. You get a good idea how much shrinkage there is in wool if you take a handful and just squeeze it into a tight round shape by rolling and tucking it in. This will give you an idea of the finished size you might achieve. Remember also that adding wool to increase the size is possible at any time whilst you are felting the basic shape. So if you want to make a larger object, add more wool as you go.

Be aware that the larger your object, the more detail you will have to add!

## Crafting with and for children

I mentioned my carefree childhood and so I equally remember my crafting projects to be free of stress and pressures. I don't recall that I was ever told I had done something wrong or that things should be done differently. I grew up with a confidence in my own

abilities and the belief that everything is possible. Indeed nowadays during my public talks on the subject I always emphasise that there is NO CRAFT POLICE – yes, that's right, no laws, no fines!

We need to remind ourselves as adults that allowing our children to explore their own ideas and abilities gives them confidence in their own creativity. Crafting with children therefore is no easy task! I too have learned the hard way and remember the time I sat down with my two- and three-year-olds who were meant to make pretty biscuits which we were going to show off later when their dad was home from work. I imagined that we would use cutters to create nice shapes. My children had a different idea. They created little piles of dough, half of it ended in their tummies and a considerable amount ended up on the floor. I can still feel the frustration that rose in me and the desperation I felt when I just could not get them to do what I wanted them to do. Therein lies the challenge! When crafting with children we must be aware of the following:

- For whose benefit is it?
- Why are we doing it?
- What are the outcomes I want to achieve and why – and can I let go of them?

If you are on a deadline making a perfect present for Grandma, then getting the children on board may not be the wisest thing to do.

Children often prefer the process of crafting rather than focusing on the outcome. It is often we adults who have been trained to end gain. Children do not recognise that concept. They are just as happy to craft and abandon it all when they have had enough. A knitting project that was to become a teddy's blanket turned into a skinny scarf instead! They do not yet always have the end in mind but are still free to enjoy what they are doing right now. In our crazy, fast-moving world the sentiment is turning and as adults we are actually trying to get back to the place where the process (the here-and-now) can be appreciated

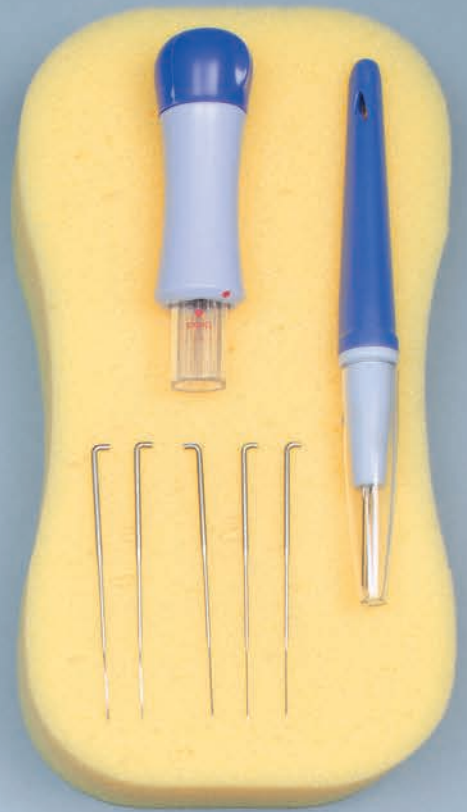
as much as the result. We can learn a lot from children, their free ways, lack of inhibition and capacity to think entirely outside the box.

## Safety first

These recommendations are based on my personal experience and are by no means everything you have to consider when crafting with or for children (or any other people), but they make a good place to start.

1. Keep your needles safe. Have a container that can be closed securely and tidied away out of children's reach to stop curious fingers playing with them.
2. If you allow your child to needle felt, only do so under adult supervision. The needles are sharp and whilst they may not cause a severe injury, they can frighten a young child. I have allowed my children to needle felt from the age of six, once I knew they had the required dexterity to do so and relying on my judgement that pricking themselves with a needle would not upset them.
3. Needle felt and only needle felt (rather than multi tasking): needle felting is not like knitting or crocheting where you can take your eyes off and watch TV at the same time. It requires your eyes to be on the project at all times. I only ever prick myself with a needle when I am tired or take my eyes off the ball.
4. If you break a needle make sure you find the broken-off part and dispose of it safely. If the end of a needle is inside a felted object, carefully try to feel where it might be and get it out if possible. If not, do not give the feltie to a child, keep it only for decorative purposes. You may even consider disposing of it in its entirety (a hard call, I know) if you cannot be sure that it stays out of children's reach.
5. Hygiene: if you run workshops or invite friends round to your house to needle felt together, be mindful of the fact that when stabbing yourself a needle can be in contact with blood. You may decide not to share needles.
6. Use the needles correctly, making sure you have a mat as an underlay. It not only protects the needle and the table or surface you are felting on, but it also prevents you stabbing yourself. If you have the mat on your lap, make sure it is thick enough so the needle does not go straight through it into your leg. Keep your fingers out of the way. There are protective aids such as finger protectors and tools that help you hold your small felted objects down so your fingers are not in the way.
7. Needle holders: these can be crucial for people who have difficulty holding a single felting needle as the holders are far more comfortable to grip. However, having a needle holder also increases the risk of stabbing yourself or breaking a needle. The further removed you are from the work, the less control you have.

Undyed wool batts, natural undyed fibres and tops from sheep, goat and plants and natural undyed curls of sheep's wool.



# Tools and accessories

The following tools and materials are a good list of essentials to invest in if you are a newcomer to needle felting or are perhaps adding to your existing needle felting materials, tools and accessories stash.

## Felting needles

There are many different types of felting needles. They are in fact manufactured for machine use, which is one of the reasons why they don't appear very hand friendly. Everybody prefers different needles and they not only vary in size but also in how the sharp end is shaped (triangular, star shape etc.).

Here in the book I refer only to fine, medium and coarse needles regardless of what shape. A fine needle is usually a size 40, a medium a 38 and a coarse 36. I find that if I have those three sizes I can manage every project. For the projects here in the book it does not really matter whether they are star or triangular. The numbers I quoted refer to the way wire is measured (wire gauge). My all-time favourite needles are twisted needles, particularly medium (#38) and fine (#40). Their spiral end makes them very efficient at tangling up the fibres, because they can accommodate more notches on the end. But as a beginner you will be fine with any shaped needle.

## Accessories

### Felting brush and 7-needle holder

This is great for 2D needle felting and works wonders on flowers, pictures, butterflies etc. as it speeds up the felting process but also creates a smooth finish. It only works with a brush mat.

### Carders or dog brushes

A pair of carders is useful for mixing small batches of colours and fibres.

### Glue

Simple PVA glue in a bottle or a tube with a very fine nozzle is very useful. A glue gun is great for quick gluing

that needs less detail and delicacy, such as gluing needle felted acorns into acorn caps (see p 116).

### 3-needle felting tool

This is suitable for 2D- and 3D-needle felting and speeds things up massively but can also be used with just one or two needles and is therefore a good needle holder for those who struggle to hold a single needle.

## Mats

### FOAM

Ideally, you want something firm, like foam used for upholstery. You can cover it in hessian for extra protection and easy cleaning. A mat should last you many 3D projects – all of those in this book. It gets worn more quickly if you do lots of flat felting where you sink the needle into the mat each time. First signs of wear are usually that small pieces of foam come off or it gets thinner.

### HESSIAN BAG FILLED WITH RICE OR WHEAT GRAINS

This is an alternative to the foam mat but far more environmentally friendly and can be made at home, and it also lasts much longer.

### PLASTAZOTE PACKAGING FOAM

This is used in the same way as the foam mat but has an even shorter life span.

### KITCHEN OR CAR WASHING SPONGE

These may not last as long but are a good emergency fall back.

## Other accessories

- Glue-in eyes, 3–7mm
- Glue-in wire bird legs in black or white
- Extra-strong white pipe cleaner, 30cm
- Water-soluble paper. This should feel more like fabric rather than paper or foil and is the only one suitable for needle felting, and is great for 2D! It works well when needle felting objects, such as leaves (see p 107).

# Techniques

## Mixing wool

There are three ways to mix wool or other fibres. In fact you can mix wool with silk, curls and plant-based fibres,

such as Ramie or similar. See the online tutorial here: <https://www.themakerss.co.uk/pages/colour-mixing>.

### Small batches (1–5g)

Lay the wool batts or tops you wish to mix flat on top of each other and using both hands, begin to tear these apart between your thumb and index fingers.

Repeat the process of laying the wool on top of each other before the next tearing apart. The more you repeat this process the more of a single new colour you will achieve. The less you do it the more mottled and uneven the mixed wool will be. Add different colours if you want it to be lighter, darker or more of a certain shade.



The principle of mixing colours is the same as mixing paint:

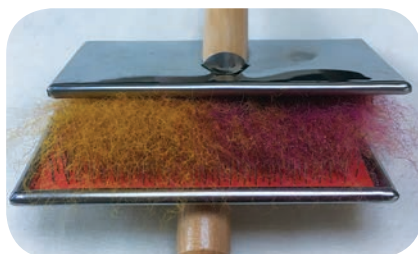
Yellow + red = orange

Yellow + blue = green

Red + blue = purple

Red + white = pink

I love mixing colours that 'clash' such as bright pink and orange to make flowers, for example.



### Small to larger quantities (5–10g)

You can mix wool more evenly if you use carders or wire dog brushes. The latter will not be available in really large sizes (15cm or more) but even a medium-size dog brush mixes a fair amount of wool and there really

is a considerable price difference. You always need two of the same size brushes.

Lay the different colour wools you would like to mix flat onto the brush and then brush it with the other brush so that the

teeth go in opposite directions. Repeat this process and you may have to 'peel' off the wool in its entirety and repeat the brushing process. Stop when the wool is mixed to the desired affect.

### Drum carder (10g+)

These machines work on the same principle as the carders or brushes but the wire teeth are on two rollers, one large, one small, that brush against each other when turning a big handle. I love this bit of equipment and could play for hours trying all kinds of different mixes of colours and fibres. A small carder allows you to make one batch

(maximum 40g) and I have found you have to do three rounds (take the batt off and feed through again three times) to get an even mix. The advantage is that you end up with a perfect batt as well as evenly mixed fibres and soft, 'lofty' wool.

Drum carders can be bought second hand on eBay or at wool shows but also

online from shops that supply spinning wheels. Many people make their own and there are tutorials online for that. If you buy one expect to spend between £200–400. I recommend you go for quality when buying a drum carder as a poor quality one can be a pain. Quality usually means spending a little more.

## Wrapping wool around a pipe cleaner or wire



In this book there are quite a few projects that require you to wrap wool around a pipe cleaner or your felting needle neatly, and it requires a little practice to do so. Understanding the process will help you.

When wrapping wool around a pipe cleaner it is always best to use a thin strand of wool and it will create a much finer and smoother finish if you use fine wool tops. This is why for the fairies, angels and other figures, I use the flesh-pink South American wool top for their limbs. When you wrap the wool around, imagine it is a ribbon that you are trying to keep flat. This means that you

have to let go of the strand after each turn so that it does not twist in on itself (this is the opposite to how you would wrap the wool to make your own curls).

Some people find it easier to move the pipe cleaner around the strand of wool as you can keep holding on to the wool top rather than having to let go. However, this is not always possible.

When starting to wrap the wool, use the very fine ends to wrap around the pipe cleaner first as they will sink into the soft cover and stop it from slipping around. Less is always more, so use thin strands. You can

always add more if necessary or just go over one area several times. Keep the wrapping tight. Don't allow any uneven or loose fibres to emerge. It is better to unwrap it a little than to ignore it. If you have to start with a new strand, secure the fine ends on a part of the pipe cleaner that will get covered over again and make sure you are wrapping the second strand round the pipe cleaner in the same direction as the first one! This is really important as otherwise you will unwrap the layer underneath. When coming to the end of a strand, fasten the loose wisps in by wrapping them extra tightly.



## How to create a hard felt versus a soft finish

If you understand the process of needle felting you will know that each time the needle gets stabbed into the wool it tangles up the fibres it comes into contact with, condensing the shape and squeezing the air out. It is therefore easy to imagine that

if you only ever stab the needle into your felted object just on the surface (1–2cm, depending on the overall size) it will only felt the surface but not the centre.

If you stab the needle all the way into the centre each time it will felt the fibres in the

centre and on the surface. Therefore if you want to achieve a solid felted object, you must keep sinking the needle all the way into the centre. See illustration p 10.

## Two dimensional and three dimensional – what is the difference?

I often get asked what the difference between the two is and so an explanation may be helpful. When I talk about three dimensional (3D) needle felting, I mean creating shapes from wool by sculpting with the use of a felting needle. The 3D sculpting in this book includes the animals, fairies, fruits etc. Usually shapes start off as a ball

or sausage. I use the felting mat as support, protection for the needle and to prevent stabbing myself. For round projects I have to keep turning them regularly to felt from all directions. By stabbing the needle in strategic places I can make indentations, or 'bumps', make shapes round or pointy, make a groove. I can add other 3D shapes (arms,

legs, heads) or more wool or features such as curls, wings etc.

When I do 2D needle felting, it means that my project starts flat and stays that way. The only 2D needle felting projects in this book are the primroses and autumn leaves. You can find a tutorial here – <https://www.themakerss.co.uk/pages/tutorials>.

# Tearing wool rather than cutting with scissors

When separating wool it is very rare that you use scissors to cut it. Wool in general tears easily and it leaves a much softer edge. In this book I always assume

that wool is torn rather than cut unless I specifically refer to cutting with scissors.

When tearing wisps, pinches or larger quantities of wool batts, it is pretty simple. Hold the wool between your index finger and thumb and tear parts off with the fingers of your other hand. As wool batts are generally made with shorter fibres, it is not hard to do.

This is a little more tricky when using wool tops. The nature of wool tops

means that long fibres run side by side. To tear these you have to have your hands further apart from each other as you are separating the fibres rather than severing them. This also means that you may end up with a longer strand than you expected, as you will have the whole length of the fibre. You may have to repeat the process and tear it into smaller strands, even eventually

tearing the individual fibres into shorter lengths.

Cutting wool is usually only done when tearing is not an option, for example, when trimming the hedgehog spikes or donkey mane. Sometimes we have to cut curls as pulling them will make them frizzy and we could lose the tight springiness that we may need for angel hair and gnome beards.

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## How to make curls

Sometimes we just do not have the right colour or no curls at all. Or maybe they are too tight or too loose.

There are two ways to make curls that I use regularly. One involves a crochet hook and the other involves a bamboo or wooden skewer or knitting needle. Personally I prefer the method with the crochet hook but if you cannot make a simple crocheted chain you will need to use the second method.

Whilst you can make curls with a short-fibred wool batt, the curls will not appear like the natural curls we get from sheep. They will look more like very frizzy hair, even dreadlocks. If you want to make distinct curls, use a top or

long strand of wool or other suitable fibre. It does not have to be wool. I have made curls with Mohair tops (hair from a goat) and Ramie (plant fibre). The Mohair in its natural white colour works beautifully as it is already classed as 'hair' rather than wool and so has a smooth, silky texture to it that even has a little shine like hair. Ramie is a great alternative as it is pure white, which no wool (unless bleached) can compete with. If you have coloured tops, such as Australian or South American Merino, then these will work well too. Other tops work too but the coarser the wool, the less fine and silky the curls will look.

### With a crochet hook

The smaller the crochet hook, the tighter the curls. For most of the projects in this book, I have used a 3 or 3.5mm hook.

Separate a strand of wool lengthwise about 1cm or less in width. Then make a slipknot and crochet a chain until you almost run out of wool. Make sure when you are crocheting that you make each loop tight but not too tight to tear the wool or fibres.





All fibres differ in that they may tear less or more easily. The Ramie, for example, tears easily. When you have only enough wool left to make a last loop, leave the loop unfinished. This means you do not pull the wool through as you normally would when crocheting a chain. We need to keep the loop open so that we can undo the chain later on. Make several batches if you need a fair amount. The angels and fairies in this book use 2–3g of curls.

Next run the little crochet chains under water to wet them through thoroughly. Squeeze excess water out of them and

leave to dry. You can speed up the drying process by either placing them onto a baking tray and put them into your oven (fan oven, preferably) at no more than 50° Celsius/120° Fahrenheit or place them on a radiator or another source of heat to dry. Make sure it is only so warm that you can still touch it without burning yourself. As we are curling natural fibres, we do not want them to burn and discolour.

Once the chains are dried (I always check that there is no damp by feeling them with my lips), gently undo the chain by pulling the loose end. Move your fingers along

pulling each loop close to the chain. You have to keep moving your fingers along the curly end towards the loops to pull them out. Again we are trying to be careful not to tear the strand or pull the curls apart. You should end up with an amazing lock that would be hard to tell apart from the real sheep curls.

You can watch a video tutorial on how to make curls here: <https://www.themakerss.co.uk/pages/tutorials>.

## With a wooden or bamboo skewer or knitting needle



If using a skewer, you are limited to the size as they only come in 3mm widths or thereabouts. You can use a larger knitting needle if you want to make larger curls. For the projects in this book the smaller size of skewer or a 3mm needle is perfect.

As before, separate a thin strand of the top/fibres lengthwise. Fasten the thin wispy ends onto the skewer or knitting needle by twisting it around tightly. Next hold onto your strand and systematically wrap it

neatly around the skewer or knitting needle, never letting go of it, but just sliding along the strand until you run out. This way of wrapping is the opposite of what you would do when wrapping a wire armature where you have to keep the wool flat like a ribbon.

While you are wrapping the wool around the skewer or knitting needle, by not letting go of the strand, you are also twisting it in on itself, which is really important in making curls. Once you get to the end,

secure the finer fibres by wrapping them tightly over the top of the others. Then make the whole skewer or needle soaking wet as with the crochet hook method and again leave to dry all the way through, or put into a fan oven at a maximum of 50° Celsius/120° Fahrenheit or on a radiator. Once completely dry, slip the whole wrap off the skewer or knitting needle and your curls will just unfold.



# *Making people, fairies and angels*



*Making heads, arms and hands*

*Spring sprite with legs*

*Fairy or sprite without legs*

*Rose fairy*

*Angel*

*Tree-top fairy*

Many of the figures included in this book, including fairies, fruit girls, mermaids, merboys and people, start off in exactly the same way and so rather than repeat these stages in detail for every project, you will find the detailed instructions here. However, I do refer back to these technical methods in each project as well as give a basic outline of what to do to guide you through each step. So,

whether you prefer to proceed cautiously or plunge in, you should be able to use the book in a way that suits you.

It might be helpful to know that making the head is the same for all of the projects. After that, variations apply: for example, you will use a pipe cleaner in different ways, for an angel (to add arms or make a stand for a Christmas tree) or to shape a tail for a mermaid.

## Making heads, arms and hands

These are linked together here because they are formed out of one piece of pipe cleaner.

### YOU WILL NEED

- 4g flesh pink wool tops (I use South American Merino)
- 3–4g white or cream core wool batts that are 'sticky', which means they don't come undone when wrapping around the pipe cleaner (I use Fox Sheep or South German Merino wool batts – I love the organic lanolin-rich version as it is extra 'sticky')
- 30cm-long extra-strong pipe cleaner (only use 1 if making hanging fairies, 2 if you are making a standing figure or a figure with legs)

*Mind your needles when making figures as they can easily break if they hit the pipe cleaner. Be careful throughout the projects but especially when felting close to the wires, such as when adding hair.*

### Making the head

1. Tear off about 20cm of flesh-pink wool top (about a finger's width). You need to keep about one third for wrapping the hands or arms. (If making legs wrapped in this wool top, you need an extra 1g.)

2. Bend your pipe cleaner end in on itself about 2cm down from the top. Hook the pipe cleaner onto the middle of the strand of wool and secure it by twisting the end of the pipe cleaner around the long end. The wool top should be fastened securely. It will look a little like a moustache on a stick!





3. Move the flesh-pink wool out of the way by bending it up and away from the pipe cleaner.



4. Start wrapping the core wool batts around the top of the pipe cleaner just below the pink 'moustache'. Wrap it flat like a ribbon, which means you have to let go of the end once a full round has been completed.



5. Build up layers slowly until it measures about 2–3cm. Using your medium needle, felt these layers into a ball shape. Add more thin layers to build it up into a ball that measures about 2–3cm when felted down.



6. Now pull the flesh pink strands from the top over the ball shape.



7. Do not worry about the top of the head where it will have an indentation or part of the pipe cleaner showing as this will be covered by hair later on. However, if too much pipe cleaner is sticking out, you can push the needle-felted ball upwards along the pipe cleaner.



8. Smooth the pink wool evenly over the white wool (remember you only need one quarter of it to look perfect as the rest gets covered with hair), then tighten at the neck and tie with a strong thread making sure that the flesh pink wool is smooth and even without any gaps or bulges.



#### MAKING A SECURE KNOT

*Tie the thread round the first loop twice instead of once.*

*This will stop the thread from slipping open while you need to let go of it in order to make the second loop. This way you can tie the neck really firmly without the help of a second pair of hands.*



# Making the arms and hands

There are two ways I make arms in this book. For hanging figures (Angel p 41) or those without visible legs (Strawberry girl p 72), you make the arms by cutting about 15cm off the pipe cleaner which you used to form the head. For standing figures with distinct legs (Spring sprite p 35) or a tail (Mermaid and merboy p 84), you need to use a separate pipe cleaner to make the arms.

Once your pipe cleaner arms are attached, there are two ways to complete the arms and hands. The first is when both hands and arms are covered in the flesh-coloured wool (for example, Mary p 149 and Joseph p 150).

For the second method only the hands are covered with flesh-coloured wool top. The arms are then covered with another colour wool top (for example, Strawberry girl p 72, Angel p 41, and Mermaid and merboy p 84).

## Arms

1. Before starting to make the arms, refer to your project instructions as to whether you cut a length off the main pipe cleaner coming from the head or whether you use a new length of pipe cleaner.



2. Move the wispy ends of the flesh-pink head cover out of the way and twist the new length of pipe cleaner once around the main pipe cleaner that is attached to the head.



3. Push the new arm pipe cleaner up so it is positioned just below the head.

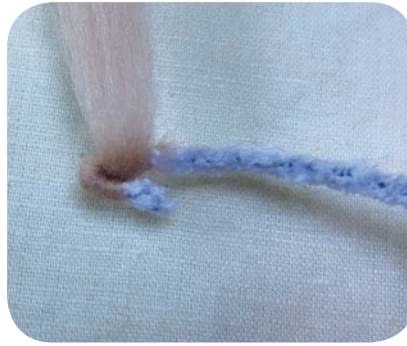
Make sure that the two pipe cleaner lengths (the arms) are of equal length.



4. Wrap one of the wispy ends of the flesh-pink head wool round in front of the arm and body and then continue winding the wool down the vertical pipe cleaner.



5. Wrap the second wispy end in the same way so that the wool crosses over below the head and is neatly fastened off on the vertical pipe cleaner.



## Hands

1. Use a thin strand of flesh pink wool top and start wrapping it around one end of the pipe cleaner that will become the hand/arm. Fasten the wispy ends in first, then wrap thin layers like a ribbon about 1–2 cm away from the end so you create a thin, neat and tightly wrapped cover.

2. Next bend the pipe cleaner over 0.5–1 cm in from the end so that the flesh pink cover will create a neat round end which will be the hand.

3. Continue wrapping the flesh pink wool top so that the bend of the pipe cleaner is covered.

4. Complete the other hand in the same way.

Now you have two options – check which one applies to you by looking at the instructions for your chosen project.

### 1. Bare arms

You cover the whole arm in flesh-coloured wool tops because you want to expose the arm (Mary p 149) or you are making a long-sleeved fairy or similar.

### 2. Covered arms

You only cover the hand in flesh-coloured wool tops and use another colour to cover the arm as though the figure is wearing a thin long sleeved top (such as the Mermaid and merboy p 84).



### 1. Bare arms

1. Use a thin strand of flesh pink wool top and start wrapping it round the pipe cleaner starting at hand end. Fold the end in and wrap all the way up the pipe cleaner.

2. Wind the wool as though it was a ribbon, keeping it flat and tight on the pipe cleaner.

3. Make sure both arms are equally and evenly covered in the same amount of wool.



## 2. Covered arms

1. Start with your pipe cleaner figure with hands covered in flesh-coloured wool top.

2. Take your coloured wool and begin wrapping the pipe cleaner arms in a thin layer, winding the wool around as though it was a ribbon, keeping it flat rather than allowing it to twist.

3. Make sure you wrap very tightly so that the wool stays on the pipe cleaner without unwinding itself.

4. If your wool runs out or breaks, start with a new strand but always make sure you wind it round in the same direction as before, otherwise you will unwind the layers underneath.

# Simple butterflies

Butterflies are such beautiful insects and every spring I watch out for the first one that I can spot as it is a clear sign that summer is on its way. I used to tell my children a made-up story about a butterfly that would visit a small cottage garden and that it lived in a land where it was always summer. The children who lived in the cottage decided one day to follow the butterfly and got their mother very worried when she found them gone. I know that my story was inspired by the book *The Story of the Butterfly Children* by Sibylle von Olfers (Floris Books, 2009) and I loved the idea of a place where summer was eternal. I also told the story because I tried to teach my own children never to leave our garden regardless of how tempting it might be (it never worked).

## YOU WILL NEED

- 30cm extra fluffy pipe cleaner
- 1g Australian Merino wool tops (Flower Garden, Berries, Rainbow)
- Pair of sharp little scissors
- Optional: needle and thread for hanging butterflies



This project does not require any needle felting at all and is a great project for children. The butterflies are low in cost to make and might be a good idea for parties or little token gifts.



1. Cut a length of 8–10cm off the pipe cleaner. Trim both pipe cleaner ends with sharp little scissors so that the fluff makes a ball shape at the end with a 1–2cm-trimmed length before it becomes fluffy again.



2. Tear off a strand of wool top of about 20cm and the width of two fingers.

3. Now fold the wispy ends of the wool top into the centre of the strand so that they slightly overlap and hold them down with your thumb and index finger.



4. Then bend the 8cm pipe cleaner in half, and wrap it around the centre of the folded wool strand, making sure that you leave about 2cm of each end at the top.

5. Twist the two ends around each other neatly a couple of times and they will become the antennae.

6. Using your fingers, pull the wings apart in the centre to make two wings on each side of the pipe cleaner body.



*You can hang the butterflies up by feeding a thread through the two pipe cleaners that run parallel to each other. Use a needle and thread for this and, before tying the thread, make sure the butterfly is hanging evenly.*

# Christmas pudding bauble

## Bauble shape

1. Make a bauble shape in exactly the same way as for the red bauble (p 161) but use the brown main wool batts.

## Adding decoration

1. Next use half of the white wool and lay it over the top of the bauble. Felt this down with your medium needle so that it looks as though the cream is running off the top of the brown ball (pudding). Add more white as and where required. You could have one side where the cream (white wool) is 'running off' more.



### YOU WILL NEED

For the Christmas pudding bauble

15g rich brown wool batts (I used Countrysheep but brown Mountain Sheep and Portuguese Merino as well as Milksheep would be suitable too)

1g red wool batts (New Zealand Merino)

1g green wool batts (e.g. variegated green New Zealand mix)

2g white wool batts (Cape Merino but Gotland or Shetland would work too)

1 x length of ribbon (I used 60cm of red raffia)

Coarse and medium felting needles

Felting mat

Darning needle (to fit the ribbon)

Small sharp scissors

*This makes a medium to firm ball shape of approx. 8cm.*

## Holly leaves

1. Then split the green wool in half. Lay one half of it onto your felting mat and felt it flat into a leaf shape. Keep lifting the piece off the mat so it does not get fastened onto it.

*You can make stiffer leaves following the instructions on page 107.*



2. Then cut half circles out of the edge of the leaf going all the way round. This will give it the distinct look of a holly leaf. Repeat with the other half of the green wool.

3. Position one leaf on top of the bauble and felt it down, concentrating the needle around the edge of the leaf to make the pointy features more distinct against the wool underneath. You can leave the tips of the leaf unfelted to give it more of a 3D effect. Felt the second leaf on in the same way.

## Berries

1. Use three wisps of the red wool and roll one into a tight little ball. Holding the ball tight in your fingers, lay it on top of the bauble, still holding it, so it does not pop open and felt it down with your medium needle, only stabbing into the edge of the berry and the top of the bauble.



2. Doing this will not only fasten the berry onto the bauble but it will also make sure it maintains its round, bulbous shape. Repeat this process twice more to create three berries sitting on top of the pudding.

3. Neaten up your pudding bauble by making sure that all the features added (white, green and red) have a nice contrasting edge against the wool underneath.

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## Adding the ribbon

1. Add the ribbon to hang your Christmas pudding bauble exactly as for the red bauble (p 162).

