

the  
**stitchbook**  
COLLECTIVE 2022

## Workshop 12 of 12

### **Embroidery on Felt**

**These notes should be read in conjunction with the online video**



**[www.untangledthreads.co.uk/MEMBERS](http://www.untangledthreads.co.uk/MEMBERS)**

**Video Password: FELT**

**Embroidery on Felt**

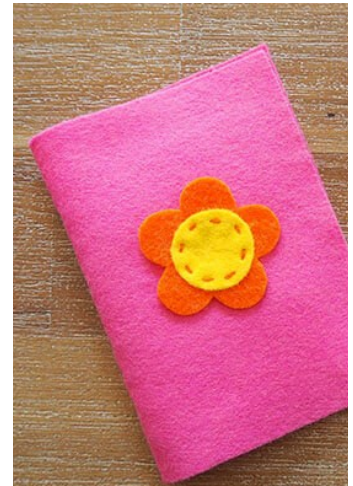
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# Introduction

When you think of embroidery on felt, do you imagine those little needle cases you first made with your mum or grandma? They were probably the first 'needlework' projects you will have come across? There is a reason that felt is such a good starting point for learning about embroidery ..

- Felt is VERY forgiving.
- It doesn't need its edges hemming, therefore applique is simple.
- The structure of felt makes it easy to pass a thick needle through.
- It is relatively cheap to buy in small quantities .
- It comes in a rainbow of pre-made colours.

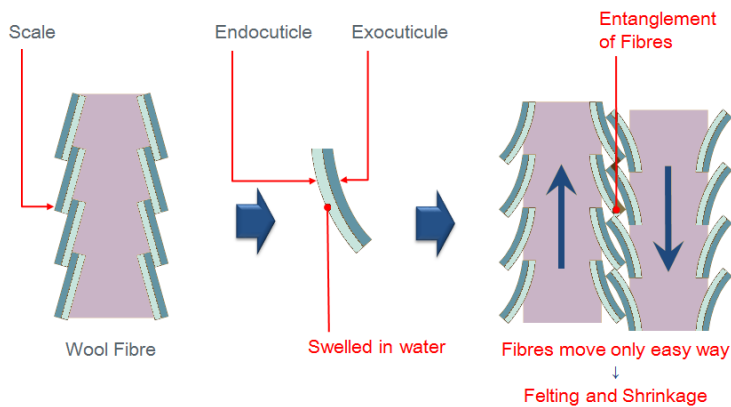


If you haven't really looked at felt recently, you'll be amazed. Nowadays, you can get felt in 100% wool, 100% polyester, or 100% acrylic and almost every variation in between. The more expensive 'wool blend' felts are particularly lovely to work with and give a sophisticated feel to a product which has long been thought of as 'naïve'.

In this workshop my aim is to show you how easy it is to introduce pre-made felt into your work, with a much more organic feel than the fuzzy-felt stick-on look that it is often portrayed with craft projects. I'd also like to try and encourage you to have a look at how simple it is to wet-felt small pieces of fabric. This will give you an infinite variety of colours, patterns and 'looks' .. *and it's great fun!*



# Wool roving, pre-felt, felt and boiled wool



I really don't want to get too technical about this (mostly because I am not qualified to do so) and I really don't want to put you off, but, it is actually quite useful to have a basic understanding of what is happening when you felt wool fibres, and what the different terms you will come across actually mean.

To produce a piece of felt, the fibres have to interlock with each other creating a matted fabric. You do this by applying warm water (to open the fibres up), add soap (as a lubricant) and then agitate (to physically tangle.)

**Wool roving** generally refers to wool fibers that have been processed (and carded: i.e. combed into long untangled lengths) but not yet spun into yarn. Wool roving is sometimes called spinning fibre or top. Wool roving is what is used to make wool felt. The most popular and easily accessible roving comes from Merino Sheep.



**Pre-felt**, as the name suggests, is the result of initial agitation of the wool fibres. The fibres have entangled themselves and will hold together into a flat sheet, BUT loose fibres can easily be pulled from the surface, and more importantly for us, additional fibres can still be manually added into the felt. Pre-felt can be bought in sheets.



**Felt** is the final stage, when the heat, water, and pressure have permanently interlocked the fibres to create felt fabric. At this point it is very difficult to add more fibres, other than by stitching, or needle felting. (see page 11) .



**Boiled Wool** is made through a process called fulling. Before felting the wool is already spun and knitted into a fabric. This fabric is then soaked in a soapy solution, and mechanically heated and compressed. It creates a really thick felted fabric. NB: Your washing machine can be turned intentionally or unintentionally into a fulling machine! Boiled wool is a wonderful surface to embroider into.





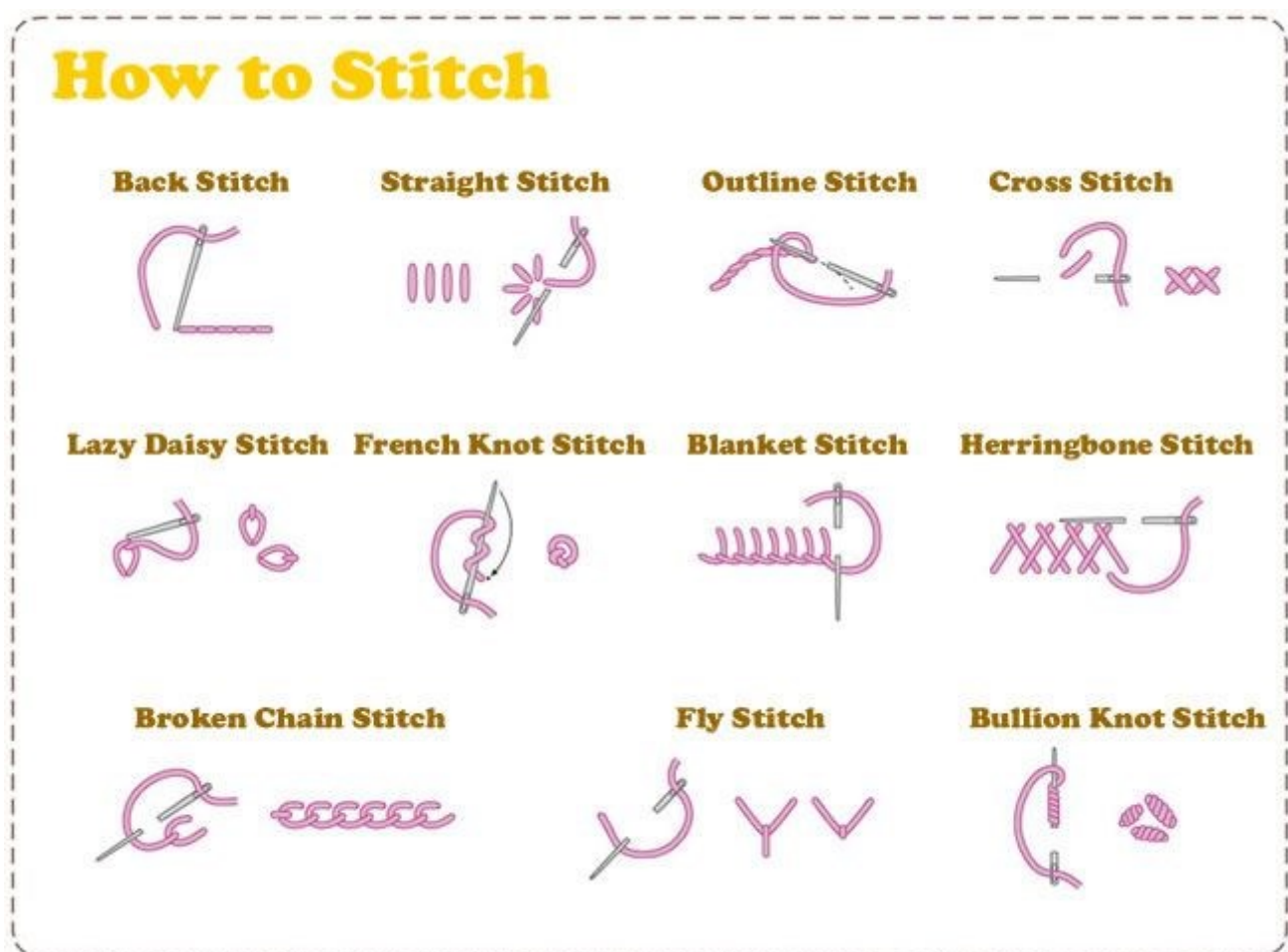
# Embroidering with Wool (Crewelwork)

To give it its proper name, embroidery with wool is called crewelwork.

Because the threads are much heavier than embroidery flosses, the finished designs are much thicker and heavier than that of traditional embroidery and it is perfect for stitching onto felt or felted surfaces.

In simple terms, crewel embroidery is just normal embroidery using 1-ply or 2-ply wool. The name comes from – *krua* – which means wool. It is one of the oldest forms of surface stitching – at least a thousand years old – and the technique itself is steeped in history, with the earliest surviving example being The Bayeux Tapestry. Simple stitches which add texture are the best to use for crewelwork.

*Remember that we looked at Bayeux stitch in Workshop 5/12 on couching and laid work, and we looked at some basic stitches in Workshop 2/12 on Textural Stitching.*



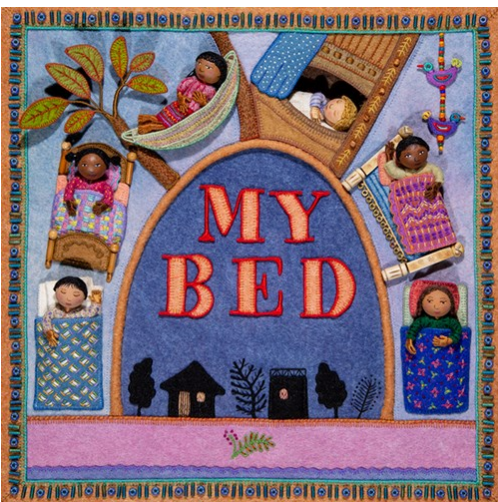
# Embroidery on pre-made felt

If you already have some pre-made felt, it is great to stitch onto, and very easy to applique (add layers) without needing to hem any edges. If you take a look at my Pinterest page *Untangled Threads @helenbirmingham* you will see a Board called **Embroidered Felt**. This will give you huge amounts of inspiration for machine and hand stitching designs onto pre-made felt.

One of my favourite artists who uses predominantly pre-formed felt is Salley Mavor of [weefolkstudio.com](http://weefolkstudio.com)

I think you might particularly like a short video about her picture book called MY BED. You can see it on YouTube

[www.youtu.be/MrRKOWPnjVw](http://www.youtu.be/MrRKOWPnjVw)



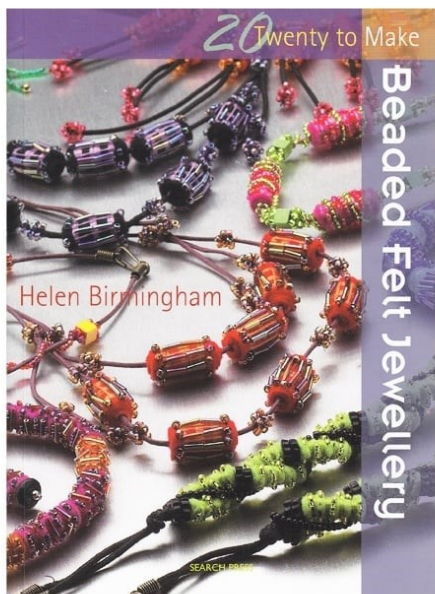


# Rolled Felt beads

It would seem a shame not to plug my own book here! (Published in 2008! So you'll find 2nd hand or cheap copies online if you want one!). Although it is focused on beading, the basic material is felt, and you may find some inspiration from it.

**Search Press**

**ISBN-10** : 1844483150



## Review

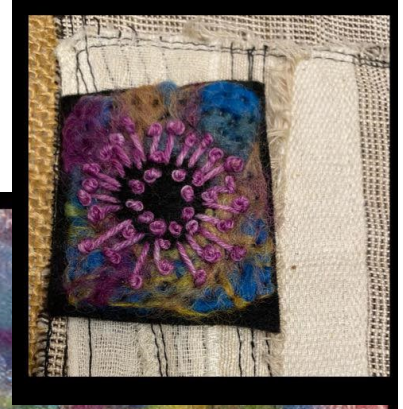
Here is another title in Search Press new series, Twenty To Make. These books feature twenty ideas (plus variations) for crafters in a number of popular crafts, so far mostly jewellery making. Here is a book showing a whole new way of making your own beads using an easily available and versatile material - felt. Wow! I love making jewellery, and am always keen to see a new method, especially if it involves few materials and gives me a chance to use up odd bits and pieces. Felt is easily obtainable, and once you have mastered the simple way of making the beads (note: this is not about felt making, but making beads out of pre-made felt) you are away on a journey through color and texture, adding a few beads left over from other projects and pretty threads to make some wonderful wardrobe-extending pieces. The designs have names inspired by sweets, deserts and pop and are in a range of glorious colors. As well as necklaces and chokers, there are also instructions for making earrings, bangles, hair barrettes and headbands for weddings or any other occasion. Alternate ways of extending this new idea presented themselves to me as I rooted through my bead stash, as they will to you. Easy to make, fun to do and wholly addictive - my favorite in this series to date. --Rachel Hyde, MyShelf.com





# How to wet felt/pre-felt on a small scale

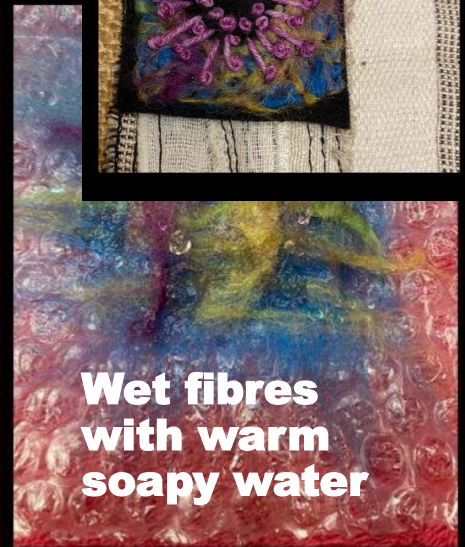
This process is shown in full on the video.



**Lay fibres onto bubble wrap**



**Use a mix of colours if you like**



**Wet fibres with warm soapy water**



**Place bubble wrap on top**



**Agitate, rub and tangle**



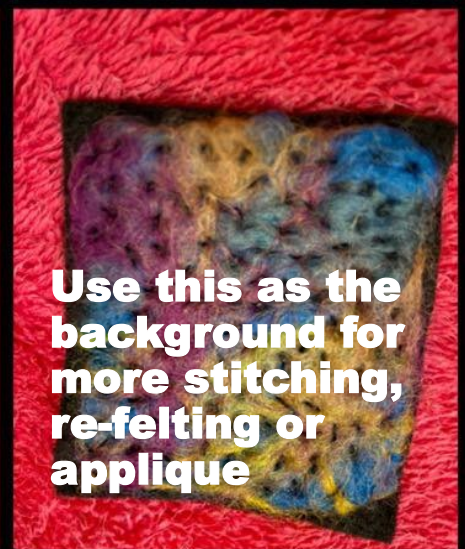
**Rinse and pull back into shape**



**Turn edges under if required and pin onto backing felt**



**Stitch into place using a variety of stitches**



**Use this as the background for more stitching, re-felting or applique**



# Embroidery on pre-felt





## Re-felting after embroidery



The previous example of embroidery onto a pre-felted surface is great if the result is to be used purely for decoration. You could mount and frame it for example, or stitch it into a page of your Stitchbook. However, if you

are wanting to include the piece in a more useable or wearable item (like a brooch or a phone case), you may find it beneficial to re-felt the piece once you have embroidered it. This will consolidate the surface and make it more robust. You can continue adding roving and stitching, then re-

felting as often as you like, but be aware that at some

point the fully felted stage will be reached, and the surface will not consolidate any further.



Re-felting is a little bit like fulling (see page 4). To re-felt your work simply dip it into some warm soapy water, place it back between the bubble wrap and agitate. You will find that the work will shrink (maybe irregularly) and might need pulling back into shape again.











You may find yourself inspired by some of the Impressionist painters?  
*(particularly some of Monet's flower paintings?)*

French knots and bullion stitches translate really beautifully into atmospheric floral interpretations and landscapes.



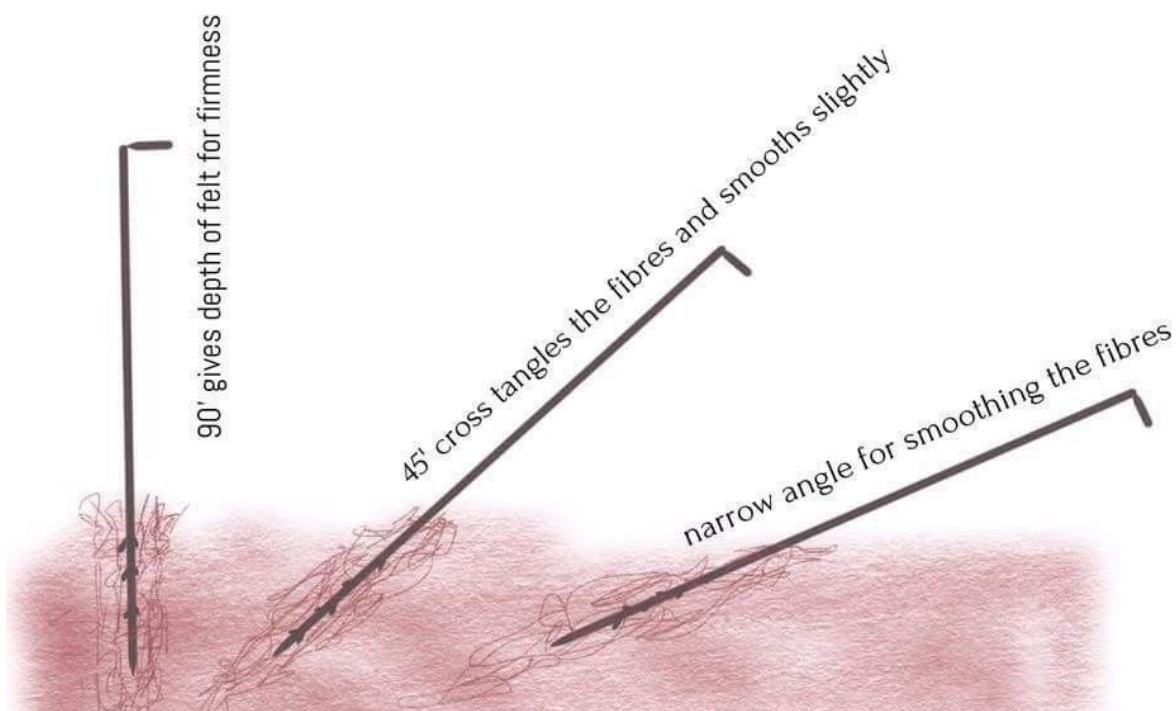
# Introduction to Needle felting

It feels appropriate to mention needle felting in this workshop, but if you want full instructions, you will find lots of videos and details online. Basically it is done using DRY wool fibres and a barbed needle. Needle felting has become very popular recently, and is used to really good effect to make 3D animal models.

I find it easiest, if you are wanting to make 2D pictures, to start with a layer of commercially produced pre-felt. This should be laid onto a piece of thick sponge (a car sponge or upholstery sponge is ideal) .

You can then start to blend the coloured fibres together and lay them down on the pre felt. Then the fun part, you take the needle and push the fibre into the fabric. You need to be careful with the needle, they will break if you flex them, and you need to be particularly careful of your fingers! The barb on the needle will go into your finger easily, but like a fishing hook, it is painful to remove!

Continue with an in and out motion with the needle until you are happy with the result. You can pick the wool out if you are not happy with how it looks. The diagram below shows what effect you will achieve if you insert the needle at different angles.



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