

artfelt™

artfelt™ in a nutshell

artfelt™ is a new felting technique that combines certain aspects of needle and wet felting with a new patented paper developed to ease the felting process. Appropriately named “Easyfelt” paper, this paper allows one to felt incredibly simple or complex pieces with nominal space and physical effort. It allows you to create a felted material that can be either thick or thin, precise or abstract, and it can all be accomplished with very little experience.

How does artfelt™ work?

There are four main steps to the artfelt™ process which are covered in detail in both the written instructions and on the DVD. As a quick overview, the first step is to design your project and cut your paper to the appropriate size. Shrinkage with artfelt™ can be anywhere from nothing to 20%. The next step is to tack the roving down onto the Easyfelt paper using a barbed needle. It is the Easyfelt paper that keeps your roving in it's proper position during the felting process. Once the roving is tacked into place, the piece needs to be saturated with water, rolled up with a piece of plastic and thrown in the dryer. The tumbling motion and heat of the dryer will felt your piece. After 15 to 45 minutes, remove from dryer. The piece will now be felted, but the paper will still be attached. Place your piece in a sink with the paper side up and pour boiling water over the paper to dissolve it. To finish the piece, either lay flat to dry, or iron dry.

How do I get started?

Your kit provides you with both written instructions and an instructional, slide show DVD. Both sets of instructions are complete, however, it is recommended that you explore the DVD and then follow up by reading the written instructions.

The slide show DVD is broken down into sections as follows:

Before You Begin

1. Quick Demo
2. Sample Designs
3. Supplies
 - What's in your kit
 - Additional supplies needed

Four Basic Steps

1. Design
2. Create
3. Felt
4. Finish

Beyond the Basics

1. Handbag basics
2. Oops...
3. Tips

Before you begin

If you can, check out the photos under sample designs to get some ideas of what you can make. If you can not play the DVD, there are photos of several items on the cover sheet of your kit. Your kit has enough material to make either a wide scarf, two narrow scarves, several pillow covers, four placemats, or several wall hangings. You are not limited to these items, this is just to give you an idea of how far the roving and paper included in this kit will go.

Supplies

What's in your kit:

Your kit should contain 1 hank standard roving, 2 hanks pencil roving, 2 barbed needles, 1 sheet Easyfelt paper roughly 12" x 90", one piece plastic the same size, an artfelt™ slide show DVD and these written instructions.

Additional Supplies needed:

You will need something to protect your work surface from the barbed needle. Styrofoam or foam padding works best. If you have neither around, a stack of towels works just fine in a pinch. A spray bottle to saturate your piece with water is helpful, however, if there is not one available, there are several other ways to saturate your piece which are listed under the "felt" section. An old sock, nylon sock or pair of pantyhose works great for tossing your rolled up piece in the dryer (ah yes, you will need a dryer), and last, but not least, you'll need something to boil water in and a sink.

Four Basic Steps

1. Design

You will want to decide what you are going to make in advance. Although the Easyfelt paper in your kit is cut to make a wide scarf, you can cut it lengthwise and make two narrow scarves, or cut it into squares to make pillow fronts or wall art. The paper can be cut into any size and pieced together to create additional sizes – however, it is not suggested that you cut it smaller than a 12" x 12" square. To test out the artfelt™ technique, we suggest you cut off a 12" piece of the Easyfelt paper. This will give you a practice square to try out the various ways of working with the roving. After making a tester, you then can decide what you would like to make with the supplies in your kit. Even after cutting off a 12" piece, your Easyfelt paper will still be plenty long to make a scarf.

2. Create

Once you have your paper cut to the size you desire, it is time to attach the roving to it. For this you will want to lay down your protective cover first, whether it be foam, Styrofoam, or a stack of towels. (Foam of some kind is preferred as needles have a much greater tendency to break when using towels. Make certain the

towels are old terry cloth or plush towels – not cotton or linen kitchen towels.) The protective cover is going to keep the barbed needle from piercing the surface you are working on.

Place the paper on top of the protective cover. There is no right or wrong side to the paper.

You will now tack the roving onto the paper. There are three different methods of doing this, each one providing you with a different type of finished material.

- Using pencil roving by itself creates a very fine, soft, double-sided, felted fabric. This lends itself wonderfully to scarves and garments that need some drape.
- Using the standard roving on its own will allow you to create a fine fabric, or with a multitude of layers, a thicker fabric, one more suitable for purses and table runners.
- Combining the standard and the pencil roving gives you flexibility in your designs and in the weight you choose to create. However, in general it is not as attractive on one side as it is on the other.

You will want to think of your paper as your canvas and the roving as your medium as you proceed. To attach the roving, you will use the barbed needle in an up and down piercing motion. The barbs on the needle must go through the roving and the paper, pulling a small portion of the roving onto the back side of the paper. This should be a very quick motion, similar to pricking your finger with a needle. You are basically tacking the roving onto the paper to keep it in its place during the felting process. The less you tack your roving onto the paper, the less the roving is actually worked, and the softer your piece tends to be, so tack it on sparingly. How much is enough tacking?

As a rule of thumb, there is no need to tack the roving into the paper more than is necessary to hold it in place. If you can lift your paper up sideways and the roving stays put, then it is tacked down enough.

When using pencil roving by itself, your work will look the same on both sides when it is complete. You must always make certain that the pencil roving overlaps when tacking it down. **If it does not overlap, it will not fuse together when felted, thus, your finished piece will fall apart.** The pencil roving can be tacked down in a spiral pattern or side by side or in an abstract pattern, just make certain that the edge of the pencil roving you are tacking down is laid and tacked on top of the edge of the roving already tacked down. Since pencil roving is quite fine, there will be more tacking involved than if you were using the standard roving.

The second way to create a piece is to use the standard roving by itself. To begin, hold the roving in your left hand and using your right hand, grasp the end of the roving and slightly tug, pulling out some fibers. Lay these fibers down on the paper, all facing one direction. Then take another tug, pulling out more fibers. Lay these fibers on top of the last batch in the opposite direction. This is called cross-hatching and is necessary if you want your fibers to fuse together in the felting process. For a

fine finished material, you will want to cross hatch very thin layers of fibers. For a thicker material, you will want to either cross hatch a multitude of fine layers (perhaps 4 or 5), or cross hatch 2 thick layers. A multitude of fine layers seems to create a stronger material which suits handbags well. Don't forget to tack the roving down to the paper. It is not necessary to do after every layer – just when the cross hatching is complete. There is far less tacking involved when using standard roving versus pencil roving.

When you have a base of standard roving down, you can create a pattern on top of it with the standard roving, as we did with our Heart with Wings Pillow. Just make certain that when tacking roving on top of the cross hatched layers, the barbed needle still pierces through the entire piece.

This brings us to the third method of creating a project. You can use a combination of standard and pencil roving to create many different fabrics. You can start with a standard roving base constructed of a multitude of cross hatched layers. This gives you a very strong base. To liven it up and strengthen it even more, you can create a pattern on top of it with the fabulously dyed pencil roving. Our hand bag was created in this manner. After a solid base, the entire surface was covered with the pencil roving. When doing this, there is no reason to overlap the pencil roving, as it will fuse right into the base layers. You can also use the pencil roving to create random patterns on top of a fine base layer, as we did with our blue scarf with the swirl pattern on top.

Here are a few suggestions:

- When tacking roving down, remember, the paper will dissolve at the end of the technique, so the roving closest to the paper will be your backside.
- To create **negative space** (holes in your work), you will simply want to leave areas on your paper that have no roving what so ever. HOWEVER, the key here is to make certain that all the roving around these blank areas is somehow connected. If not, your piece will come out as several pieces, not one.
- This can be a good thing in some cases, such as when **making felted flowers**. You can use the paper to create a whole garden of felted flowers to attach to a garment or handbag. Simply create the flowers on the paper – tacking them down in the finished shape you would like them to be. Do not allow the flowers to touch. Felt them all together on the one piece of paper. When the paper is dissolved at the end of the artfelt™ technique, the flowers will all become individual flowers rather than a sheet of flowers. For a more dimensional look, make flowers in different sizes and layer them – putting a button in the center to attach them to the garment.

- When creating a scarf, there is no need to lay the whole piece out. You can work on it from one end the other – rolling the finished end up as you go along.
- To create multi-colored fringes, twist two strands of pencil roving together and tack down the twist to the paper. You may have to tack a little bit more than normal to keep the yarn in it's twisted shape. To keep the fringe attached, tack the ends of the twists into the actual project so that they fuse together.

When you have finished tacking all your roving to the paper, it is time to felt!

3. Felt

Preheat your dryer by turning it on the highest setting with a few dry towels in it. Let it run and warm up while you are getting your piece wet.

You will need to saturate your piece with water. One of the easiest and safest ways of doing this is with a squirt bottle. (There is an alternative at the end of the instructions under tips). If you have a small piece (small enough so you can lay it flat in front of you), you can get it wet all at once. Squirt it heavily as you want the roving and the paper to be saturated with water. Then cut a piece of the enclosed plastic slightly bigger than the piece of paper. If your paper did not come with plastic, you can use saran wrap. You want the plastic to be at least as wide, and slightly longer than your paper. Place the plastic over the wet roving and using your hand smooth it out, compressing the water even more into the roving. Now roll the paper with the attached roving and plastic into a log. You may find it easier to roll your piece by rolling it around a rolled up wash cloth or towel. Just make certain the rolled washcloth is on top of the plastic – and does not touch the roving. If it does touch the roving, the roving may felt itself to the washcloth. When rolling the piece, check the back of the paper and make certain it is totally wet. The paper becomes slightly transparent when it is wet. If it is not wet, spray the back of the paper with the squirt bottle until it is wet. When the piece is rolled into a log, you will want to place it in an old sock or trouser hose. This will keep your piece from shifting while in the dryer, as well as keep the plastic from sticking to your dryer – if your dryer falls on the very hot side.

The easiest way to get the log into the hose is to slide your hand down inside the hose to the toe. Grab the end of your piece through the hose and pull the hose over the piece. This works better than trying to shove the piece into the hose. Once in the hose, tie a knot at the end, or use a garbage bag tie to keep the hose closed and the roll from falling out. If you are working with a very large piece – an old sock or trouser hose may not be big enough. In this case, you can wrap the entire piece in a towel and use large rubber bands to keep it rolled. Or, fish net stockings stretch a great deal and work very well. In some cases, if your piece is very large, you may need fold it in half after rolling it. This works fine – but do remove from dryer about

every 20 minutes or so to unroll and then re-roll in another direction. This will prevent creases in your finished product.

When all rolled up and secured, toss into your pre-heated dryer. To begin, set your timer for 15 minutes, then remove from dryer and unroll your piece. If it is felted to the degree you would like, you are finished felting and you may move onto the finishing section. If not, you will want to re-roll the piece (in the opposite direction preferably), place again in the hose, and then toss into the dryer. Smaller pieces usually take anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes total time in the dryer. Larger or longer pieces, like a scarf, may take up to 45 minutes. If making something larger than a scarf, you may have to remove from dryer and re-roll several times for a total time in the dryer of up to an hour.

When your piece is felted to the degree you desire, unroll and remove the plastic. Although the paper can only be used once, if the plastic is still good, you can reuse it.

4. Finish

Take the piece and lay in the sink, paper side up. The paper will now look wrinkled. Boil water and pour directly onto the paper. The Easyfelt paper will dissolve immediately. If you have a large piece, you may need to boil several kettles of water. Try to avoid leaving the felted piece sitting in the hot water. If you do, there is a chance that the colors may begin to run. The dyes in the roving are not made to withstand such high temperatures over a period of time. Thus, pouring the water over the paper and letting it drain right into the sink is the best method of removing the paper.

When all the paper is dissolved, it is best to rinse the piece with warm water to make certain that all the residue from the dissolved paper is gone. Then either lay your piece flat to dry, or iron dry. If you have made a three dimensional piece such as a handbag, you can stretch your felted piece to fit over the original form and let it dry on the form.

What to do if...

Your piece is dry and there is a hard spot on it...

Chances are this a spot where the paper did not dissolve completely. If this is the case, you can usually see the white of the paper. However, in some instances you can not. Simply pour additional boiling water over that spot and the remaining paper should dissolve.

You felted your piece too long...

If you feel your piece shrunk too much and is over felted, you can soak it in hot water for a few minutes, then remove the excess water, stretch with your hands and iron dry. This helps a bit.

Your piece has holes you do not want, or it has fallen apart in areas...

You have several options. For holes, it is easiest if you take a small piece of the Easyfelt paper and place it behind the hole. Using the roving, fill in the hole, making certain that the roving overlaps with the already finished area. Wet down just the new area and perhaps a few inches surrounding it. Roll up and put in dryer as normal. Only the wet area will felt further. Finish as normal.

For a piece that has fallen apart in an area, you can, using the barbed needle, attach it back together. Slightly overlap the two pieces and use the piercing motion with the barbed needle over and over again until the two pieces become one. You can add a little extra roving for added strength if you desire.

Another quick way to saturate your piece with water is to get a large pan that is several inches deep and fill with about 1" of water. Place folded towels in the water so that they absorb the water. The towels should be thoroughly soaked. Then take the piece of paper with the roving attached and lay on the towels. Place the plastic over the roving and press the piece into the towels. The paper and the roving will absorb the water. Do not try to do this without the plastic, as the roving will stick to your hands and may come off the paper.