

# Needle Felting — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into hands-on practice. Each section matches a course module and asks you to choose fibre, felt test shapes, and measure your results the way a careful felter does. Work through it alongside one real project and you will finish with a planned, sculpted, coloured, and finished wool animal, plus a record of needles, blends, and steps you can repeat.

## Fibre, Needles, and Working Safely

Choose core and surface wool, match needle gauges to each stage, and set up a safe station before you commit to a project.

### Exercise: Felt-speed test: which wool is your core wool

Take a pinch each of every wool you own (core sliver, Corriedale, Merino top, any others). Roll each into a loose marble of the same size and poke each one fifty times with a 36 needle, counting as you go. Squeeze each marble afterwards.

- Which fibre firmed up fastest and squeezes hardest after fifty pokes? That is your core wool.
- Which fibre stayed soft and squashy? Reserve that one for surface or blending only, not for building bulk.
- Did any fibre leave large visible holes or shed badly? Note it so you choose needles and layers accordingly.

### Worksheet: Project and materials plan

Record exactly what you are making and what you are working with, so your fibre and needle choices are right and your results are repeatable.

Project: what animal or figure, and finished height (cm)

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Reference photos gathered (front, side, three-quarter)? Y/N

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Core wool: type and approximate grams needed

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Surface colours: fibre type and grams for each colour

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Special fibres: locks, Merino, carded blends and what for

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Armature needed? Y/N, and wire gauge if yes

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Eyes plan: glass/safety beads or felted wool, and size

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Needles on hand: list gauges and shapes (e.g. 36 triangle, 40 star)

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### Checklist: Station setup and needle safety check

- Dense foam block (at least 5 cm) or a wool felting mat in place
- Fingerguards or finger cots on the hand that holds the wool
- Spare needles available in case one snaps mid-session
- Needles counted at the start so none go missing later
- Work surface clear of children and pets, no loose needles on the floor
- Good light positioned to show stray surface fibres
- Small sharp scissors and a comb or brush within reach

### Exercise: The straight-poke drill

Felt a small loose ball of core wool to roughly firm. Now deliberately practise fifty straight pokes (in and out on the same line) and then, very carefully and slowly, feel what a slight sideways lever does to the needle. Stop the moment you feel resistance to avoid snapping it.

- Can you keep the needle on the same line in and out, or does your wrist drift sideways as you tire?
- What does even a tiny sideways angle feel like? This is the motion that snaps needles, so name what your hand was doing.
- Are your guiding fingertips staying back from where the tip lands, or creeping into the danger zone as you focus?

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## Building Firm 3D Forms

Felt dense cores, shape them into specific solids, and join parts so seams are invisible and strong.

### Exercise: The hard-core squeeze test

Build a core ball about 4 cm across by adding and felting core wool in thin skins, not one lump. Stop when you think it is done and squeeze it hard between thumb and finger.

- Does it give under a firm squeeze, or resist like a cork? If it gives, it is not finished, so keep felting.
- How many thin skins did you build it up in, and did each one felt firm before you added the next?
- Did you remember to leave a small fuzzy patch where a part will later attach? Mark it if so.

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### Worksheet: Form breakdown plan

Before sculpting, break your animal into the simple solid shapes it is built from, and plan each one. This keeps proportions honest.

List of body parts (e.g. body, head, 4 legs, tail, 2 ears)

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Base shape for each part (ball / egg / cylinder / taper / cone)

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Target size of each part (cm), measured against the reference

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Which parts are made as matched pairs (legs, ears)

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Where each soft attachment patch will be left

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Order of assembly (what attaches to what, and when)

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## Checklist: Shaping and joining quality check

- ] Each core squeezes hard with no soft centre
- ] Tapers and waists made by concentrating pokes, checked against reference silhouette
- ] Paired parts compared side by side and matched before attaching
- ] Soft patches left on both surfaces at every join
- ] Each join survives a gentle tug without shifting
- ] A fresh wisp felted over each seam to hide the line
- ] Seams refined with a 40 needle so no boundary or hole shows

## Exercise: Invisible-join practice

Make two firm shapes, leaving a soft patch on each. Join them by stabbing through the boundary both directions, then bridge the seam with a thin wisp of wool and refine with a 40 needle.

- After bridging, can you still see the line where the two parts meet? If yes, add another thin wisp and re-felt.

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• Does the join survive a firm tug, or does it loosen? Re-stab through the seam until it holds.

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• Did concentrating on the seam leave a hole or dent nearby that you now need to patch?

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## Colour, Surface, and Texture

Wrap cores in clean colour, blend shades like paint, and build the texture that makes wool read as a real creature.

## Exercise: No-grey coverage test

Cover a firm grey or cream core in thin overlapping wisps of one surface colour, felting each wisp before the next. Then inspect every high point, edge, and end under strong light.

- Is any core colour showing through at ends, edges, or high points? Patch each spot before moving on.

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• Did you keep the wisps thin and crossing, or slap on one thick wad that rounded off your sculpted detail?

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• After the finishing pass with a 40 needle, does the surface look tight and deliberate, or still fuzzy?

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## Worksheet: Colour blend recipe log

Record every custom colour you mix so you can match it again, because guessing a blend a second time almost never works.

Blend name (e.g. fawn body, shadow under-belly)

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Colours used and the ratio (e.g. 3 parts cream : 1 part light brown)

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Mixed by hand-drawing-together or by carding

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Where it is used on the figure

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Light direction chosen for the whole piece

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Adjustment notes for next time (warmer / cooler / lighter)

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### Checklist: Surface and texture finishing check

- Surface wisps laid in the direction the coat would grow
- Darker blend feathered into recesses and undersides
- Lighter blend feathered onto the high points facing the light
- Every colour transition softened, no hard lines
- Texture matched to the animal (loose tips for fur, tight for smooth skin)
- Spots or markings kept crisp with a 40 needle
- Whole surface tightened and rolled smooth between the palms

### Armatures, Faces, and Finishing

Add a wire skeleton where needed, set a face that reads as alive, and finish to a clean, durable, show-ready result.

#### Exercise: Wrap-before-you-felt test

Bend a short piece of aluminium wire and try felting core wool directly onto the bare wire. Then wrap a second piece of wire with a pipe cleaner or thin core-wool strip and felt onto that. Compare how the wool grips.

- On bare wire, does the wool spin loosely around the wire instead of gripping? Note why wrapping matters.  
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- On the wrapped wire, does the wool felt on solidly? This is the bridge that lets a body felt onto a skeleton.  
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- Have you looped or buried every wire end so no sharp tip can work its way out to stab someone?  
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#### Worksheet: Face placement plan

Plan and dry-test the face before fixing anything permanent, since placement is what makes a sculpture read as alive.

Eye type and size (glass/safety bead or felted wool)

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Eye height on the head (measured, both eyes equal)

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Eye spacing (measured, lower and closer than feels natural)

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Sockets poked for recessed, shadowed eyes? Y/N

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Nose/muzzle: felted-on shape or sculpted-in

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Mouth/brow lines and the expression they create

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Checked straight-on and in a mirror before committing? Y/N

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#### Checklist: Final finishing and care check

- Whole surface tacked with a fine 40 or 42 needle, no loose fibres
- Piece rolled firm and smooth between the palms
- Held to strong light and stray fuzz felted or trimmed away
- No grey core visible anywhere, all joins invisible
- Soft spots and needle holes patched and re-felted
- Eyes matched, recessed, and securely set
- Storage planned: dry, out of direct sun, moth deterrent for real wool

## Exercise: Flaw-fix run-through

Deliberately find one flaw on your finished piece (a soft spot, a visible hole, a crooked part, or a fuzzy patch) and fix it using the add-wool-or-reposition method rather than forcing the wool.

- What flaw did you find, and which fix did it call for (add a wisp, re-attach, or tack and trim)?

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- Did you fix it by adding wool and re-felting rather than mashing the existing wool harder?

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- After the fix, can you tell where the repair was? If yes, feather a thin corrective wisp over it.

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## Your Action Plan

1. Run the felt-speed test on every wool you own and label which is your core wool and which is surface only.
2. Gather three reference photos of your chosen animal (front, side, three-quarter) and break it into simple solid shapes.
3. Assemble your station: dense foam or mat, fingerguards, a 36, 38, and 40 needle, spares, scissors, and good light.
4. Felt each body part as a hard core in thin skins, leaving a soft patch wherever a part will attach.
5. Shape the cores into their target solids by concentrating pokes, checking each against the reference silhouette.
6. Build any wire armature, wrap the wire before felting, loop every end, and pose before adding the surface.
7. Join all parts through their soft patches, bridge each seam with a fresh wisp, and refine with a 40 needle.
8. Cover the figure in thin crossing wisps of surface colour until no core shows, then blend shading toward the light.
9. Add texture and markings, dry-place and set the face with recessed matched eyes, then build expression in small steps.
10. Do the final finishing pass under strong light, fix every flaw by adding wool, and store the piece dry and out of the sun.









