



# How to Make a Sample Piece of Felt

Brought to you by...

Acorns & Twigs   
*imagination encouraged*





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Well Hello!

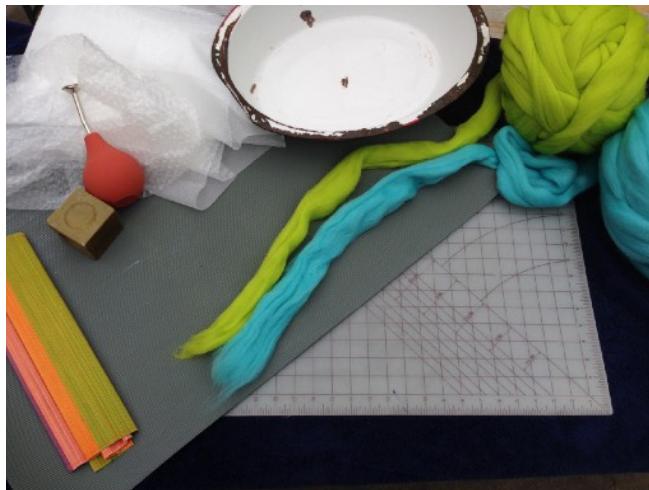
Looks like you are interested in making your first wool sample, or test piece before journeying on to bigger, better (and more satisfying) things. Good for you!

Because like I've ranted before, it is the only way to get a relatively accurate finished result. I myself loath doing it, and I'm sure you won't be very found of the idea either - but we both know it is the right thing to do!

Plus, if you don't think you need to keep your sample for later reference, then you can definitely reuse it - either as a pot holder, or you could cut it up and glue it a sturdy paper and use it as a birthday card or something similar.

## EQUIPMENT

So the first thing you need to do is get all of your materials together. These are mine:



You will need:

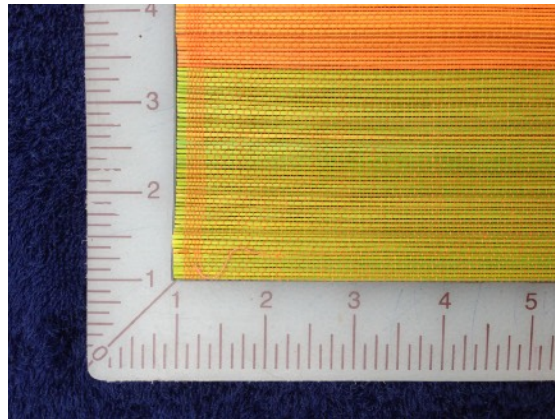
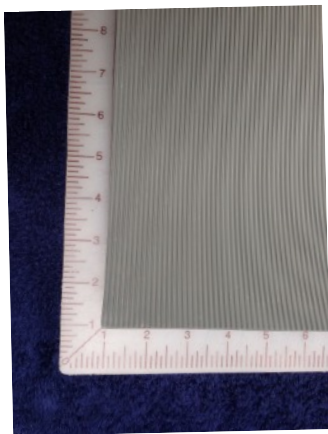
- two towels (one for your table, and one for your hands)
- a ruler or tape measure
- [Soap](#)
- Hot water (wait until this is needed otherwise it will be too cold) & container (bowl or tub)
- The [wool](#) and other materials you plan to felt

Optional:

- [Water sprinkler bulb](#)
- [Bubble wrap](#) and/or [netting](#)
- Sushi mat
- [Friction mat](#) as underlay
- Vinegar

First you want to protect your surface. Since I was working outside on an old table, a towel was sufficient for me (just enough to prevent getting me wet with puddles and drippings, I didn't really care about the table). If you need more protection, painter's plastic, a waxed table cloth or [bubble wrap](#) are great options. I would still lay an old towel over it to soak up any excess water. Don't use your best towels, some wool will leak color from dying, and that might upset you.

Now for demonstration purposes, I used my rotary cutting mat but you can just use any measuring tape or ruler. I laid this on my towel, and placed [my favorite friction mat](#) in it's corners to zero it out. Then I added a bamboo place mat, I would recommend a bamboo sushi mat though because the bamboo of a sushi mat is thicker and sturdier. This is what I had available, and it works. ;) If you don't have either, [bubble wrap](#) or even a towel will work.





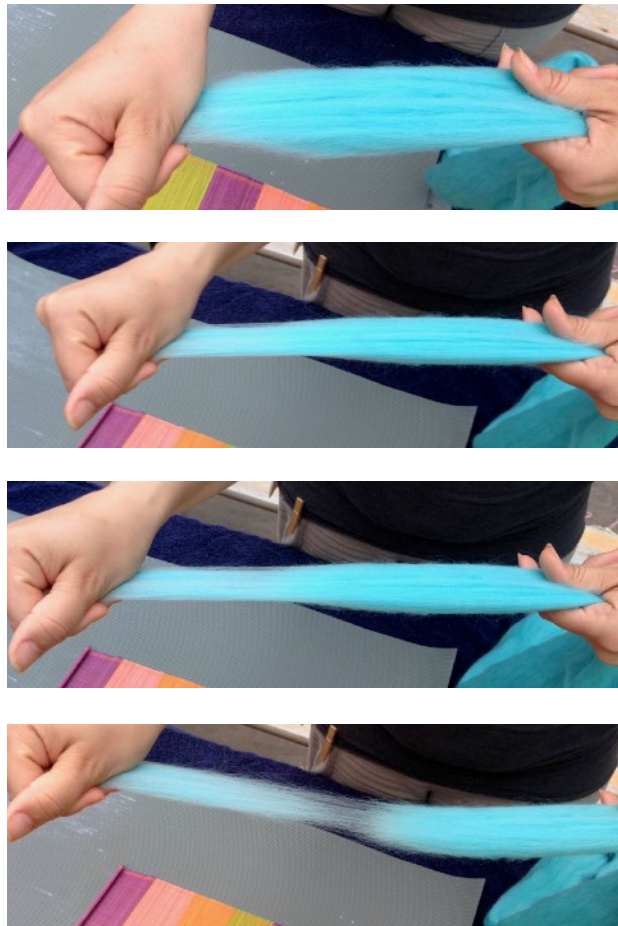
## HOW TO PULL THE TOP APART

Here come the fun part! You get to take that scrumptious [wool top](#) and start working with it. Yay!!

You want to hold it in both hands, and gently and slowly pull it apart. It is important that you don't yank at it, or hold it too tightly otherwise you will not be able to separate it. The wool's scales will catch on each other and lock it into place. Not even my husband can separate it then...

Also be careful not to back brush the top otherwise you risk matting it.

Here are some pictures of me pulling my [teal colored wool](#) apart:

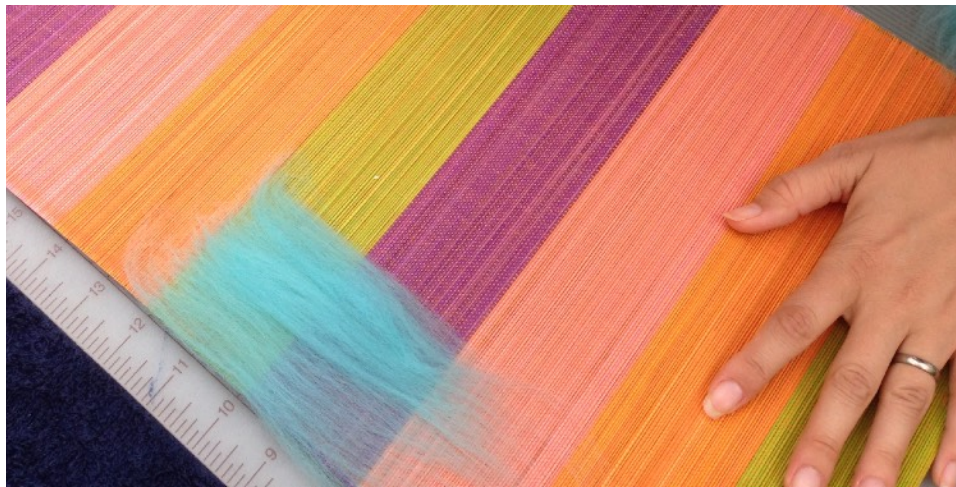


The left hand pinches just a few of the end fibers, and slowly pulls a tuft of wool out of the rope of the [top](#).

## PLACING YOUR FIRST LAYER

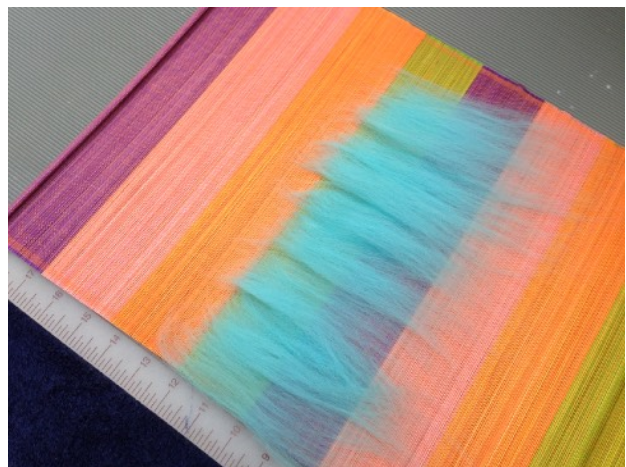
The tuft of wool you just successfully (more or less, the first time is always weird, but you will get the hang of it quickly) separated now gets put onto your bamboo mat.

I started out thinking my sample piece would be 12" x 12" but in the end it will be 13" x 13" so don't let the pictures confuse you. These things happen. :P



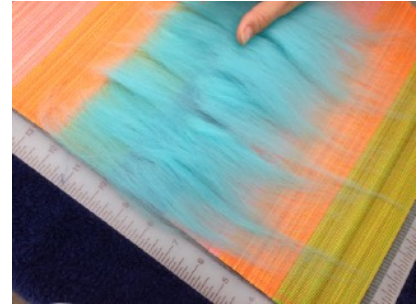
*two tufts of teal colored wool laying next to each other*

Continue laying out tufts of wool in the first row. Stopping at the same length to create a square. My first row was 12" long at this point.

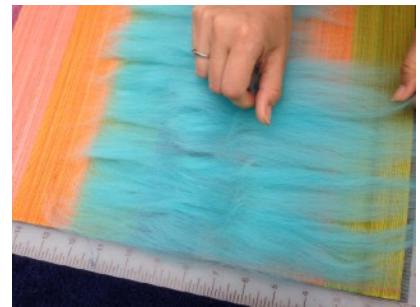
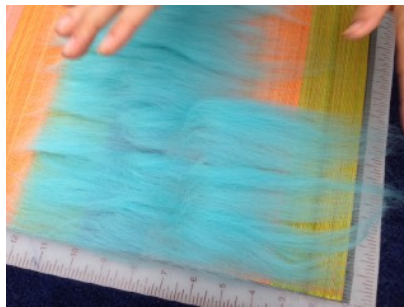




Lay our second row slightly overlapping the first row.



And so on...



Until your square's first layer is finished.



### PLACING YOUR SECOND LAYER

I used a different color ([neon green available through this link](#)) for this demonstration so you can easily recognize the different layers.

Your second layer is laid out using the same method, only this time you need to lay the fibers perpendicular to the first layer's fibers. My first layer was laid from bottom to top (from the picture's point of view) so my second layer was worked from right to left.



### THIRD & FOURTH LAYERS

The third layer is laid out the same as the first, therefore I used the [teal color](#) again. The fourth and last layer is the same as the second layer, hence the [neon green](#) for this direction of the dominating layers. This can be done purposefully, but not with our example today.





## WETTING YOUR WOOL

At this point you want to get your hot water ready. I always wait until after I have laid out the wool because depending on the size and decorations of your project, your water could be cold by the time you need it.

You need a hot soapy solution. You can either use liquid dish soap, buy [soap flakes](#) that will dissolve in the water or place a [bar of soap](#) in the bowl and pour hot water over it. I choose the last option.



Your water should be so hot that it is hardly bearable to touch. That's where a [sprinkler bulb](#) comes in handy. If you don't have one, you can take a flexible plastic bottle, poke some holes in it's lid and use that, or do as I used to do before I had the bulb, and cup it out with your hands. For our sample, that would be ok, but I do not recommend it on your actual product since you can not control the amount of water. You also risk distorting the fibers and creating puddles of water.

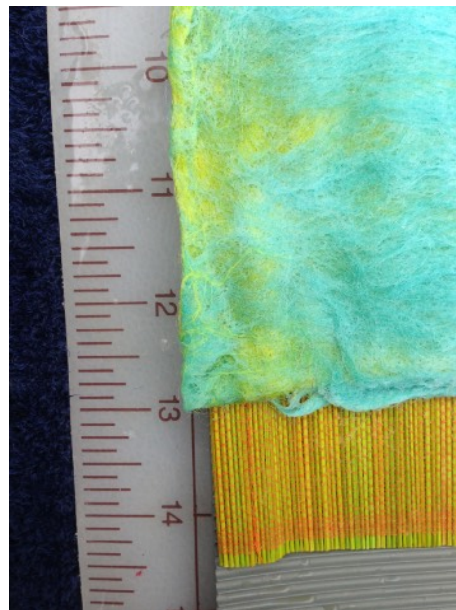


Soap up your hands to prevent the wool from sticking to your skin. If you have [netting](#) or [bubble wrap](#), then now is the time to place it over your test piece.



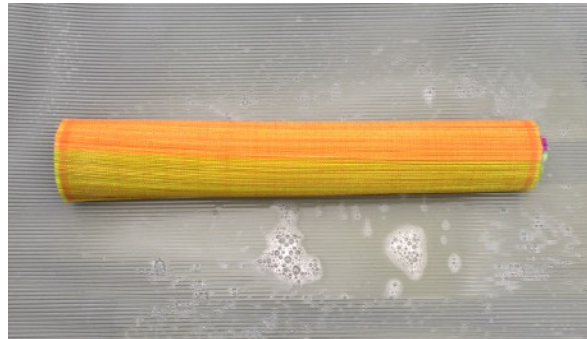
Gently press the fibers down, making sure that everything is soaked. Very gently, make small circular rubbing motions to add soap suds to all the fiber, taking care not to slide the fibers around.

At this point I remeasured my square and realized that it actually was 13" x 13" so that is officially my starting size since I have not done any actual felting yet.



## FELTING

Roll the wetted felt up into your bamboo mat. At this point a second towel or a sponge is good to have to soak up the excess water that came out by rolling the wool up.

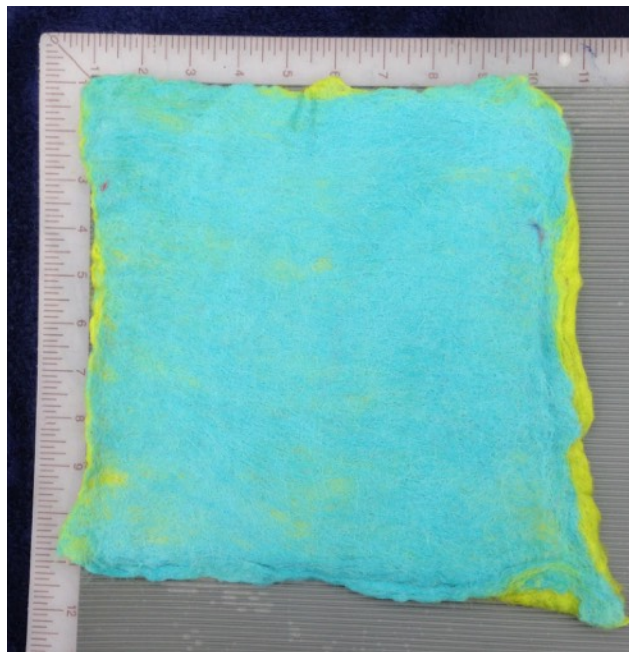


Roll the felt back and forth 25 times. One roll counts as from the palm of your hands to the fingertips and back to the palm.

Unroll, turn your felt 90° and roll back up and roll in this direction another 25 times.

Repeat 4 times.

This is how much my wool hat shrank at by then. It measured about 10" x 10"





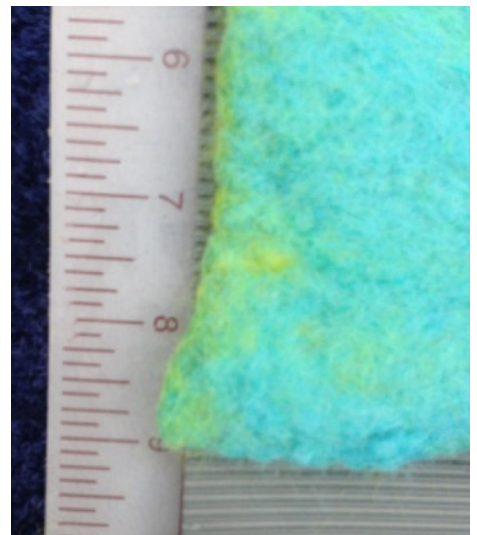
## FULLING

Continue to roll increasing the rolls to 100 each time before unrolling and turning 90°. Keep doing this until it stops shrinking, measuring every once in a while.

It is important to turn the felt 90° each time so that it shrinks evenly on all sides.

You may have noticed that long corner on the bottom right of my felt. I was able to get rid of it by rolling my felt into my bamboo mat starting at that corner instead of a side and rolling it diagonally. Notice the finished piece below doesn't have that odd corner anymore.

My end sample piece looked like this and measured 9" x 9":



## LAST STEP

The last step is rinsing your sample piece out with clear water. Using cold water will shock the fibers and possibly cause more shrinking.

Adding vinegar to your last rinse will help neutralize the rest of the soap. If the soap is left in the felt it will cause it to deteriorate sooner and it will start to fall apart after several months.

Do not twist your felt. You only want to squeeze the water out.

Rolling it into a dry towel a couple of times will help it dry faster.

## THAT'S IT!

Congratulations! You've just made your first sample piece. It is a great way to experiment and get acquainted with felting.

Now all you have to do is clean up your equipment and work area, and lay everything to dry.

Make sure your sample piece is laid flat. Don't hang it otherwise it will stretch in one direction and won't be a square anymore.

You also want air to circulate around it. An oven rack or window screen work well. We don't have a dryer and hang all of our clothes to air dry so we have this handy drying rack.

Don't forget to measure your felt after drying since it can still shrink some while drying.

If you are asking yourself what you are supposed to do with these hard earned measurements, check out our [How to Calculate Wool Shrinkage Worksheet](#).

Now go grab yourself your favorite beverage, sit back (you deserve it!) and start planning and dreaming of your actual project! ;)

