

# Needle-Felted Compositions

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**Grade Level:** 4-6<sup>th</sup>



**Time Span:** Two 45 minute classes

Introduction and demonstration (first class): 10 minutes

Art making: 30 minutes

Clean up: 5 minutes

**Essential Questions:** Why are drawings and designs not often made in wool?  
What are the benefits of composing in wool?

**Guiding Questions:** How can surface design and detail be made in wool? What are the benefits of needle felting compared to wet felting? Can detail and depth be made in wool?

**Objective:** Students will learn the process of needle felting. Students will create a two dimensional composition from wool. Students will reflect and think of other applications of needle felting.

**Materials:**

- Wool roving in various colors (at least 3 one foot sections per student)
- 9" x12" acrylic felt in various colors
- One felting needle per student

- Felting mat or recycled foam to felt on top of (one piece per student)
- Paper and pencils for sketching

**Resources:** Images and adaptation from:

*A sheepish composition.* (2011). Retrieved October 10, 2012 from <http://cdn.dickblick.com/lessonplans/sheepish-composition/sheepish-compositionsheepish-compostion.pdf>

**Performance tasks:** The instructor introduces the concept of needle felting to the students. The instructor gives a brief history of needle felting before demonstrating the process. Students are told that needle felting can give further detail and embellishments to the surface of wool. A short demonstration on needle felting is given to the students, with emphasis on safety precautions. For the demonstration, the teacher lifts the base felt and places it on top of a piece of foam. The teacher applies several small pieces of colored wool roving on a piece of base felt. The instructor then demonstrates the proper way to hold the felting needle, and the proper way to use the needle by carefully poking it straight down through the layers of fiber and into the foam. Once the students understand the process they return to their seats to start the project.

Step 1: Students decide if they would like to sketch their designs before they start to felt. Each student will receive a 9" x 12" sheet of acrylic felt to use as their base felt.

Step 2: Once a student has decided what they would like to draw with wool, they collect their decided colors of roving from a bin at each table.

Step 3: Students start to arrange their wool compositions by pulling the wool apart into thin gauze-like pieces and then laying it down on the felt in the desired placement. Students continue to lay small bits of wool down, building

the composition. The instructor circulates to provide feedback and to make sure the layers of the wool are not too thick.



Step 4: Once a student is finished with their composition they can raise their pointer finger to show that they are ready for a needle. Felting needles are counted and kept track of due to their dangerous nature.



Step 5: Once a student has a needle they are ready to carefully place their compositions on top of a piece of foam; foam for needle felting is available at each table.

Step 6: Using the felting needle, students start to attach the wool to the base felt by pushing the needle through the wool, felt, and into the felting foam. The felting needle is sharp, so students must take care to poke the needle only directly down into the foam, and to not hold, or put their hands under the foam. Felting needles that are not in use must be carefully "parked" in the felting foam to avoid injury and lost needles.



Step 7: The punching action is continued steadily, (but safely) all over the entire composition. Occasionally the base felt will start to stick to the foam so it needs to be periodically lifted up and shifted.

Step 8: Further detail can be added to the composition during the process with various sized bits of wool roving applied to the desired area.

Step 9: The piece is complete once all the desired roving is adhered to the base felt.

**Clean up:** In the last five minutes of class students mark their projects with their name on masking tape stuck to the corner of the piece. Projects are placed on the students' class shelf. Each student is expected to return their unused pieces of wool to the container they found them in. The teacher collects felting needles from each student before they leave.

**Modifications:** Younger students, students with poor motor control, and students who cannot handle the responsibility of a sharp tool can achieve a similar effect by punching a blunt plastic needle through the



roving and through a piece of burlap as the base. The final composition needs to be secured on the back with fabric glue by the instructor. Students who grasp the concept easily can experiment with building up layers of felt to make a multidimensional composition.

**Assessment:** Students will receive formative assessments for this new felting technique. Each student will receive a worksheet that asks the student to illustrate his or her project. The worksheet also asks the students a series of questions to assess understanding and interest in the project. Evidence of the elements of and principles design should be apparent in the completed wool

compositions. Understanding of the process of felting should be demonstrated. Students with un-felted pieces or limited understanding of the process Should receive additional instruction.

**Maine Learning Results:**

A. Disciplinary Literacy - Visual Arts: Students show literacy in the art discipline by understanding and demonstrating concepts, skills, terminology, and processes.

A2. Elements of Art and Principles of Design

Students compare features of composition both within an art work and among art works.

B. Creation, Performance, and Expression - Visual Arts: Students create, express, and communicate through the art discipline.

B1: Media Skills

Students choose suitable media, tools, techniques, and processes to create original art works.

B2. Composition Skills

Students use Elements of Art and Principles of Design to create original art works that demonstrate different styles in paintings, three-dimensional objects, drawings from imagination and real life, and a variety of other media and visual art forms.