



Wool Sweater Pincushions: An Introduction to Needle Felting

by Linda Lenich & Jennifer Zoeterman

Our grandmothers knew the best pincushions were made of wool. Let wool's natural lanolin oil preserve your pins with this fast, fun way to recycle an old wool sweater into a new one-of-a-kind pin keeper. Embellish with a needle-felted design using Pure Wool's Wool Fleece and Bernina's Decorative Needle Punch Accessory. This project is a great way to learn the new technique of needle felting and create a pretty place for your pins and needles. Grandma would be proud!

Supplies

- 100% wool sweater
- Pure Wool's 100% Merino Wool Fleece—choose from fleece multi-packs in eight colorways to coordinate with your sweater
- Pure Wool's Hand Felting Needle
- Decorative Needle Punch Accessory
- 8" x 8" square (minimum) of 2" thick foam work surface
- Perle cotton #8 in colors to coordinate with your sweater
- Chenille needle, size #22
- Stuffing: wool sweater scraps
- Scissors
- Rotary cutter with Olfa Decorative Edge Scallop Blade
- 8"x 8" rotary ruler
- Rotary cutting mat
- Blue washout marker

Preparation

Shrink the wool sweater so the unfinished cut edges of the pincushion will not fray. Machine wash in hot soapy water, plenty of agitation, cold rinse, and into a hot dryer. Your sweater is sufficiently shrunk if it does not fray when cut. Some sweaters will need the process repeated to shrink completely. To protect your washing machine from lint, simply wash your sweater in a zippered pillowcase.

Cut a 5 ½"x 5 ½" backing square from sweater using Olfa's Decorative Edge Scallop Blade. Each sweater will be different, so choose a section of the sweater you would like to add interest to your pincushion. Consider using the buttonholes, ribbing, buttons, collar, etc.

Cut a 4 ½" x 4 ½" top square from sweater using the scallop rotary cutter. The needle-felted design will embellish this square, so consider using a solid or

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the reverse side of the sweater. Many sweaters have a completely different look and texture on the reverse side.

Now you are ready to needle felt! Read through the Basic Needle Felting Instructions below, and then proceed to Pincushion Directions.

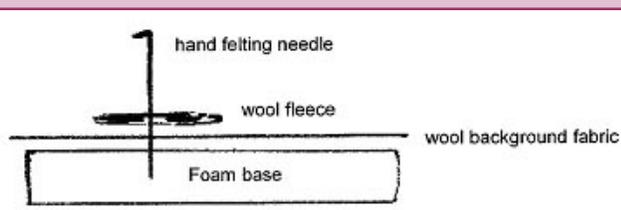
Construction

To mark placement of stems for embroidery and position of wool fleece shapes, lay paper pattern (page 3) on top sweater square. Lift and mark key features and position of design with blue washout marker. Don't worry about precise marking, needle felting lightly at first allows for change of position.

Basic Needle Felting Instructions

Needle Felting is the fast and easy technique of applying and interlocking wool fleece (roving) into 100% wool background fabric using a barbed felting needle. Wool fleece is pushed into the wool background fabric with the up and down motion of the felting needle. The barbs on the needle and the properties of wool fleece cause them to become and stay entangled.

- Place foam work surface on table. Lay wool sweater fabric on top of foam.
- Unroll a round of fleece. Hold fleece lightly in one hand; with fingertips of other hand gently pull a small amount from end.
- Keep your fingertips a few inches apart while pulling. If your hands are too close together, the fibers will not release easily.
- Do not cut the fleece with scissors; doing so interferes with the needle felting process.
- Wool fleece goes a long way; pull less than you think you need; more can be added.
- Place the fleece in desired position on top of wool sweater fabric.
- Hold the needle near the middle, between thumb and first finger. Push the upright needle through



the fleece into the wool background and down into the foam work surface with a firm but gentle up and down motion, keeping your other hand away from the needle tip.

- Use the hand-felting needle to position and temporarily hold fleece in place. Use the needle tip to move the fibers into desired shape.
- Place your shapes in lightly at first; this allows you to remove them if you change your mind about color or placement.
- There is no waste with wool fleece; as long as you needle felt lightly, you can change your mind about a shape's color or position, just pull the fleece off background fabric and re-use at another time.
- If you turn the background sweater wool over, you will see the fleece fibers underneath.
- You can "needle" straight up and down or from an angle. The needle tip is fragile, do not bend or press on it while "needling", because it may bend or break.
- Once you are happy with the design's placement, shape and color, remove fabric from foam base. Use BERNINA's Needle Punch Accessory to completely needle felt shapes in place. This multi-barbed needle attachment will completely secure the shapes in place using the speed and power of your sewing machine.
- Remember to keep your other hand away from the barbed felting needle tip...always exercise care and mindfulness.

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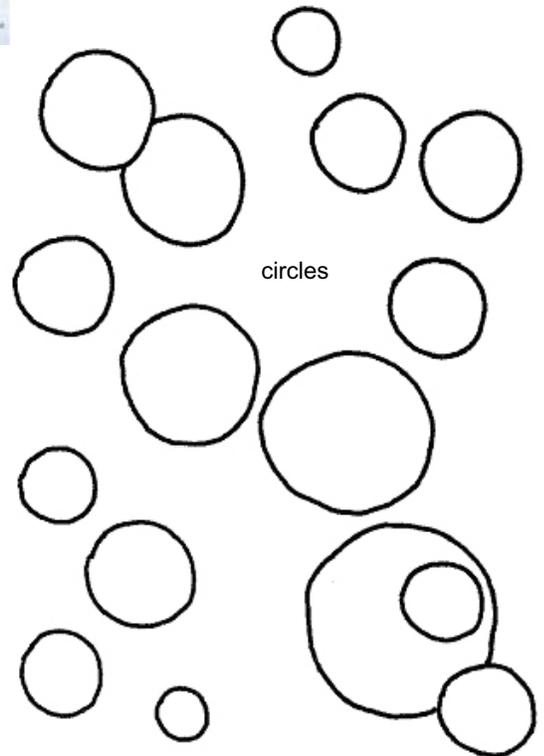
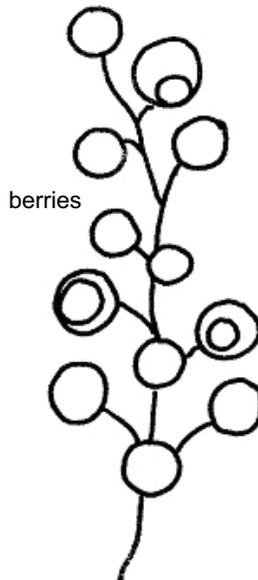
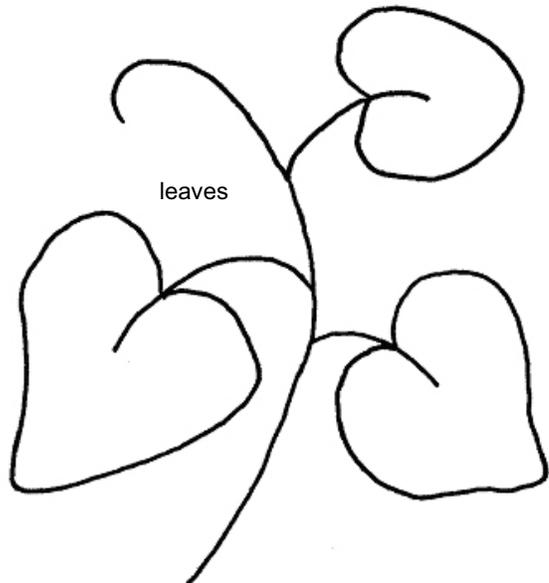
Free placement without any marking (“by eye”) is also an option. This method allows creativity and freedom in design.

For the Berries and Leaves designs with embroidery, first embroider the stems using a stem stitch with chenille needle threaded with perle cotton.



To create needle felted circles and dots: Pull a small amount of fleece from end of round. Loosely gather into a small ball with your fingers and place in desired position on top sweater square. Push the needle into the center of the fleece ball and through sweater fabric in an up and down motion a few times to hold it lightly in place, then needle around the edges of circle to define shape. If there is a dot on top of a circle, simple repeat and place on top.

For leaf shapes, form fleece into a heart shape, place on sweater fabric. Use the hand felting needle tip to move the fibers into desired shape. Push the needle into the center of the fleece and through sweater fabric in an up and down motion a few times to hold it lightly in place, then needle around the edges of leaf to define shape.



Once you are happy with the complete design’s placement, color, and shape, remove the top sweater square from foam work surface and place on bed of machine. Use BERNINA’s Needle Punch Accessory to quickly and completely needle felt design in place. The wool fleece shapes will have sharp edges and become integrated into the sweater fabric.

Once top is completed, place on backing sweater square and pin in place.

Attach top to bottom with a running stitch ¼ inch from top edge using a matching or contrasting color of perle cotton. Sew three sides together, leaving one side open for stuffing.

Fill with wool sweater scraps.

Continue stitching to close opening.



Look for Pure Wool patterns, “Fleece for Felting,” and felting needles—distributed by Quilters’ Resource, Inc.— at your local BERNINA dealer.