SOFTWARE & TECH

How To Sew On Felt

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Introduction: Why Felt is a Dream to Sew

Felt is one of the most forgiving and satisfying materials to work with, whether you are a seasoned seamstress or a complete beginner. Because felt does not fray, it eliminates the need for hemming or finishing raw edges, which makes it an ideal fabric for a wide range of projects—from whimsical ornaments and soft toys to stylish brooches and practical coasters. Learning **how to sew on felt**opens the door to countless creative possibilities, and the good news is that the techniques are simple to master. In this guide, we will cover everything you need to know: which tools and threads work best, the essential stitches to use, tips for sewing by hand or machine, and how to achieve clean, professional results every time.

Understanding Felt: Types and Properties

Before picking up your needle, it helps to understand what felt is and how different types behave. Felt is a non-woven fabric made by matting, condensing, and pressing fibers together. The main types you will encounter are:

- Wool felt – Made from natural wool fibers, it is soft, durable, and has a beautiful texture. It holds stitches well and is often used for high-end crafts. However, it can be more expensive and may shrink if exposed to heat or moisture.
- Acrylic felt – Made from synthetic fibers, it is affordable, widely available, and comes in a vast array of colors. It is stiffer than wool felt and can pill over time, but it is perfect for practice projects and children's crafts.
- Blended felt – A mix of wool and synthetic fibers, offering a balance of softness, durability, and cost. It is a versatile choice for many sewing projects.
- Eco-friendly felt – Made from recycled plastic bottles (PET) or other sustainable materials. It is usually similar to acrylic felt in texture.

When learning **how to sew on felt**, start with a medium-weight acrylic or blended felt. It is easy to cut, holds its shape, and is forgiving of mistakes. As you gain confidence, you can explore wool felt for special projects.

Essential Tools and Materials

Having the right tools makes sewing on felt a pleasure. Here is what you should have on hand:

Needles

For hand sewing, choose a sharp needle with a large eye. A **crewel needle** (size 5 to 8) is perfect for most felt work. If you are using embroidery floss, a **tapestry needle**with a blunt tip can help avoid splitting the fibers. For machine sewing, a universal needle size 80/12 or 90/14 works well.

Thread

- Embroidery floss – Use 2 to 3 strands for decorative stitches like blanket stitch or backstitch. It adds a lovely contrast and sheen.
- All-purpose polyester thread – Good for invisible seams or when you want the thread to blend in.
- Nylon beading thread – Ideal for very strong, nearly invisible stitches.

Scissors

Sharp fabric scissors are essential. A small pair of **embroidery snips** is useful for trimming thread tails. For cutting intricate shapes, a **rotary cutter** with a cutting mat gives precise results.

Pins and Clips

Felt is thick and can be difficult to pin. **Wonder clips**or small binder clips work better than straight pins because they do not leave holes. If you use pins, place them in the seam allowance area to avoid visible marks.

Other Supplies

- Pattern paper or freezer paper (lightweight and easy to trace)
- Fabric marker or chalk (test on a scrap first)
- Thimble – helpful when pushing a needle through multiple layers of thick felt
- Small iron and pressing cloth (use low heat, no steam)

Preparing Your Felt for Sewing

Unlike woven fabrics, felt does not usually need pre-washing. In fact, washing can cause wool felt to shrink and synthetic felt to lose its crispness. Simply give it a gentle shake or wipe with a lint roller to remove dust.

Cutting Felt

Accurate cutting is the foundation of a neat project. Place your pattern directly on the felt and trace lightly with a chalk marker. Use sharp scissors and cut with long, smooth strokes. For curved edges, rotate the felt rather than the scissors. A **rotary cutter** is especially helpful for straight lines and intricate shapes.

Transferring Patterns

For complex patterns, use **freezer paper**: trace your pattern onto the paper, iron the shiny side onto the felt, then cut along the lines. The paper peels off easily and provides a stable guide. Alternatively, pin paper pattern pieces directly to the felt.

Hand Stitches for Sewing Felt: Step-by-Step

Hand sewing gives you control and allows for decorative touches. Here are the most common stitches you need to know when learning **how to sew on felt**.

Running Stitch

The simplest stitch – perfect for gathering or temporary basting. Bring the needle up through the fabric, then down a short distance away. Repeat at even intervals. Keep stitches consistent in length (about 1/8 inch).

Backstitch

A strong, continuous line that looks like machine stitching. Insert the needle up from the back, then take a small stitch backward. Bring the needle up again ahead of the previous stitch, then go back to fill the gap. This stitch is great for seams that need strength.

Blanket Stitch (Buttonhole Stitch)

A decorative edge stitch often used on felt ornaments and appliqués. Work from left to right. Bring the needle up near the edge, then reinsert it a short distance to the right, creating a loop. Pull the needle through the loop to form a “L” shape. Repeat along the edge. This stitch prevents fraying (though felt does not fray, it adds a finished look).

Whip Stitch

An overcast stitch used to join two pieces of felt together. Insert the needle diagonally over the edge, going through

both layers. Keep stitches close together for a neat seam. Whip stitch is fast and works well for stuffed toys.

Ladder Stitch (Invisible Stitch)

Used to close an opening after stuffing. Work inside the seam allowance, picking up a tiny thread from each side alternately. Pull the thread to close the gap, and the stitches become nearly invisible. This is an essential skill for amigurumi-style felt projects.

Sewing Felt with a Machine

If you prefer speed and straight seams, a sewing machine can handle felt beautifully. Follow these tips:

- Needle: Use a universal or sharp needle size 80/12. For very thick felt (multiple layers), go up to 90/14.
- Thread: All-purpose polyester works well. A slightly looser tension (4-5 on most machines) prevents puckering.
- Stitch length: Set to 2.5–3 mm. Shorter stitches can create perforations; longer stitches may cause drag.
- Presser foot: A walking foot or Teflon foot helps feed the felt evenly. A standard foot is fine for single layers.
- Speed: Sew slowly. Felt can stretch if pulled; let the machine feed it naturally.
- Backstitching: Secure your seams with a few reverse stitches at the beginning and end.

Machine sewing is excellent for large pieces like felt bags or blankets. However, for small curves or tight corners, hand sewing remains more precise.

Pro Tips for Perfect Felt Sewing

Even experienced crafters can run into issues. Here are practical solutions:

Avoiding Stretch

Felt has some stretch, especially synthetic blends. When sewing, do not pull the fabric. Let the machine feed it, or use a stabilizer (lightweight fusible interfacing) on the back. For hand sewing, avoid tugging the thread too tightly; let the stitches lie flat.

Using Clips Instead of Pins

Pins leave permanent holes in felt. Use **Wonder clips**or small bulldog clips to hold layers together. They hold securely and do not damage the surface.

Pressing Felt

Felt can be pressed with a dry iron on low heat. Use a pressing cloth to avoid melting synthetic felt. Never use steam, as it can distort the fibers. Press seams open or to one side gently.

Finishing Edges

Though felt does not fray, you can add a decorative finish with blanket stitch or a zigzag machine stitch to create a polished look. For raw edges that will be hidden inside a project, no finish is needed.

Common Projects for Felt Sewing

Now that you understand **how to sew on felt**, here are a few project ideas to practice your skills:

- Felt ornaments – Christmas trees, snowflakes, or animal shapes. Use blanket stitch around the edges and add a ribbon hanger.
- Felt plushies – Simple stuffed animals or food shapes. Use whip stitch for assembly and ladder stitch for closing.

- Felt appliqué – Decorate T-shirts, bags, or pillows by sewing felt shapes onto fabric with a tight zigzag or blanket stitch.
- Felt coasters – Stack two layers of felt and sew with a decorative running stitch around the edge.
- Felt keychains – Cut small shapes, sew together with a loop of ribbon, and add a keyring.

Each project reinforces a different stitch or technique, so you can build your skills gradually.

Troubleshooting Common Issues

Thread Tangling or Knotting

This often happens with hand sewing if the thread is too long. Keep your thread length to about 18 inches. Use a thread conditioner (like beeswax) to reduce tangling. For machine sewing, check the tension and rethread the machine properly.

Visible Needle Marks

If you must use pins, insert them only in seam allowances that will be hidden. Avoid using pins on the front of the project. If marks appear, lightly steam (without pressing) or rub gently with your finger—they often disappear.

Puckered Seams

Puckering occurs when the thread tension is too tight or the stitch length is too short. Loosen the tension slightly and increase the stitch length. Also, ensure you are

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