



*Wrap it!*



# Recycled fabric *mosaic wrap*

by Wendy Bailye

## Materials

**To embellish:** A variety of recycled fabrics such as fine cotton voile and silk gorgette. The fabric needs to be 100% natural and it should be able to be blown through i.e. you can feel your breath going through the fabric weave to the other side. Some synthetic nets and organza can be used and will felt in nicely, but to be safe always do a small test piece. Some synthetics are quite resistant to felting and will not stick to the wool fibres evenly. Threads and yarns chopped up into tiny pieces.

**Wool Tops:** Carded merino wool tops. I used Treetops Nuance 170grams (60z) Azure blue tops; 30cm(12 inch) long piece of Black Smudge tops and 30cm(12 inch) Wildfire red tops for decoration.

**Felted with the help of:** One piece of bubble wrap (1cm bubbles) 2.8m (3yds) long and at least 600cm (236inches) wide; piece of nylon tulle net 2.8m long and at least 600cm wide; knitting or embroidery wool scraps (must be wool or wool blend and not machine washable; plastic container with two level teaspoons of soap flakes dissolved in two litres warm water (not hot); old plastic supermarket bag; old towel.

*This lovely, colourful piece of felt can be used as a wrap, a wall hanging or table runner—or with a big pin it can be a skirt for over pants/tights. It can also be cut up and made into cushions or other items. Enjoy this technique! It will get you hooked, and what a great way to use up fabric scraps!*

*There is no specific surface pattern—just use your creativity and mosaic your fabrics as you would a collage. The endearing thing about felt is that you can put a piece of fabric as decoration on it and if you don't like it remove it and change it at will before wetting. Be playful. You can't get it wrong! This wrap can also be made in scarf size—just adjust your materials, bubble wrap and net accordingly.*

## Laying out

1. Place sheet of bubble wrap, bubble side up on table top. The wool is laid out one third bigger than you require it, as the felting and fulling process shrinks the wool by approximately one third (more for harder felt).
2. Hold the wool roving and separate around 1m (1.1yds) of it length ways into 3 or 4 long pieces. It should separate off easily. Start with one length of this roving.
3. The most effective way to pull off even tufts of wool is to hold the length of roving in one hand and grasp the entire width of the end of the wool between the first finger and thumb of the other hand. Only

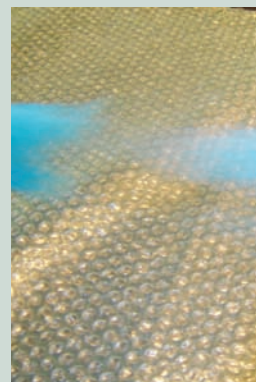
pull on the last 1cm of the roving to ensure an even, fine layer. Gently pull the wool and hopefully a very fine, even layer will come away. If the tuft is too thick you are pulling too far down the length of roving.

4. There are two ends of the wool you have pulled off (drafted). Place this fine tuft down on to the bubble wrap making sure the end held in your fingers is placed on the edge of the piece. When laying out the wool leave a 5cm frame of bubble wrap with no wool coverage around the edges of your piece (as the wool spreads out when wet).

5. Place the next tuft of wool down at the edge of the first, horizontally (overlap by a few mm's). Continue to place wool in this manner until the piece is the width you desire. After you have laid the wool out to the desired width it is time to add the next row.

6. For the second layer, lay out in the same manner, but at a **90 degree angle** from the first layer. If you wanted a thicker felt you could add more thin layers rather than thick layers (at right angles each time). Check for thin spots and fill in if necessary. Thin layers give a good quality felt.

7. Cut your fabrics to any size. They can be tiny (mosaic) or large (like patchwork) depending on the look you want in the finished surface. Fabric fossicking is a favorite pastime of





mine. The scraps come from various Op shops and Reverse Garbage Brisbane. Use the fabric as you would collage or paint. Lay pieces, leaving approximately 5mm gaps between each. With wool shrinkage these gaps will close up until there is about a 2mm gap. When the piece is covered with the fabric you can add your wool decoration on top, but this step is optional.

8. Pull off fine tufts/thin lengths of different colours of wool tops and place on top of the fabrics in any pattern you like. On this wrap I have used black or red thin strips of wool tops and some yarn finely chopped up in gaps for a bit of extra texture. Let your imagination run riot. Have fun!

### Wetting

1. When you are happy with the design carefully cover the whole piece with the netting, making sure the netting extends over the edges of the wool.
2. Get your bucket of water ready and dip an old plastic grocery bag into the soapy water and press the very wet bag onto your net covered wool, soaking the fibres. Start in the center and work your way out to the edges.
3. Use the palms of your hands to press down, wetting the wool through and pressing out the air. Do not rub, just press the water through. Make sure the piece is wet right

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the way through. Pay special attention to the edges as these can stay dry if not careful. The net keeps the wool and pattern from moving and stops the wool from sticking to your hands. Check to see how wet the wool is by pressing your hand down on the netting—if suds and water pool up between your fingers then the wool is too wet. If the wool is too wet the fibres will float around on each other rather than felting to each other. Blot with a towel to absorb the excess if this is the case. Do this lightly and don't press hard. If you press too hard you can take out too much water and the piece will be too dry to felt well. Also, be careful not to use too much soap. It should not be sudsy at all. The wool should look completely flat. If there are bubbles or raised spots then it is not wet enough. Add more water.

## Rolling

1. Remove the netting once the wool is wet through and flat and has been blotted. Roll up bubble wrap tightly with the wool and fabric

inside it. You may like to put a dowel in the middle of the roll and tie the bundle but I find I can manage with just rolling it carefully. Make sure it is resting on your wet towel so it doesn't slip about on the table.

2. With both hands on the roll, roll the bundle gently at first, backwards and forwards, increasing pressure slowly over time. Do about 100 rolls, unroll smooth out any creases and shape the edges by stretching a little. Roll back up from opposite end. Do this ten times. This starts the felting process.

3. The felt should now be well felted and the fabrics firmly attached to the wool layer below. Testing for doneness... Keep rolling until the individual wool fibres cease to move if you rub them with a finger across the surface. Try the pinch test. If the wool is at the soft felt stage try and pinch some of the fibres on the reverse (wool) side between your fingers and pull up. The wool should come up as a whole. If the fibres separate more rolling is needed. When the wool

comes up as a whole, the piece is then able to be moved from the bubble wrap.

4. The felt can now be rolled on itself. Fold it in half lengthways, and half again and then roll it up across the **WIDTH** of the felt. The felt previously was rolled along its length. This rolling will make sure the felt has been rolled in two directions. After about thirty rolls, unroll the felt and make sure it is not sticking to itself. Repeat the folding and rolling twice more.



## Shrinking/Fulling

Fulling is the final stage of felting and is the part where the main shrinkage and hardening occurs. Lay the felt out flat and stretch the edges into shape. This stretching is very important, and should be done periodically throughout the fulling process add a little soap if necessary. To continue the fulling process you can now throw the felt onto a hard surface for a few minutes, savage but fun!

You can also knead it with both hands, or roll it on itself—checking regularly that it doesn't felt on itself. You should now have a hard, well

made piece of felt. The hardening of the felt is important as it will make it more serviceable and less likely to pill. Continue until the felt has shrunk by about one third, and has a hardened texture and the fabrics are crinkled on the surface. My wrap ended up measuring 1.5 metres x 40cm.

Lastly rinse out the soap well from your piece of felt, then give it a vinegar rinse. Use a quarter cup to a basin or small sink of water. Soak for a few minutes, rinse in more

clean water. Spin your felt in the spin cycle of your washing machine for 30 seconds or wrap in a dry towel to remove excess water, shape and lay flat to dry in the shade. Felt can be pressed with a steam iron on wool setting on the reverse side.

**Suppliers:** For the merino [www.treetopscolors.com.au](http://www.treetopscolors.com.au) 08 9387 3007

Wendy runs felt making classes on all aspects of felt making from her picturesque home studio in Samford, Brisbane and is available to travel and teach. Visit [www.heartandsoulaustralia.com](http://www.heartandsoulaustralia.com) for class dates, photos, newsletter and details. Fabulous Felt Frolics 0409 643 220.

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