

## The Felting Process - *Read through this entire process before you start felting!*

The only type of washer that I have ever used for felting is a traditional top-loading agitator washer. Knitting friends have used newer front loaders to felt and gotten OK results, but I have no experience with them. Here goes.

Put your washer on the settings for hot water, smallest load, regular wash. Put in a scant tablespoon of wash detergent, powder or liquid. Place one pair of old jeans or a bath towel or two in the washer. Place your bag in the washer once the water has started to fill the tub.

Check the bag after 5 minutes. You may start to see some "fulling" or shrinkage at this point. If not, check again in 5 more minutes. The key is to check your bag frequently to obtain the results you want.\* It can take up to 25 or 30 minutes to get the shrinkage you want – be patient!

\*Some books tell you to run your project through an entire wash/rinse/spin cycle. I've gotten my best results by just turning the dial back to the start of the wash cycle when it's about to stop 'wash' and go to "spin/rinse", effectively just creating a long wash/agitation cycle with no rinse to interrupt the felting process.

After you see shrinkage or fulling/fluffiness, start to check your bag every three to four minutes. Use rubber gloves - this is hot water! You should start to see significant changes - your stitches and rows blending together and the bag really shrinking. Now it's up to you to determine how heavily felted you want your bag to be. The longer it's agitated, the more it will shrink and the tighter and thicker the felted fabric will become. I tend to like pretty tight felting, as once the bag is dried and in use the "fabric" is more stable and will stretch very little. They tend to hold their shape better than a more lightly felted bag.

Once the bag is the size you want, put your washer setting to where it spins to get the wash water out of the wash tub, pre-rinse. Let the bag spin for just a minute to get some of the water and suds out of the wool. Take it out of the washer. Allow the spin to complete to empty the dirty water out of the washtub. Then reset the washer to rinse on a cold water setting and put the bag back in. This helps to "set" the bag, and really interlock those felted fibers. When the spin cycle starts, let the bag spin until almost all of the water is out of the washer. The bag will feel stiff and just a little wet. Take your bag out of the washer. What I've found is that if you let the bag spin until the cycle is done and items are really "spun dry", bags sometimes develop creases or a strange ridge that you cannot pull or press out of the bag - a big disappointment after all of your work.

\*Sometimes it is recommended that you put your project in a zippered lingerie wash bag or bed pillow cover. I've tried it a few times and found that you run a risk. An unfelted purse is fairly large, and when confined in a bag has a tendency to felt to itself or develop thick ugly creases. When this happens, it is nearly impossible to undo the damage.

Over the past few years I have knit a number of bag patterns several times. Same brand of yarn, same numbers of stitches and rounds, and every time the bag turns out a little different from the last. Some of it has to do with the fact that different color dyes are made with different chemicals. When you add hot water, detergent and agitation, the wool fibers start to break down differently due to the various chemical properties. You'll notice that some bags shrink and felt quickly while others will take much more time. That's why you always want to check your bag OFTEN while felting! The point of all of this is to say that the unfelted and felted measurements in the patterns in this book are approximate sizes your bags will end up. This process is equal parts art, science and magic. Sometimes you'll even encounter a "happy accident." You'll know what I mean when it happens to you!