

# Fabrics to Needle Felt Onto

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If you are wanting to needle felt pictures or designs onto fabric, how do you choose which fabric is best for needle felting on to? We get this question all the time, and this video tutorial will help you choose the type of fabric or material that is best to needle felt onto..and it can really depend on what you are needle felting! Are you needle felting a picture that has a lot of detail and will require a dense application of wool? Are you needle felting a picture that is not overly detailed?

Are you needle felting something that needs to be durable, easily handled, or even washed? Perhaps you are needle felting a picture that you also want to wet felt, or a design that you also want to sew into another project. All of these parameters contribute in the decision making of choosing the type of fabric or material to needle felt onto.

There are many ways to approach this topic, and we will take the route of naming a variety of fabrics you might needle felt onto, and things to notice or look for depending on your particular project.

## **Some characteristics of the fabric you might consider:**

woven vs. non-woven and open weave vs tight weave, thin vs thick, fragile vs stable, stretchy vs non-stretchy, lofty vs compact aka squishy vs flat, low surface tension vs. high surface tension aka think surface "resistance")

## **What is the purpose of the project?**

Decorative, functional, wearable

What will happen to "it" ... the fabric you are needle felting on ....once you are done needle felting?

Sit on a shelf, Framed, behind a mat, behind glass, in a hoop?"

Mounted...on wood, on canvas, on...?

Sewn into another project?

Will it get dirty? Will it ever get washed? Will it pill? Will it even hold up?

Choosing the right fabric and the right finish for a project that will last is key.

Below is just a partial list of fabric you might consider needle felting onto. Of utmost importance is the FORM AND THE FUNCTION of the item you are needle felting. Consider the PURPOSE of the project first, then choose your fabric.

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**Needle Felting on to 100% Wool Felt - machine made  
non-woven, condensed material = low "loft", durable, receptive to needle felting**

Pure wool felt that is well made and is at least 1mm thick is an exceptional base fabric to needle felt onto. It can take a lot of wool in a really small space and still not pucker, buckle or get obviously misshapen.

We like it for all manner of projects such as:

Detailed pictures or animal portraits, landscapes, simple or rich design elements, to be used in sewing projects, such as bags, purses, pillows, and for magnets, ornaments, pins, key chains, etc. One great thing about wool felt is it can be cut without fraying, and be glued or sewn easily. While it is very durable, it is also a great background for pictures that will be matted and framed. You can leave the background behind your subject (such as an animal portrait) open to show the color of the wool felt, or fill it in. It can handle all the wool you pile onto it. Because this fabric is already "felt", meaning it has been completely "felted", it will not work in wet felting projects. However, it can be "fulled" further. If you wish to tighten and shrink the fabric further, hand wash it in hot, soapy water then steam press. You can also put it in the washing machine, but suggest you put it in a mesh bag so as not to pill the surface.

**We carry 100% Wool Felt in sheets and in yardage:**

<https://feltingsupplies.livingfelt.com/wool-felt>

**Needle Felting on to 100% Linen Medium or Heavy Weight  
woven material, somewhat of an open weave, receptive to needle felting, condensed material = low "loft",  
strong material**

Needle felting onto natural or dyed linen can be dreamy! It makes a great background for pictures and is a wonderful fabric for home linens and accessories. Linen fabric would not be our first choice for needle felting a large detailed landscape because we would expect the fabric to begin to pucker and get a bit misshapen with a variety of landscape elements. However, linen fabric it does work very well for needle felting detailed pictures such as animal portraits.

We do suggest washing and pressing your linen prior to needle felting anything that you plan to wash. Also, if you are needle felting home linens or accessories that are to be washed, we recommending wet felting the surface design and steaming pressing it. Plan to hand wash, line dry and iron.

**We carry linen for felting and sewing:**

<https://feltingsupplies.livingfelt.com/linen-fabric>

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*For more on this, see our video tutorial:*

## **Pumpkin Spice Table Linens**

<https://feltingsupplies.livingfelt.com/pumpkin-spice-felt-linens>

### **Needle Felting on to Denim fabric - new or up-cycled**

woven material, generally a close weave, durable, thick, receptive to needle felting

Denim fabric is generally a very good base for needle felting onto. It would not come to mind as a base for a large wall hanging, but that is not to say you could not decorate a large piece. This is a great example of a fabric to needle felt onto and then sew into another project, or perhaps you want to decorate a denim pillow, jacket or other accessory. As above, plan to use washed fabric, and if this will be a wearable...plan to wet felt the surface and hand wash, line dry and potentially iron.

### **Needle Felting on to Canvas fabric**

woven material, often a tight weave with larger/coarse threads, thick

This might seem like a "durable" choice, but we suggest testing the fabric before planning a large needle felted picture or design onto canvas fabric, pillow, bag, etc. Often the rigidity of the fabric is a challenge and the felting needles will face resistance from the characteristics of the fabric. If you still wish to proceed, try a finer felting needle .... one that will pass through the weave with less resistance. If your needles are bending = too much resistance! Try a finer felting needle.

### **Needle Felting on to Cotton fabric - Quilting fabric**

woven material, tight weave, thin

This is not a top choice for needle felting pictures that may cover a large surface area onto due the light weight and tight weave. Unless your design elements are minimal, expect the fabric to pucker . If you still wish to use it, leave extra room around your subject so your final piece is of a usable size and shape.

Choose a finer felting needle to avoid damaging the fabric.

### **Needle Felting on to Cotton muslin - medium weight**

woven material, somewhat of an open weave, receptive to needle felting

Will perform similar to linen, may not look as "nice", great for sewing projects, and mounting over a canvas or in a hoop.

### **Needle Felting onto Wool Fabric**

woven, medium weave, receptive to felting

Woven wool fabric is generally receptive to needle felting. The fabric may be used as is =off the bolt, or boiled to tighten the weave further. This fabric can be used for decorative items as well as functional items .

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## **Needle Felting on to Burlap**

open weave to very open weave

Burlap can be needle felted, sometimes it may seem that it requires more wool because so much wool pushes through the large openings in the weave. For best results, get a base layer fixed on to the fabric to close up the holes and then build your design on top of the wool foundation.

## **Needle Felting on to 100% Wool Felt - handmade**

non-woven, weight varies , loft vs condensed will vary

Wool that has been felted by hand can be one of the most satisfying things to needle felt on to (in our opinion :) It can be thick or thin, and will be the best support when your material is well felted, think condensed...no matter how thick or thin. If it is "lofty" ...think squishy...details will be more challenging, as will be controlling the design. If the fabric shifts as wool is added...the design will shift as well.

## **Needle Felting on to Wool Prefelt**

non-woven, weight varies, loft vs condensed will vary

Prefelt is PARTIALLY FELTED wool. You should expect that as you needle felt a design into it, it will felt more. This means it will get more compacted/condensed, the prefelt will shift. This might be ok if you are covering the entire piece with the intention of felting it full via needle felting or wet felting. If, however you are looking for a good background canvas for needle felting single subjects onto, this will not be suitable as it is not a stable fabric until it is completely felted.

## **Needle Felting on to Burlap**

**open weave to very open weave**

Burlap can be needle felted, sometimes it may seem that it requires more wool because so much wool pushes through the large openings in the weave. For best results, get a base layer fixed on to the fabric to close up the holes and then build your design on top of the wool foundation.

## **Needle Felting on to Cheese Cloth**

**woven, very open weave, fragile**

We were asked recently about needle felting onto cheese cloth. The fabric is very fragile and will not add to the integrity of a needle felted piece, nor would it form a suitable base. However, if you wish to incorporate cheese cloth, you may need to build up a layer of wool by sandwiching it between layers of wool.

***\*For any fabrics where you are having a challenge getting the wool to bind, but you want to use it in your project, consider putting a felt sheet on the back side to help trap the fibers.***

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## Needle Felting on to Silk Fabrics

woven, from delicate with very open weave to tightly woven

In general we do not recommend needle felting onto silk due to its delicate nature. However, we have known friends to gently needle felt on to silk. While this is not something we suggest, we caution that the fabric is highly susceptible to snags and runs.

## Needle Felting Pictures - Video Tutorial Playlist:

<https://feltingsupplies.livingfelt.com/needle-felt-pictures-tutorials>

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