

How to Use a Hat Block to Create Hat Tips

Wool, water, pressure, friction and heat are the tools for making felt. There are many different styles of felting, but there is only one way to do it! Just try putting some wet bunnies in the sun to run around and you will find out that it is nearly impossible to pull apart the felted mats of their fur.

How felting works:

Wool fibers are held together through chemical bonds, when the bonds are broken by moisture and heat, the wool's structure can be re-shaped. The heat dries the wool and new hydrogen bonds are formed on the wool structure as the water escapes. The new hydrogen bonds maintain the wool in the new shape. High humidity can cause these hydrogen bonds to be broken again.

Knitted woolen garments, which shrink in a hot machine wash, can be said to have felted, but have actually been "fulled". Felting differs from fulling in the sense that fulling is done to fabric whereas felting is done to fibers that are not in fabric form. Modern fulling is an example of how the fibers bond together when combined with the movement of the washing machine, the heat of the water, and the addition of soap.

This is an entry from Wikipedia:

Felt is a non-woven cloth that is produced by matting, condensing and pressing fibers. While some types of felt are very soft, some are tough enough to form construction materials. Felt can be of any opaque color, and made into any two-dimensional shape, size or thickness.

Felt is the oldest form of fabric known to humankind. It predates weaving and knitting, although there is archaeological evidence from the British Museum that the first known thread was made by winding vegetable fibers on the thigh.[citation needed] In Turkey, the remains of felt have been found dating back at least to 6,500 BC. Highly sophisticated felted artifacts were found preserved in permafrost in a tomb in Siberia and dated to 600 AD.






Creating a felt hat tip form-the 16th C process:

Felt was most frequently made of wool felt when it was to be covered with fabric. Hat felt was rarely mixed medium. Angora rabbit felt was the highest quality felt which was not covered on hats.

There are several starches and glues from which one might choose. When creating a "period" piece, I prefer rabbit skin glue as it is easy to work with, has no smell, and doesn't leave much residue when working with it. When 100% authenticity is not an issue, I like to use mundane liquid starch.

You will need:

1. 100% wool or bunny felt – you could purchase felt as a flat piece, make your own felt, purchase hat blanks or recycle 100% wool hats from the thrift store.
2. A hat block with the correct shape – you can rent them at Lacin in Berkeley for \$7/week
3. Liquid starch or glue - Optional: Orvus soap
4. Hot water
5. String
6. Large pot
7. Rubber gloves
8. Large pot with water
9. Spray bottle (not required but nice to have)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soak the wool felt in about 1 gal. of hot water. Gently massage the felt until it is completely soaked. Squishing the fabric is OK, but do not wring it. <p>Tip - I find it useful to wear rubber gloves for this process as it allows me to work in hotter water.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the felt is well soaked, remove it from the water and add 2 cups liquid starch or glue to your water. Put the felt back into the hot water and continue to massage it until starch/glue seems worked through the felt. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place over hat block, press into shape. • Begin by quartering your hands around the hat block tugging on opposite sides from one another. Move 45 degrees around and tug down again keeping your hands on opposite sides of the block. Continue all around the block until all of the felt is pulled to the desired length. <p>Note that this may take a little pressure but not too much as you don't want to tear the top of your felt.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a string or large rubber band to secure the felt at the bottom of the hat block <p>If using a string – spiral the string around the block starting near the top and working downward.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put about 1 cup of undiluted liquid starch or glue into a spray bottle. Once you have your felt stretched and secured onto the hat block, spray liberally with starch. <p>Tip - I find it useful to gently massage the starch/glue into the fibers. Begin at the tip and work your way down.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let dry completely. Usually a day will do it. 	

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