

## **The art of felted wool painting:**

### **A comprehensive step-by-step guide for adult beginners**

One of the most popular workshops at the Grandparents' Academy, among the 40 active workshops, is the one dedicated to the art of painting with felted wool.

We have created this detailed article presenting the technique of painting with felted wool (also known as "felting" or dry felting), specially adapted for adult beginners, with the aim of providing other seniors in the country and abroad with information that may be useful for them to approach such a creative handmade workshop. The material is clearly structured, with accessible explanations, descriptive images, and practical steps to facilitate learning. The article is divided into logical sections for easy reading and can be used directly in educational presentations or interactive courses.

#### **Introduction to the fascinating world of felted wool**

Welcome to the creative universe of felted wool painting, a rediscovered ancestral technique that transforms soft wool fibers into vivid, textured, and relief-filled paintings. Unlike classic painting on canvas, here you don't use brushes or paints, but the natural properties of wool—the microscopic elements on the surface of the fibers—to create images through friction and pressure. It is a tactile, meditative art, perfect for adult beginners who want to discover a relaxing hobby without strict rules.

This technique, which originated in the traditions of Mongolian and Tibetan nomads thousands of years ago, has evolved in Europe and America as a form of contemporary art. Today, thousands of artists practice it to create landscapes, portraits, or decorative motifs. Its advantages? It is affordable (inexpensive materials, less than \$100 for a starter kit), therapeutic (reduces stress through repetitive movements), and versatile—you can make paintings, greeting cards, or 3D accessories.

For adult beginners, this guide is designed as a step-by-step course with simple explanations, practical tips, and illustrated examples. We will cover everything from choosing materials to finishing, with practical exercises and common mistakes to avoid. At the end, you will be able to create your first painting! Estimated time for a beginner project: 2-4 hours.

Why give it a try? Felting wool stimulates creativity, improves concentration, and offers quick, visible results. It's ideal for quiet evenings, occupational therapy, or personalized gifts.

## **Essential materials: What you need to get started**

Before you get your hands on the wool, prepare your workshop. As a beginner, invest minimally—a complete kit costs 50-150 lei online (e.g., Etsy, eMAG, or hobby stores such as Hobby Lobby Romania).

### **Basic list (for a 20x30 cm picture):**

- Felting wool: 10-20 grams, in various colors (red, blue, yellow, green, black, white). Choose 100% natural, clean merino wool without aggressive chemical dyes. Cadmium red for flowers, turquoise for the sky, brown for tree trunks.
- Base support:
  - Thin cotton or silk cloth (30x40 cm), treated with water and soap (pre-felted).
  - Or industrial plastic film (bubble wrap, 50x50 cm) for dry felting.
- Rubbing tools:
  - Felting needle set of 3-5 thicknesses (38-40 gauge for fineness).
  - Anti-adhesive brush (felting mat or foam pad, 20x30 cm).
  - Roller or bamboo stick for even pressure.
- Auxiliary accessories:
  - Water spray or spray bottle.
  - Natural soap (Marseille soap or wool soap).
  - Sharp scissors, fine tweezers.
  - Wooden frame or frame for finishing.
- Protective gear: Thin gloves (optional), safety glasses (for needles), absorbent towel.

Where to buy? Romanian online stores: Cartuserie.ro, HandmadeBoutique.ro or international: Amazon.de (fast delivery).

Tip for beginners: Start with 5-6 basic colors. Wool is sold in "top" (elongated fibers) or "roving" (unrolled rolls) – ideal for blending.

### **Preparing your workspace: Safety and organization**

Choose a stable table with natural light and a surface protected with plastic or newspaper. Work standing up for correct posture. Ventilate the room – wool dust can be irritating.

Setup steps:

1. Cover the table with plastic wrap.
2. Place the anti-adhesive brush in the center.
3. Organize the colors into separate bowls.
4. Prepare a bowl of warm water + 1 teaspoon of soap.

Essential safety: Felting needles are extremely sharp – keep them away from children. If you have sensitive skin, use moisturizer after the session. Ideal time: 1-2 hours/day to avoid hand fatigue.

### **Step-by-step technique: From sketch to finished painting**

We will create a simple landscape: a mountain with a lake and trees, perfect for beginners. Each step includes estimated time, tips, and variations.

#### **Step 1: Planning and sketching (15-20 minutes)**

- Draw the sketch on tracing paper or directly on the canvas with a soft pencil.
- Examples: Triangular mountain outline, oval lake, 3 stylized trees.
- Transfer to fabric: Place the sketch under a damp cloth (the cloth should be soaked in water and soap for adhesion). Lightly mark the key positions with a needle.

Tip: Use the rule of composition – place the main subject on the "golden line" (1/3 of the frame).

#### **Step 2: Creating the background – Base layers (30-45 minutes)**

- Spread the wool fibers (1-2 mm thick) on the backing, following the sketch. Start with desaturated colors: bluish-gray for the sky, greenish-brown for the ground.
- Blending colors: Mix 2-3 thin strands (e.g., white + gray for clouds). Pull the fibers with your fingers, overlapping them in horizontal layers.
- Spray lightly with water and press with the roller for 10-20 seconds.

Common mistake: Too much material – the background becomes too thick. Solution: Thin, successive layers.

Practical exercise: Create a 10x10 cm sample with only sky-water background.

#### **Step 3: Adding the main elements – Needle felting (45-60 minutes)**

- Needle technique: Pierce the fibers perpendicularly into the anti-adhesive brush. Fast movements, 100-200 stitches/minute.
- For the mountain: Gray-brown wool, stab densely towards the top (for relief).

- For the lake: Dark blue, radial pricks for ripples.
- Trees: Dark green for leaves, brown for trunks – add texture with shallow pricks.
- Change needle: Thick (36 gauge) for volume, fine (40 gauge) for details.

Time breakdown:

| Element  | Colors           | Time   | Key techniques               |
|----------|------------------|--------|------------------------------|
| Mountain | Gray, brown      | 15 min | Deep vertical punctures      |
| Lake     | Turquoise, white | 10 min | Radial, superficial          |
| Trees    | Green, brown     | 20 min | Multiple layers for branches |

Visual progress: After 10 minutes, the fibers harden, which is a sign of felting.

#### **Step 4: Details and textures – Advanced beginner level (30-45 minutes)**

- Add shadows: Diluted black wool (mixed with white).
- Highlights: Fine white yarn for reflections on water.
- Creative textures:
  - Grass: Short green fibers, horizontal stitches.
  - Flowers: Small balls of red wool, secure with a needle.
  - Clouds: White fluff, minimal pressure.
- Use tweezers for individual fibers.

Thematic variations:

- Portrait: Oval face, wavy fiber hair.
- Animals: Soft outline, eyes with black dots.
- Abstract: Free colors, no sketch.

#### **Step 5: Finishing and fixing (20-30 minutes)**

- Turn the work over, prick the back evenly.
- Wet with soapy water, roll in a towel, and rub for 5-10 minutes (fulling).
- Rinse with cold water, dry horizontally for 24 hours.

- Mount in frame with neutral glue or pins.

Expected result: A textured painting with natural depth, resistant to dust.

### **Advanced techniques for rapid progress**

After your first project, experiment with:

- 3D relief: Thick layers for sculptures (e.g., raised butterflies).
- Wet colors: Mix with water for an acrylic effect.
- Combined with embroidery: Add stitches over wool.
- Large sizes: 50x70 cm painting – use an electric roller.

Weekly exercises:

1. Monochrome: Only shades of blue.
2. Complex composition: House with garden.
3. Speed felting: Table in 30 min.

### **Care, storage, and display**

- Clean with a soft brush, avoid moisture.
- Store in breathable boxes, away from sunlight.
- Display: Perfect for handmade galleries or local fairs (e.g., Romanian Design Week).

Practical projects:

- Felted greeting cards.
- Phone cases.
- Christmas bathtub decorations.

### **Common mistakes and solutions**

| The issue          | Cause                 | Solution                    |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Wool is not stable | Too wet               | Spray less                  |
| Hole in the work   | Needle too aggressive | Replace with a finer needle |
| Colors mix badly   | Dirty fibers          | Wash wool beforehand        |

| The issue  | Cause         | Solution         |
|------------|---------------|------------------|
| No texture | Weak pressure | 500+ pricks/area |

### **Therapeutic benefits and community**

This art calms anxiety (repetitive movements activate the parasympathetic nervous system). Studies show a 30% reduction in stress after 1 hour. Join the groups: Facebook "Împâslire România" or workshops at the Romanian Athenaeum.

Fictional testimonials based on real experiences:

- "I started as a beginner and now I sell paintings!" – Maria, 45 years old.
- "Perfect for post-pandemic stress." – Ion, retired.

### **Conclusion: Start your creative adventure today!**

You now have all the tools you need to create with felted wool. Start small, practice daily, and you'll be surprised by your progress. This technique is not just art, but a path to mindfulness. Order the materials and send me pictures of your first creation!

Extra resources:

- Video tutorials: YouTube "Felted wool painting tutorial."  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VELFCk9xdAc>
- Books:
  - DILLBAUM, Monica, *Animals made of felted wool*, Casa Publishing House, Bucharest, 2014, 32 pages.
  - SIENI Pieni, *101 Beautiful Felt Flowers*, Tuva,
- Online courses: Skillshare "Needle Felting Basics".