

Perky Penguin

Materials:

Fleece
Merino in white, black
and orange
Orange felt fabric
Strong thread
2 black seed beads
Black and orange thread

Tools:

Felting needle
Foam pad
Sewing needle
Beading needle



The templates for
the wings (top)
and feet (bottom).

Instructions:

- 1 Using the needle felting instructions on page 6, needle the fleece into an egg shape with a flattened base. Make a small ball shape for the head, checking proportions with the base. Attach the ball to the top of the egg shape by needling from all angles to ensure it is firmly secured and adding extra fleece fibres to cover any gaps. The total height should be around 6.5cm (2½in).
- 2 Cover the front of the figure with the white merino wool. Then using the black, cover the rest of the bird, leaving white for the belly area and a white heart shape for the face.
- 3 Make a beak from orange merino using the *Appendages* technique shown on page 7 and fix this to the face.
- 4 Use the template above to cut out feet from orange felt fabric and sew these on with orange thread underneath the base.
- 5 Use the wing template as a guide to help you form wings separately on the foam pad, using white merino underneath and black on top. Follow the instructions for *Appendages* on page 7. Leave some fibres loose at the end and needle these on to the body of the bird.
- 6 Add eyes with black fibres and finish off by sewing on black seed bead pupils using a needle and black thread.

This Perky Penguin project is taken from **Twenty to Make: Needle Felties** by Susanna Wallis

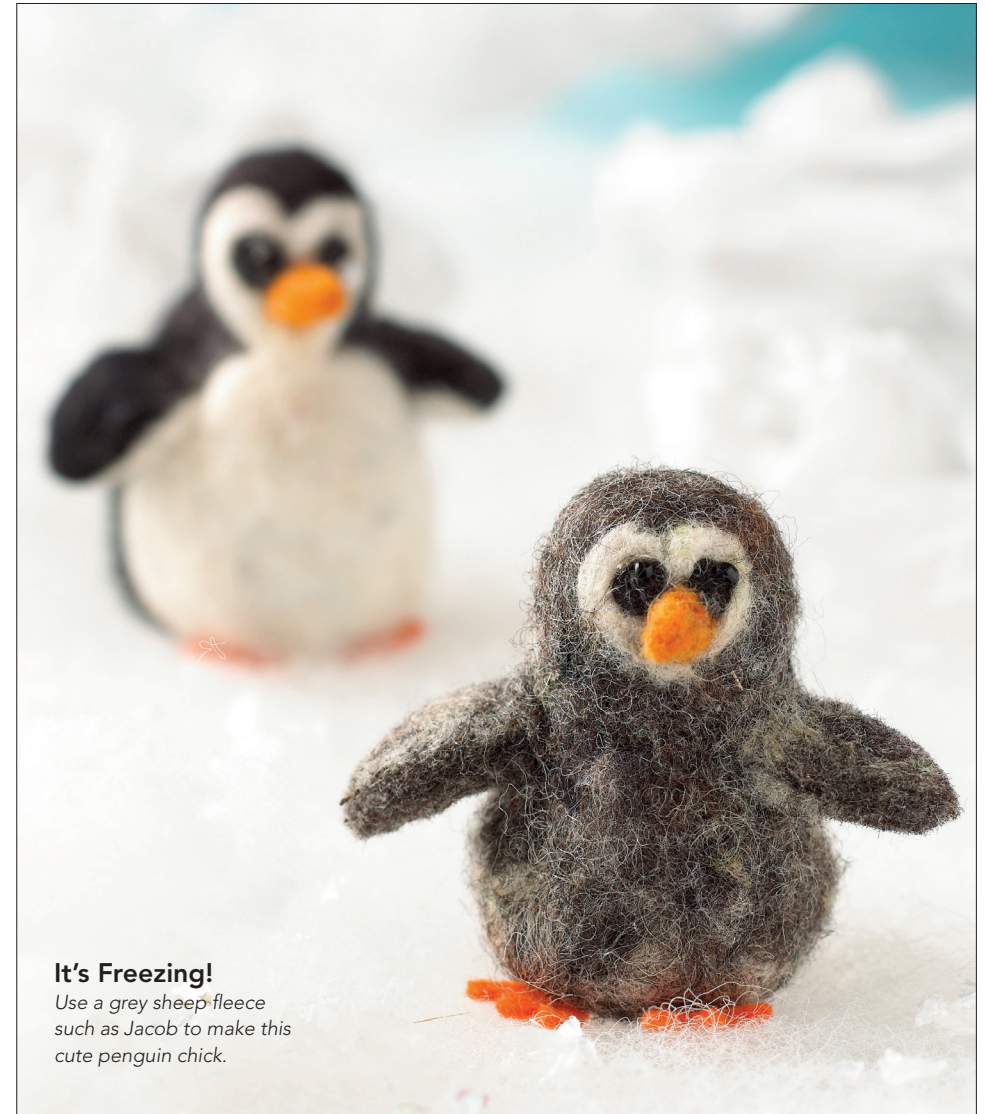
Text copyright © Susanna Wallis 2012

Photographs by Paul Bricknell at Search Press Studios

Photographs and design copyright © Search Press Ltd 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this extract, text, photographs or illustrations may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means by print, photoprint, microfilm, microfiche, photocopier, internet or in any way known or as yet unknown, or stored in a retrieval system, without written permission obtained beforehand from Search Press.

ISBN: 978-1-84448-905-3



It's Freezing!

Use a grey sheep fleece
such as Jacob to make this
cute penguin chick.

Materials and techniques

Materials

The basic materials and tools required are simple and inexpensive and include felting needles, a foam pad, cushion or needle felting base, sheep fleece, coloured merino wool fibres, felt fabric, wire, beads, buttons, pipe cleaners, pre-felt merino, linen thread, a needle and thread, embroidery thread, yarn and Wensleydale fibres.



Techniques

Using sheep fleece and dyed and combed wool

All the projects in this book start with a sheep fleece, or raw wool, centre. Some have a wire or pipe cleaner armature which is then covered with the fleece. This is suitable as a stuffing material for the centre of each design as it felts quickly and is bulky and very cost-effective. Once a shape is formed, the finer fibred, dyed and combed wool (such as merino) can be added and will cover up the coarse look of the fleece, resulting in a smoother, colourful finish. All sizes given are an approximate guide – you can adapt all sizing to your own specifications.

Basic ball, egg or body shape

Many of the figures in this book start off as a basic shape. Take a small handful of fleece. Pull out the wool fibres into a long strand, then curl it tightly into a bundle. Place the item on a working surface such as a needle felting base, an old cushion or foam block. Needle the wool repeatedly with your felting needle, making sure the needle goes in and out with a straight up and down movement, and that you keep moving the piece around to work at it from all sides. Add more wool in stages, layering and needling in thin strands to achieve the desired size and shape. With continued needling it should start to form a coarse looking, fairly firmly packed shape. Check your sizing and also if the shape is firm enough. The finished shape is important for the final result so it is worth a little extra effort to refine the shaping at this stage. Keep comparing with the photograph of the finished project and amend as you go.

Sausage shape, arm, leg or toadstool base

Shorter arms, legs and bases can be achieved from a firmly felted wool centre. The method is the same as for the ball shape, but you will need to form a sausage shape, wrapping more fibres around in stages and needling it until it is fairly firm.

Using armatures for arms and legs

For figures with longer arms and legs, use a wire or pipe cleaner armature. This will improve the figure's stance, structure and stability. For an individual limb, use fleece pulled into a long thin strand, hold the wire or pipe cleaner in one hand and wind the wool round it. Place it on the foam pad and needle the piece from all angles, adding more strands until the piece is of the correct shape, depth and firmness, then cover with the required colour fibres before attaching to the body.

To make an armature for an animal, form a simple skeleton with a head, arms and legs from pipe cleaners or similar gauge craft or floristry wire. Cover it with fibres and needle felt the shape, being careful to avoid hitting the wire with your needle. Check that the legs are of the same length.

Wire appendages such as tails

These can be attached to firmly felted figures by threading a 12cm (4¾in) length of wire or pipe cleaner on to a very large darning needle. Sew the wire through the figure where needed, going 1cm (¾in) below the surface. Pull the needle through to the exit point but leave 2cm (¾in) of wire remaining at the entry point. Remove the darning needle and tightly twist the 2cm (¾in) of wire around the longer piece to secure the tail in place. Cover the wire and any holes or gaps with the final wool fibre colour.

Wrapping a pipe cleaner or wire for thinner areas

For areas such as antennae and tails, the aim is to achieve a much thinner effect, so the finer wool fibres in the final colour are used straight away. Pull the wool fibres into a long, fine strand, hold the wire or pipe cleaner in one hand, and closely and very tightly wind the fibres round it, keeping the look as thin as possible. After the tail or antennae is fixed to the figure, secure the fibres by placing the piece on the foam pad and carefully needling the fibres into each other round the wire or pipe cleaner centre. Continue to add very thin strands, covering all the exposed centre.

Flat, thin shapes

Lay long strands of coloured wool fibres in a close spiral on the foam pad. Needle the piece, removing it from the mat after a few minutes and turning it over to work from the other side. Needle it into a flat circle shape, work in from the sides, and continue to add fibres on the top and bottom to ensure the thickness is enough and that it looks fairly smooth.

Details

Details such as eyes and mouth can be added using very small strands of coloured wool fibres, using them as if drawing or painting. Use very small amounts, poking in the fibres, checking the effect and adding more if needed. Remove any mistakes by carefully pulling out the fibres.

Appendages

For ears, noses, beaks, wings, fins and feet, place a bundle of the coloured fibres the size of a medium coin on the foam pad. For ears and similar appendages, needle the wool into a flat bundle, adding fibres and shaping from the outside edges and all angles to form the shape. Keep a few loose fibres at the point where the piece will be attached. For a nose or beak, start with a bundle the same size, formed into a tiny sausage. Keep firming with the needle as usual and taper the shape to a point at the end. Keep some loose fibres at the other end to attach to the main figure or piece. Always check proportions with your figure as you go.

Blending colours

Merino wool comes in many colours and shades but it can be effective if you blend similar colours, resulting in a more natural look, which is more authentic for animal fur and skin tone. You can also achieve a marbled colour effect as in the Fuzzy Fish on page 12. Blending can be done by selecting fibres and carding (combing) them together using two tools similar to dog brushes. You can also look at using fleeces from different coloured breeds for a natural effect.

