**FELTED PURSE INSTRUCTION SHEET**

**Sew, what's up?**

My daughter Chanel and her friend Camille were shopping for cute purses on the Internet, but they couldn't find any that didn't cost over a hundred dollars! I showed them how to make their own, one-a-kind purses out of wool thrift shop sweaters for fewer than five dollars.

**Here's what you'll need:**

1. 100% woolen sweater (including cashmere and alpaca but not acrylic)
2. Very sharp scissors, large size
3. Pincushion full of pins
4. Painter’s tape (wide, blue tape that can be found at a hardware store)
5. Thread, bobbin in thread that matches your sweater
6. Washing machine
7. Dishwashing liquid (not laundry detergent)
8. Dryer
9. Sewing machine
10. Embellishments, as desired

**Before you begin, a few notes:**

You can buy old sweaters for next to nothing at thrift stores. Re-using cast-off materials from a thrift shop or an old trunk in your attic fulfills one of Jane’s biggest rules to “Re-use, Recycle, Renew!” You can choose a sweater that has buttons or zippers, but you may want to turn it inside out before putting it in the washing machine and the dryer to minimize noise and potential nicks to the interior of your machines.

Sweaters often bleed when washed so make sure that you combine colors that will look good if they tint each other.

You will be cutting through some very thick material once the sweater has been felted, so make sure you have large, very sharp scissors. Proceed with care.
First, get out those old sweaters:

1. Put the sweater(s) in your washing machine.
2. Pour in one good “squeeze” of dishwashing liquid – not laundry detergent.
3. Set the water level on your washing machine to the lowest possible level (on my machine, it’s called “Mini”). Set the cycle to HOT WASH – COLD RINSE. Do not use any custom cycle options on your machine. If you have a front-loading washing machine, please look at the note on page 6.
4. Close the machine and turn the dial to a REGULAR cycle and start the machine. On most machines, you start the cycle by pulling the dial out.

As the washing machine agitates the sweater, the fibers in the sweater begin to open up, the dish liquid softens the fibers and then, during the spin cycle, the fibers compress to form the felt.

5. After the machine has finished one complete cycle, remove the sweater and place it in the dryer. Set the dryer to its hottest temperature and press the start button.
6. You will need to leave the sweater in the dryer for one full cycle, at least 15 minutes long. The felted sweater needs to be completely dry so you can work with it.

Once you remove your sweater from the dryer, make sure you clean the lint trap because there will be a lot of shedding. If there is any stretch left in the fabric, you may need to repeat the entire washing machine/dryer process 4-5 times to get the desired felted blanket effect – requires some patience!

Now grab your painter’s tape and scissors:

1. Lay your felted sweater out flat on a good cutting table. Notice how small the sweater is now? You will see the fabric no longer has the stretch and give of a regular sweater. It’s now a solid piece of felted fabric.
2. Mark a straight line from under one arm to under the other with the painter’s tape.
3. Using two more pieces of tape, map out where the handles of the purse will be. Be sure to leave a \( \frac{1}{2} \)" seam allowance between the collar of the sweater and the tape.

4. With your large sharp scissors, cut the sleeve off of the sweater. Go slowly and carefully, because it’s like cutting through two wool blankets. Don’t throw the sleeves away! We will use them later to create an additional accessory – waste not, want not!

5. Cut out the square that contains the collar to form the handles. Make a short cut through both layers first to begin the cut, and then switch to cut first one single layer then the other. 

   *Remember not to cut into the blue tape as you go along.*

6. Now you can remove the blue tape and see how the purse is beginning to take shape. With the square you cut out, cut straight across both shoulder seams. Set the two pieces aside to become your outer and inner pockets.

**Ready to Sew and So!**

1. Thread your machine as you normally would.

2. Pin the outside pocket to your purse. You can put the pocket any place you like so when the purse is finished, it will either be a SIDE POCKET or a FRONT POCKET.

   *Laying your pins out all along the outside of the pocket will allow you to sew over the pins without breaking the needle.*

   1. Make sure you are sewing the pocket to one layer of the purse only! Sew across the two top seams, then down the length of one side, across the bottom and up the length of the other side.
2. To begin your stitch, place your needle ½” down the seam, then put the presser foot down. Backstitch back over that first ½” and then move the fabric forward, maintaining a consistent seam allowance.

3. When you are ready to turn a 90 degree angle at the corner, leave the needle in the fabric, then raise the presser foot, turn your fabric 90 degrees, then put the presser foot down again. Sew down the other angle.

4. When you’ve reached the end of the last seam, backstitch over the last ½”. This will close your seam and ensure the seam won’t come out. Pull the last thread and bobbin thread out and cut. Cut the threads at the beginning of the seam, too.

Remove all your pins and return them to their home. You can buy magnetic pin holders to use to make sure you’ve found all the loose pins in your workspace. This will cut down on unnecessary ouches to your hands and elbows!

5. Now, turn the purse inside out so you can stitch on the INNER POCKET. Pin the inner pocket to the inside of the purse in the same manner as the OUTER POCKET. Be sure you are only sewing this pocket to one layer, too.

6. With the purse still inside out, get ready to sew the bottom of the purse. Line up the two side seams of the purse, match up the straps, then sew a straight ½” seam along the bottom.

If you think you can keep the two sides of the seam together while you sew, you won’t need to pin, but be careful the fabric doesn’t slide around under the needle or the bottom edge of the purse will be crooked. When in doubt, pin – it’s easier than ripping out an entire seam and re-sewing.
Sew Cool Tips of the Day:

- Take the bottom part of a sweater and add store-bought handles.

- One thing about felting, if you cut into a knit sweater, it’s going to unravel. Once it’s felted, it’s solid. You can cut four holes in it. Lace some cording through it and you’ve got another different look. To make cording, buy some basic cording from any sewing supply store and then wrap some of the leftover fabric from you felted sleeve around it. You can also knit, finger-knit or crochet the cording cover.

- Cut out flowers or other shapes from felt that you’ve made out of sweaters. Embellish with other notions such as buttons, rickrack, lace, etc.

- Special surprise accessory – cut off the ribbed bottom of each sleeve piece. Cut an angled notch in one side for a thumb hole and slip them over your hands for a cool little set of fingerless mittens.

Recycling never looked sew chic!

Sew You Later, Jane

Did you know you could order DVDs of your favorite Jane’s Sew and So episodes online?

Visit www.janessewandso.com and click on the ORDER DVDS button to make your secure purchase through PayPal. While you’re there, sign up for our mailing list and receive our monthly newsletter and Sew and Tell us about the projects you’ve completed.

You can sew along with the show, pause it, rewind it, and upload it to your computer or iPhone. Most of us benefit from multiple methods of learning, so watching the DVD while following along with the written instructions will make mastering the techniques in the show “sew” much easier.

Have a slumber party with your friends. Share your favorite projects with your family, school group or scout troop! It’s Sew Easy!
Special Note Regarding Front-Loading Washing Machines:

If you have a front-loading washing machine, the felting process will not work in the same way. The vigorous agitation of regular washing machines is what opens up the filaments of the yarn to create the felt, so please follow these instructions.

1. Take the biggest pot you've got (a large, tall soup or pasta pot) and fill it with very hot water.

2. Put on plastic gloves and proceed with caution because the water may seem uncomfortably hot to your hands even with gloves!

3. Add a little squeeze of dishwashing soap and work the sweater by hand, one section at a time. Rub and agitate the sweater vigorously to imitate the agitating action of a machine. Start at bottom and work your way up in 4 inch squares, grabbing the two sides of the sweater, as if you're working out a tough stain.

4. Grab a large spoon and stir and agitate the sweater in the pot.

5. Now go ahead and throw the sweater into your front-loading washer on a HOT wash, COLD rinse cycle.

6. After the cycle ends, put sweater in a very hot dryer.

As with the regular felting process, you may need to repeat this process 3-4 times. It's a lot of hands-on work, but you could also just take the sweater to a laundromat and do it in one of their agitating machines – that might be less hassle in the long run.