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Minikin Knit-and-Felt Bag

by Sue Parker of Sheepfold



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This small bag is knitted loosely, in a single piece, then felted in your washing machine. During the felting process the bag will shrink considerably and become much sturdier. Any embellishments must be added after this felting stage.

The exact size of your finished bag will depend on wool and felting temperatures used, but an indication is given below.

The photographed example is made using an aran weight 100% pure wool. Wools suitable for this project can be found at <http://www.sheepfold.co.uk/>.

You will need:

- Approx 100g aran weight pure wool (not machine washable or superwash varieties)
- 1 button, for fastening
- 1 pair of 5.5 mm straight needles
- 5.5 mm circular needle
- 1 pair of 4.5 mm double ended needles
- Wool needle to finish wool ends and attach button

Approx finished size:

Before felting: width 24 cm, height 21 cm, depth 10 cm

After felting: width 18 cm, height 14 cm, depth 7.5 cm

Instructions:

Handle: Using 4.5 mm double ended needles and the wool, cast on 5 st. Work in I-cord on these for 1.5 to 2m (knit, do not turn work and slide stitches to opposite end of needle. Repeat until you reach the desired length). Cast off. Remember that the handle will reduce in length to two-thirds its original length once felted.

Body of bag: Using the 5.5 mm straight needles and the aran wool, cast on 32 st. Knit 24 rows (garter stitch) to form the base of the bag. Change to the circular needle and knit 1 row, place a marker, pick up and knit 14 st from the first side edge, place a marker, pick up and knit 32 st from the second long edge, place a marker, pick up and knit 14 st from the second side edge, place a different coloured marker. There will now be 92 st on your circular needle. Knit in the round until the work measures 18 cm from the base of the bag, slipping the stitch markers across to the working needle and ending at the corner marker at the start of the round. Purl 1 round.

Eyelet row: *knit until you are 3 st after the corner marker, place yarn over needle (yon), k2tog, knit to 4 st before the next corner, yon, k2tog.** Repeat from * to ** on the remaining three sides to give 8 eyelet holes in all.

Upper edge and buttonhole band: Purl 1 round, knit 1 round. Starting at the beginning of a long side, knit 22 st. Cast off around the top edge until 12 st remain on your needle, removing the stitch markers as you pass them. Make a buttonhole band on these 12 st, by knitting 16 rows (or more if desired). You may prefer to transfer the stitches to the straight needles for this.

Next row: k4, cast off 4st, k4

Next row: k4, cast on 4 st, k4.

Knit 2 more rows then cast off all 12 st.

Attaching handle: Thread the cord through the eyelets and knot together at a short side (centrally).

Finishing: Finish off all ends of yarn by weaving into the work, along the cords where possible, before felting.

Felting: Felt your bag in the washing machine by placing the knitted bag in a zippered mesh bag in your machine, with a couple of towels or pairs of jeans to give the necessary agitation. Add a small amount of washing powder, but no fabric conditioner. For the photographed bag, I used 2 washes on a 60° cycle with the time saving option and 500 spin cycle. A low level spin, if an available option on your machine, reduces the risk of crumpling your bag. When felted to the desired level, remove from your washing machine and place a plastic bag inside your felt bag. Stuff the plastic bag with crumpled newspaper to give a good shape and leave somewhere warm to dry out completely.

Fastening: Sew the button to the front of the bag, aligning with the buttonhole on the flap. Make a knot in the cord on the second short side to match the fastening knot on the other side of the bag.

Felting:

Felt your bag in the washing machine by placing the knitted bag in a zippered mesh bag or pillowcase in your machine, with a couple of towels or pairs of jeans to give the necessary agitation. Add a small amount of washing powder, but no fabric conditioner. For the photographed bag, I used 2 washes on a 95° cycle with the time saving option and 500 spin cycle. A low level spin, if an available option on your machine, reduces the risk of crumpling your bag. When felted to the desired level, remove from your washing machine and stretch to give a good rectangular shape and leave somewhere warm to dry out completely.

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To purchase pure wool to make this bag or wonderful knit-and-felt kits visit www.sheepfold.co.uk