

A guide for newbies and for when it doesn't seem to be working.

Here is a quick checklist of things to consider if you are having issues (in my order of priority).

1) Biting off more than I can chew

If you are new to the GR start with a small project and only one project. Don't be too ambitious even if you're an experienced felt maker. You need to become familiar with the nuances of the GR.

Mixing two different sample pieces is definitely not a good idea until you are experienced.

2) Water

It's important! It's called "wet felting" for a reason. Make sure your item is thoroughly wet. Make sure you check it between cycles. Some wools will dry out quicker than others.

3) Soap

It's important! Do you know the pH of your soap? Neutral detergents/soaps may be good for the environment but they don't help much with felting. You need a high pH of around 11 to have a positive impact. (Google your soap to find out the pH - usually in the MSDS Data Sheet - or buy some litmus paper for \$1 on eBay).

Don't be afraid to rub your item with the soap bar between cycles as that is adding high pH directly to your fibres rather than a watered down solution.

4) Are the rollers touching the felt?

Look down from above on your rollers. Are they in contact with the rolling felt? Sometimes the rollers have a slight bow which can be flexed out if necessary. Or they may have a bump causing lack of contact, that can be ease out with a little wiggling of the PU. Are you on the right tooth on both sides (see item 5). Or maybe you need a softer centre to help - especially for light nuno pieces (see item 6)

5) What tooth for the roller?

You should be using the first tooth wherever possible. If doing nuno it should always be possible to use the first tooth as the bundles are never usually large.

6) Bubble-wrap

If you don't have a Super-Soft drive roller it may help to wrap a single layer of bubble wrap around your drive roller. You can tie it with string in a circular large spring like pattern along the length of the roller (this is shown on a video). Then use plastic sheet for your felting.

7) Rotations - how many?

Shorter rotations agitate more. Long rotations are more settling.

For a bulky piece start with long rotation cycles for the first few rounds then go short rotations to agitate more.

We find with nuno that longer rotations are best as it helps the fibres penetrate the carrier fabric.

Always use different rotation between forward and reverse ie 3.00 reverse and 2.75 forward.

The reason they are different is so that the bundle doesn't stop at the same spot on every cycle. Don't use 3:2 or 2.75:1.75 or any combination with a difference of 1 cycle as it will still land on the same spot.

The reason reverse is the larger number is because if you take up the bundle with the plastic hex shape on the LEFT hand side, then having a larger reverse number will effectively 'tighten' your roll on each cycle.

8) Cycles - how many?

Initially do only 250 cycles before you take it off, check it, and take up from the other ends.

When you are experienced you probably won't need to check it (if it looks wet enough) until 1000 cycles are done, but shorter cycles between re-rolling ensures you are equalising the felting process. You can probably extend it to 500 cycles once you get a feel for how it is working.

These above steps are very easy to do and should be a regular considerations when felting.

Other things to look at are;

9) How do I take up the lay-up?

You should be taking up the bundle from one end and then the other. (Then side to side if it is squarish)

When you first take up your bundle on the drive roller, the near end (where you begin) is inside the roll. The far end where you finish is outside the roll. This outside region will always get the most felting work.

After the first cycle. Place your roller down and unroll it. What is currently the outside of the roller will now be near end. The inside will be at the far end.

Take it up from the near end. Now what was outside the roller is inside the roller. Where you finish, what was the inside of the roller is now the outside.

This is the basic manner in which the bundle should be taken up. It alternates the fabric which is outside and inside of the roller.

10) False Ends / Partial Folds

If you find your felt is working in some areas better than others you should be using "partial folds" or "false ends". This is covered in the "how to use ..." guides. (Check the 2019 user guide)

After the first cycle, unroll your bundle. Fold the FAR end of the bundle over at some logical point (ie half way, ¼ way, whatever ...). Then, starting at the near end, roll up so the far end – the false end – is now on the OUTSIDE of the roll.

The next time you unroll the false end will be at the near end. Open up and flatten the false end. Create a new false end at the far end. Reroll starting at the near end.

OR,

11) Half Folds

Roll your bundle from one end. Unroll and take up again as per item 9 above.

After 2 cycles (or 4 cycles if you want to give it a bit more), unroll the bundle and fold both ends in so they touch in the middle. Roll from both ends as usual.

This goal is to equalise the amount of the bundle that is exposed on the outside of the roller during your various rolling cycles.

An example of false ends rolled sideways is shown here:

<https://youtu.be/6cpUhpcPPu8>

12) Weighted Rollers

Heavier rollers create more agitation. I discuss this on a video called "Pressure doesn't create felt". I don't ship heavy rollers ex-factory as (a) every kg of weight adds significantly to the freight cost which is already over \$500 per unit and (b) it is less needed with heavier felt and it's not absolutely necessary for nuno either – but it can help.

Weighted rollers are easy enough to make with water. Watch the video.

13) (but actually number 1) Join the Gentle Roller Group on Facebook.

If you don't believe me, or you want some more suggestions, you can ask questions of other users, get tips or comments and it's a good place to just keep in contact.