

Tips and Techniques:

Making patterns:

Use old manila file folders for pattern templates and trace directly onto most fabrics with pencil on light fabrics or white embroidery pencil for dark fabrics. Or print pattern page directly onto card stock. Print pin and cut paper patterns on regular printer paper. Use coins to trace small penny circles. Save cd's, plastic lids and other round and oval items for templates.

Aging fabric:

If you desire, pre-wash the fabric. Just so you know, I rarely pre-wash unless I think colors will run. Pre-washed fabric will likely need ironing. Prepare an instant coffee/tea and water solution in a wash tub or sink. I use cold water. The more coffee/tea you use the darker the stain. Submerge fabric and let sit for about half an hour. Again, the longer it sits, the darker the stain. If the fabric appears too dark, rinse with cold water. Squeeze (but do not wring) excess moisture from fabric. I hang-dry my fabric but it can be tossed into the dryer with a couple of old towels. You can also add coffee/tea solution to a squirt bottle with a wide broadcast and spray the fabric or piece with the solution. The squirt bottle technique works really well to add *stains*. To age a doll body that is already stuffed, make a coffee-stain or tea-stain in a plastic basin or bowl. Use a dense acrylic sponge like the kind that backs a scotch pad to sponge the entire doll.

Tip: Creating crusty, dirty spots is easy with cinnamon. Rub ground cinnamon into damp fabric, let dry. For darker spots use ground cloves, coffee or vanilla extract. I have also used wax shoe polish to add dirty age spots to fabric, use a dry cloth and rub into fabric for desired effect.

Tip: Coffee and tea can be hard on hands and cuticles, wear disposable gloves.

Aging paper:

Cargo tags and card stock - Prepare a strong instant coffee/tea solution in wash tub or sink. Again, I use coffee. Submerge tags for several minutes (approx. 10 minutes), remove tags from solution, place without edges touching on wax-paper lined cookie sheet. Let air-dry. Turn as necessary for even drying. You can also dry the tags in a very low temp oven on parchment-lined cookie sheets. (Please! For safety's sake, do not leave oven unattended!) Card stock, especially torn edges can be aged better with stain or antiquing gels. I prefer the gels. Apply gel to a soft cloth or heavy duty paper towel, lightly rub edges of paper first and work stain into middle of paper design (darker application to outside edge). If you have printed card stock on your printer – or used a sharpie go lightly over dry print so as not to smudge.

Tip: Use zip-loc bag to neatly soak small batches of items.

Tip: For a rougher texture or to create holes and ragged edges on paper items, use sand paper.

Aging Mop Cord:

Separate multi-ply strands from mop head. Soak multi-ply strands in strong instant coffee/tea solution in plastic tub for about half an hour. Gently squeeze excess moisture

from and hang to air dry. Use a fan to speed the drying process. When cord is dry, the strands can be separated to use.

Color staining fabric:

This is a mixture of acrylic paint and water. For a Poppet (1-3) you will need about one cup of water and acrylic paint color of your choice. In a small plastic bowl, add acrylic paint in ½ tsp increments to water a little at a time, mixing well until you have the desired shade. Paint will dry darker on fabric than it appears when you first apply it. Apply paint to fabric with a damp sponge brush (dampen the sponge before dipping into the paint).

Tip: I use disposable bowls or cups and disposable plastic forks and spoons to stir paint.

Applying paint to wood:

Wood surface should be clean, dry and dust free. Use a sponge brush to apply paint directly onto wood. Paint ends and one side. Let dry. Paint other side. Wood does not need to be sealed for primitive crafts. Let dry. Use a blow dryer to speed drying process. Let paint cure or dry well between layers or coats. I normally let pieces dry overnight before sanding or applying another layer of paint.

Aging wood:

Getting a primitive look on wood pieces is as simple as a black undercoat and antiquing. Base coat the wood piece in flat black acrylic paint. Use flat black acrylic spray paint for large or multiple piece projects. Let dry completely. Apply second color over black coat. Let dry completely. When paint is dry, sand the piece so that some of the black and some of the wood shows through the top coat. Wipe the piece free of dust, apply water-based stain or diluted antiquing gel with sponge brush or soft cloth. Immediately wipe off excess. Let dry.

Tip: Paint and stain can be hard on hands and cuticles, wash hands immediately after use or wear disposable gloves.

Dry Brushing:

This is a process that works well on both wood and fabric. Place a small amount of paint on a palette (I use a styrofoam plate). Drag a dry, stiff, short bristle brush through the edge of the paint, scrub it around a little, drag brush across dry paper towel or blotter. Quickly apply paint in desired location on wood or fabric, using light strokes or circular motion. Repeat as necessary for desired effect.

Tip: I use old brushes for dry brushing. A ½ inch chip brush trimmed short works well.

Tip: I use a styrofoam plate as my palette because it is non-absorbent so paint stays fresh longer and it is disposable.

Sewing Tips:

When making multiple items in a project, try tracing and sewing then cut. This is especially helpful when sewing small items. Use a pencil for light fabrics or white embroidery pencil for dark fabrics. Trace around a sew-on-the-line template on about half a yard to a yard of fabric. Leave plenty of room between the patterns for cutting out after sewing. I sew around all the laid out (drawn) patterns without ever snipping a thread, meaning I sew

around a pattern, do a couple of back stitches and sew over to the next drawn pattern and so on...

When sewing an item that will be stuffed, whether you will turn the item or not, use the smallest stitch length possible. Small stitches make sewing curves and tight spaces easier and you are less likely to poke through the seam while turning or stuffing.

Use large spools or cones of thread and fill multiple bobbins before beginning large projects.



Needle Felting:

Needle felting is a process where loose fiber, generally wool fiber or wool/cotton roving is poked or jabbed through the weave of a fabric with long, barbed needles. Caution! Felting needles are extremely sharp, and have tiny barbs down the sides. You can use one needle or several needles affixed to a handle. Needle felting supplies can be found at most yarn stores and web sites like hookedonfelt.com.

Note: Natural wool and wool roving is available at most craft outlets in small quantities. This wool is washed and treated or dyed and ready-to-use.

Felting Wool:

Wash wool fabric or felt yardage in hot water with cold rinse, longest cycle. Use minimal soap. Skim fibers off top of water a few times during wash cycle to prevent clogging the drain. Immediately dry fabric in hot dryer. Clean filter a few times while drying as wool produces lots of lint.

Washing Wool Fleece:

Washing real, stinky wool pelts or fleece with vegetable matter in it is a long, messy, labor intensive job. Unless you want to smell like the critter the fleece came from, consider using disposable gloves to handle it. Place handfuls of fleece in zippered laundry bags. Use your washing machine as a basin (do not allow washer to agitate). Fill washer with HOT water, add soap (Dawn concentrate) and agitate. Turn washer OFF. Add wool and press bags to submerge completely. Again, do not agitate. Basically you are gently pressing the water and soap through the fleece. Use a wooden spoon, plunger or spatula. Work wool for a few minutes while water is still hot. Do not let wool set in water or cool as lanolin will reset into the wool. You can use the spin cycle to remove excess water but do not let wool agitate at any time. Remove wool from tub. Refill tub with hot clear water (no soap), submerge wool again to rinse out soap. Repeat the rinse step twice. If the wool is really dirty, you may have to wash more than once. The water at the end of the rinsing step should be clear (clean) and not so stinky. Do not dry wool in dryer. Remove wool from bags, lay out on old towels or drying racks. Allow to air-dry. I use a fan to stir the air. Wool will usually dry overnight. Store completely dry wool in Ziploc bags.

Tip: Place a dryer sheet in Ziploc with wool, smells good, helps with static.



Making Rag Garland:

See: October Country's Original Rag Garland Loom. We recommend the loom simply because it makes adding garland trim to any project quick and easy!

Otherwise... or to do it the hard way:

Measure the circumference (as above), cut a piece of medium weight cotton household or butcher's twine about 6 inches longer. Knot the ends approximately 3 inches in on each end. Strip fabric to desired width and length. Length will vary. Tie the strips to the twine between the knotted ends. *This will take a while.* Push the strips down the twine periodically to make the garland tighter and fuller.

The fun part of making Rag Garland: Use solid color fabric as the base color, meaning use more solid color strips (2-3) between the other fabric strip colors and textures. Use homespun plaid or print strips or solids in other colors. Add raffia and assorted yarns of the bulky or ragged sort like chenille and allures in contrasting colors. Get creative! Add cheesecloth, netting, ribbon, small wired beads, rusty stars and bells, whatever makes it fun and interesting and uniquely yours.

Note: FREE Updated version of Tips and Techniques can be downloaded at the October Country website.

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