

“Battin’ Down the Haunches” Felt Cat Toys

Hallmark artist Susan Crilley says there’s an easy shortcut to the snake toys if you’re not a knitter. Just start with a 100% wool sweater. See the “easy” instructions below.

Crafter level: Easy to Intermediate

Time needed: Several hours (for washing/drying)

What you’ll need

For the snakes

- 100% wool yarn and knitting needles OR a 100% wool sweater
- Washing machine and dryer
- Boiling water
- Ruler, rotary cutter and mat, or scissors
- Scissors

For the balls

- Wool roving in various colors (available at most craft and yarn stores)
- Container of hot, soapy water (optional)
- Felting needle
- Square of thick foam (we used 4-in.-thick foam)

How to make it

For the snakes

1. Knit a square about 18 inches in size out of the wool yarn. (It doesn’t have to be perfectly square.) Finish it off and hide the thread ends.
2. Throw the square in the washer with boiling water and soap and wash on hot. Then dry it in the dryer. The first washing and drying should felt the wool. Repeat washing and drying the square once or twice more until your square has shrunk to about 6 to 8 inches in size and is thick and no longer spongy in texture.
3. Cut the square into strips about 1 or 1½ inches wide using the ruler, rotary cutter and mat or the scissors. Each square should make 5 to 6 strips.
4. Round the corners of each strip with scissors.
5. Wash and dry the strips once more, and then knot each strip at one end (optional).

Easy option for non-knitters:

If you’re starting with a wool sweater instead of a knitted wool square, just wash and dry the sweater several times until the whole sweater is felted. Then cut the sweater into 1 or 1½-inch-wide strips. Follow Steps 4 and 5 to finish them.





For each ball

1. Start with an extra-large handful of loose wool roving in whatever colors you want.
2. Roll the wad together in your hands until the fibers blend a little and form a big fluffy ball shape. It should be about twice the size of what you want your ball to be at the end of the process.
3. There are 2 options for felting the ball:
The first option: Dip the handful of roving into hot, soapy water and continue to roll it around between your palms. You should be able to feel it becoming denser as you roll it. Keep dipping it in the hot soapy water and rolling it until it's the size and shape you want. Then rinse the ball out in cool water and let it dry overnight.
The second option: Use your felting needle to punch the layers together, rolling the ball around on the foam square as you needle felt it to keep the shape uniform. (This option is less messy.)
4. To add polka dots: Use small bits of different color wool roving and make small balls out of the roving by rolling it between your fingers. Using the square of foam as a base to hold the ball, place one of the round bits of roving on the ball and use the felting needle to attach it to the ball with a punching motion. Continue until the spot is completely adhered to the ball and flat to the touch. Repeat until your ball is spotted all over.
5. To add stripes: Pull a piece of roving in a complementary color and roll it into a long strand (like you're rolling out a snake). Place the strand around the ball in a straight line and needle felt it to attach it to the ball until the stripe is completely incorporated and flat to the touch. Pull any remaining felt from the end of the strand off and repeat the process further down the ball until you have as many stripes as you want.
6. Now it's time to play!

