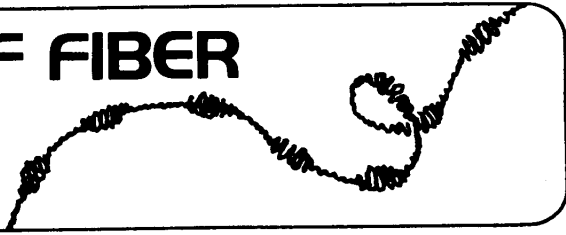


# OF FIBER



## FABRIC FINISHES

by Rose Broughton

Weavers should be aware that fabrics as they come from the loom need further work before they can be considered a finished product. In the textile industry there are many steps beyond the weaving loom that contribute to the fabric finishing process. In fact, there are many more fabric finishers than weavers. Yardage as it comes from the loom is known as greige or gray goods as it is often undyed and has not yet undergone the finishing processes that make it into the fabrics that we are familiar with. One type of woven fabric is often made into several different products due to the various finishing processes available.

Weavers work in quite a different manner from the industry--but all too often they are unaware of the various treatments they can give their fabrics to make them a better product. Fabric finishing contributes to the wear and appearance of your creations. I would like to talk about several of the processes you can use to home finish your handwoven fabrics.

### Shrinking

Nearly everything we weave should be immersed in water after it comes from the loom. This process will counteract the tension your fibers have been under during the weaving process. We all know how stiff and wrinkle prone even our finest wool fabrics are after weaving. Shrinking will relax those fibers, fluff them up a bit, perhaps change the yarn count in fabrics where the sett was too loose or the fibers were prone to shrinkage anyway and will greatly affect the appearance and hand of your woven goods. Nearly all your fabrics will become a bit smaller--so plan for this in your warping and weaving. It is much better to have the yardage for your jacket shrink now than to have the finished product shrink later.

### Fulling (felting or milling)

This is a finishing process which may be applied to wool and other animal fibers. Wool--as all spinners know, has a tendency to felt or glob together. This is due to the structure of the fiber--wool has many small barbs that permit it to catch upon other wool fibers or when subjected to heat and pressure, they will contract upon themselves. When this occurs they become felted. Weavers can take advantage of the tendency of wool to felt in their fabric finishing. You must be aware that your product will be changed--the fibers will condense causing a fuller, more compact fabric, and a large amount of shrinkage will take place.

The necessary elements to full your fabric are heat, detergent and pressure. The easiest method--with the greatest results--is simply machine wash your fabric with a hot wash plus detergent and a cold rinse. Machine drying will further felt it. If you prefer a more controlled situation, use your bathtub and slosh the fabric around with your feet! For small items, you may full them by handwashing in detergent and rubbing the fabric against itself on a washboard. Always use a hot wash with detergent, not soap, and a cold rinse.

### Napping

Many fabrics, no matter what the fiber content, are improved by brushing up the fibers to give a fuzzy effect on the fabric surface. Napping creates many more places for air cells to form and so napped fabrics are thicker and warmer. Napping is most successful on fabrics woven from loosely spun yarns as those yarns will release their fibers with a minimum of pulling and will not weaken the woven structure of the fabric. Never brush too much so that this structure is destroyed.

There are several types of napping. Single napping indicates that both sides of the fabric have been brushed in the same direction. Double napping occurs when both sides of the fabric have been brushed in opposite directions. This creates more density, firmness and warmth.

The traditional equipment used for napping fabrics are teasles. These are vegetable burrs which are pulled across the fabric to brush it up and are still used to nap finer grades of wool fabrics.

I use a bristle hair brush which seems to work fine. I brush the fabric lightly, counting the number of times I brush across each area until I am satisfied with how much nap I have raised. For mohair I spray it lightly with water before brushing. Fabrics may also be napped when they are saturated with water. As the raised fibers dry, they will tend to curl and shrink. They can then be brushed in one direction for a smooth and lustrous fabric. This process is called giggering.

It is wise to test these fabric finishing methods on a sample of your yardage before committing the whole piece to which ever process you choose. Judge which process to use by the care your fabric will get in the future. If you are pleased with the fabric texture and plan to only dry clean it, just a simple steaming under damp towels is enough to prepare it for use. If you find a piece to be a disappointment in texture and hand--try one or more of the methods described here. You may be amazed at how nice that failure can turn out.