

What is this?

Believe it or not this is your baby's hat—it's just not quite finished yet. You are going to "felt" this big baggy object into a perfectly fitting hat for your baby. Remember that beautiful sweater you ruined by washing it years ago? Well that's what you're going to do with this hat. Only this time your mother is not going to fuss at you and your Aunt Georgia, who knitted that ill fated sweater need never know.

You are engaging in the one of the oldest forms of textile making known to the humankind. Although we are using modern methods (i.e. washing machine), the magical transformation from wool to felt is an ancient art. When wool fibers are combined with hot water, soap and moving pressure, a chemical and structural change takes place which bonds the fibers creating a firm felt fabric that is warm even when wet, durable and permanently shaped.

So much for the technical aspects, let's do it:

1. On "baby's bad hair day" (their head will get a bit wet), set your washer to the lowest water level and fill with hot water and a small amount of laundry detergent. **Leave the lid open throughout the process.**
2. Throw the hat in the machine and set on agitate. After one cycle of just agitation pull shapeless, wet mass out, scratch your head and say quietly to yourself, "this woman is crazy." Make sure no holes have appeared (not often, but alas, it can happen), if one should occur, simply tie it up with extra yarn and reset the washer to agitate again.
3. Halfway through the second cycle, check former shapeless mass again and delightfully find a hat beginning to emerge from the sudsy depths. You may want to rinse, wring and try it on your baby at this point. If it is too big and the stitches are still defined, throw it in for a little more agitating. Keep a close watch, however, so that it does not shrink too much and become a gift for that American Girl or worse yet, Barbie.
4. When it fits loosely, take it out, give it a final rinse try it on your ever-so-patient baby once more. Shape it up by putting your fists inside and pulling outward, pull on the brim and ear flaps and generally form it as you want it to look when dried. Place it over a bowl of the correct size if you have one or just keep trying it on your darling model-who is now firmly convinced that you have lost your mind. The hat will shrink a bit more as it dries (which can take two or more days) so be sure to keep checking and fistfully stretching.
5. If the adorable hat should become a bit soiled from all the outings during which your child insists upon wearing their personally fitted chapeau, simply hand wash in warm soapy water and set to dry as before.