

QUICK GUIDE TO QUILTING



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Quilting from start to finish requires attention to detail with multiple steps and knowledge of a variety of techniques, tools, and notions to use. We've compiled this quick reference guide to cover the basics of traditional quilting, from choosing your tools and preparing your fabric to labeling your finished quilt. As a bonus, we've included a few tips we've learned over the years that don't always make it into instruction books. Our goal in providing this guide to you is that it will become a trusted resource for when you need at-a-glance information or a quick reminder of how to sew a particular step.

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CASTAWAY



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BASICS

WHAT IS A QUILT?

A quilt is a coverlet used for warmth and is comprised of three layers: a decorative whole-cloth or pieced textile top, a layer of batting (or wadding), and either a pieced or whole-cloth backing fabric. Before stitching the layers together, this three-layered unit is known as the quilt sandwich. Once the layers are stitched together for stability to keep them from shifting, the unfinished edges of the quilt are typically covered with binding. Binding is made up of a long, pieced strip of folded fabric that is sewn to the outside perimeter to complete the quilt, giving it a nice, finished edge.

ELEMENTS OF A QUILT

QUILT TOP—The quilt top is typically known as the decorative, top surface of the quilt. A quilt top is made using one or a variety of the following techniques:

- **PIECING**—This is a term quilters use to sew two fabric pieces together with right sides facing and raw edges aligned using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. Piecing can be done by hand but is typically done using a sewing machine. It's used to make quilt blocks or to join fabric pieces together in an abstract manner. It's also known as patchwork.
- **APPLIQUÉ**—This is a technique used by placing a finished- or raw-edge fabric shape onto a piece of background fabric and then attaching it to the surface by fusing and/or stitching it in place around its entire



perimeter. Appliqué can be done by hand or using a sewing machine.

- **FOUNDATION PAPER PIECING (FPP)**—This unusual technique is done by stitching fabric pieces onto the back side of a printed paper pattern using a sewing machine. Paper is used to provide a stable foundation while sewing the block together and is easily removed when the block is finished. This piecing technique is often used for detailed designs with small pieces that would be very difficult to assemble traditionally. Interestingly, when quilters from the past would make scrappy string quilts they oftentimes used newspaper as their foundation paper.



- **ENGLISH PAPER PIECING (EPP)**—Using geometric shapes (such as hexagons) cut from heavy cardstock



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paper and using the same shape cut from fabric that includes at least ¼" extra for a seam allowance, the paper shape is centered onto the wrong side of the fabric patch. The excess fabric, or seam allowance, is then folded over the edges of the paper shape to the back side. The seam allowance is then stitch-basted (through fabric and paper) around the shape's perimeter or fabric glue-basted at the back. The prepared pieces are sewn together by joining the right sides, aligning the edges, and hand-sewing them together using a small, whipstitch along the edge. This technique is repeated until all edges are sewn together and the project is completed. Once finished, the paper shapes are removed by pulling out the basting stitches from each shape (or pulling out the shapes from the glue-basting) to release the shapes from the back.



- **WHOLE-CLOTH QUILT**—This consists of the three layers of a quilt sandwich where the quilt top is comprised of yardage of one fabric, usually a solid color, that is intricately quilted allowing for the quilting to take the spotlight.

BATTING OR WADDING—An important part of the quilting process, batting is used as the middle insulation layer of the finished quilt providing warmth and loft. It comes pre-packaged by size or by-the-yard and is known to offer a lovely visual texture and adds dimension to a finished quilt once it is completed.

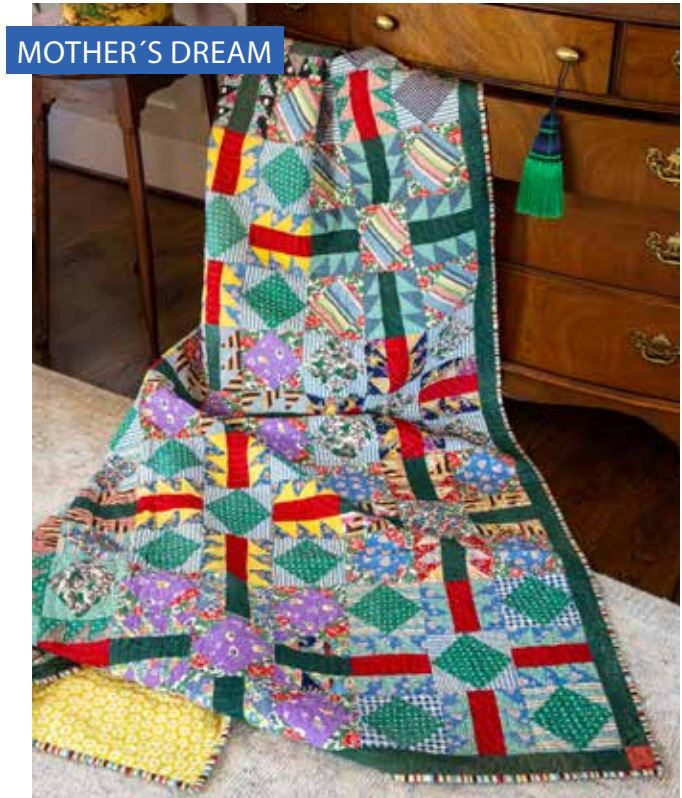
Batting is made from a variety of natural and/or man-



From left to right are swatches of bamboo, cotton, and wool batting.

made fibers. The most commonly used batting is made from 100% cotton fibers. However, it can also be found made from wool, silk, or polyester, or manufactured as cotton/polyester or bamboo/cotton blends. Though not as commonly used by quilters, a layer of flannel may also be substituted in place of batting. (See page 8 for more detailed descriptions of quilt battings.)

BACKING—This is the term quilters use for the bottom layer of the quilt sandwich. It is often made using 45"-wide



Above: Michael Miller provided fabric for the backing and binding of Mother's Dream. The backing fabric is Retro Daisies from the Ups-a-Daisy collection (sku CX10439-YELL-D), and the binding is Navigation Stripe from the Explorer collection (sku DDC10164-MULT-D).

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fabric from the bolt in enough lengths sewn together and trimmed to measure the same size as the batting. You may also consider piecing fabrics together to make your backing, thereby adding interest to your finished quilt. Backing fabric is typically chosen to coordinate with the finished quilt top. In addition to 45"-wide fabric, backing is also available in 108" widths for those who prefer no seams on the back of their large-size quilts.

AIDEN COURT



QUILTING—This is a process of sewing decorative stitches through the three layers of the quilt sandwich to hold them together. Quilting can be done by hand with

MOSSY CREEK



a running stitch; by using a domestic sewing machine or a longarm quilting machine; or by simple needle-and-thread hand-tying or tacking the layers together in spots with yarn, floss, or other thick thread.

BINDING—This is a long, narrow, pieced strip of fabric used to finish the entire outside exposed (raw) edge of the quilt after it is quilted. There are other techniques (not covered here) used to finish the outside perimeter of the quilt, such as faced binding or a knife-edge finish.

FABRIC

Most quilts, whether they are vintage or modern, are made using 100% cotton fabric. Within the quilting industry, the cotton fabric we use is known as “quilters cotton.” You can find cotton fabric specifically made for quilting in its own section in many fabric stores or from designated quilt shops. Quilters cotton yardage is sold from bolts, is of medium weight, and is made of quality 100% cotton. Though it is made to be sturdy and colorfast,



the fabric yardage is smooth and supple and is available in a wide range of solid colors and prints.

Other types of cotton fabric can be used in a quilt, such as lightweight lawn or voile, and heavier fabrics, such as denim and flannel. Linen and linen/cotton blends are also used in quiltmaking. Interestingly, there is a long tradition of using wool in quilts, both patchwork and as whole-cloth quilts. Additionally, the use of polyester was popular during the 1960s and 1970s, when home sewers used dressmaking scraps to make patchwork quilts that are seemingly indestructible decades later.

When choosing fabric for a quilt, pay attention to its “hand” or how it feels because you will see that not all

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cotton fabric is made using the same thread count or quality. You can also test the quality by holding yardage up to a light source to inspect the weave. For instance, a tighter weave fabric will not be as sheer as a looser weave fabric.

Fabric sold by dedicated quilt shops is known to be manufactured to a high standard and to use quality threads in the weaving process. Though it can certainly be a matter of preference, quilters typically recommend that you buy the highest quality fabric that is affordable, as this will contribute to the quilt's longevity.

PRECUT FABRIC BUNDLES

Precut fabric bundles come in a variety of shapes and sizes and are typically packaged from a collection of fabrics designed specifically to coordinate together. Fabric collections can consist of florals, stripes, dots, and geometric shapes in small, medium, and large prints, all adding interest to a quilt. Depending on the manufacturer,



fat quarter bundles that showcase a fabric collection can contain from 20 to 40 different coordinating solids or prints. Each fat quarter measures 18" x 21" which is equal to ¼ yard, each. Charm packs are 5" x 5" square stacks of a fabric collection or can come as a stack of solids. Other pre-cut bundles come in 10" x 10" squares, 2½" x width-of-fabric strips, and 2½" x 2½" squares. Different fabric manufacturers have their own brand names for these pre-cut stacks, but the sizes are standard. Most quilters do

not prewash fabric bundles (except perhaps fat quarters), since they will shrink and the smaller cuts can easily get stretched or distorted in the process, making them more difficult to work with.

PREWASHING FABRIC

Thanks to advances in fabric printing technology and improved colorfastness, prewashing your 100% cotton fabric is not necessarily a requirement before beginning your quilt project. Historically red dyes used in the production of fabric tended to be unstable and bleed. Today, modern fabrics are likely to be colorfast, which means they probably won't bleed into lighter fabrics the first time a completed quilt is washed. Though, if you are concerned about a fabric bleeding, there are color-catching products you can use in your washing machine that trap loose dyes from settling onto other fabrics whether you prewash your fabrics or not.

Those who prewash say they do so because 100% cotton fabrics will shrink. Prewashing gives them peace of mind regarding colorfastness and removes the sizing and other chemicals used to finish fabric in the manufacturing process.

Those who don't prewash say that they appreciate the time saved in washing, pressing, and handling yardage (most especially the long lengths of fabric!). Also, pre-washed fabric acts differently because you've washed out the protective coating of sizing which can turn the fabric into a lint magnet. Fabric off the bolt can be easier to cut and sew without having to starch, which can contribute to greater accuracy, too. Once the fabrics in a finished quilt are washed, the fabric shrinkage is known to create a softened texture that is likened to the cozy look and feel of vintage quilts.

PRESSING FABRIC

A good iron is essential to the quilting process. An important feature to look for is an iron that has consistent high heat. Something to keep in mind is that just because an iron is expensive doesn't mean it's the best for your needs, so take some time to research what is a good iron for quilting.

When using an iron for quilting purposes, we recommend pressing more than ironing. Ironing fabric and pressing fabric are two different things. When using an iron on fabric during the quilting process, use a hot setting, and we recommend that you do not use steam but do use pressing spray or spray starch. Most importantly, lift the iron and set it down to press fabric with very little movement back and forth. This technique is recommended because moving the iron back and forth on the fabric surface (most especially with a heavy hand) will distort the weave of the fabric, rendering uneven and distorted edges. We like to say to press and, when needed, slightly "butterfly" or toggle the iron in place.

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SPRAY STARCH VS. PRESSING SPRAY

Spray starch is a grain-based product, so it will attract insects such as silverfish. However, it produces excellent results and is cost-effective. If you are using spray starch, consider using it on both sides of the fabric for ultimate results. Also, it is best to allow time for the starch to soak into the fabric before ironing it so that you don't end up with an abundance of starch residue. We recommend that if you are planning to store a project for a long time that has been starched, place the project in a sealed storage bin to avoid attracting insects. Wash your project once completed to remove the starch.

Pressing spray is also effective but a bit pricier than spray starch, and it will not attract insects since it is soap-based. When using pressing spray, you may find that you use more to take out the wrinkles, but it comes in a variety of scents, so it is pleasant to work with.

Whether you prefer to use spray starch or pressing spray to help remove wrinkles and give the fabric a stiffer hand, it is truly up to you. Regardless, using either one results in more accurate cutting and stitching.

HOW TO READ A QUILT PATTERN

Read through your pattern thoroughly before you begin your project to eliminate any surprises and to give you the chance to have a clear understanding of what you'll be doing. While reading through, be sure to examine the photos and diagrams and compare them against the instructions to see if there is a technique you may be unfamiliar with so that you can ask questions from a trusted friend who quilts or someone at a local quilt shop.

Here are some other helpful tidbits about patterns and quilting to help you in your quilting process:

1. Unless noted otherwise, modern quilt patterns are written for machine piecing, and ¼" seam allowances are already factored into the cutting measurements.
2. When cutting your fabric patches, a good pattern will tell you to always cut the largest pieces first, such as borders, large rectangles, and large squares. This cutting order is designed to prevent cutting errors and fabric waste.
3. Professionally written patterns include a little extra yardage to account for a possible error in cutting.
4. Quilt patterns are written assuming a basic level of sewing knowledge on the part of the user. If there is something that doesn't make sense, be sure to ask. Quilters are generous and enjoy helping others succeed.
5. We encourage you to test new techniques or make a test block using fabric scraps before you begin.
6. A timeless adage in quilting is to remember this: Measure twice; cut once.

CUTTING FABRIC YARDAGE

Fabric yardage comes off the bolt folded along the length, otherwise known as length of fabric (LOF). First press the fold open and press out any wrinkles. Make a small cut at the fabric's edge and tear the fabric. It will tear along the straight-of-grain. Re-align the selvage edges, press the ragged, torn edge, and then make a clean cut with a rotary cutter and ruler.

ROTARY CUTTING BEST PRACTICES

A rotary cutter is used in conjunction with an acrylic quilter's ruler and self-healing cutting mat to cut the required strips and patches from fabric according to the pattern instructions. Rotary cutting blades are very sharp and should be handled with focused attention and care. Correct handling of your rotary cutter will help you cut accurately while protecting yourself from strain and other injury. The sharper the blade, the less pressure you'll need to exert to cut through one or more layers of fabric. The blade will become dull over time and should be changed once you notice skipped fabric cuts.

When cutting, place your free hand firmly on the ruler for stability. Then with your hand holding the rotary cutter, always keep the blade snug against the edge of the ruler as you cut away from yourself while positioning your hand and wrist at a 45° angle. Cut slowly and smoothly in one motion for best results.

IMPORTANT: Disengage your rotary cutter by placing it into "safe" mode whenever you are not actively using it.

BATTING TYPES AND USAGE

Cotton batting is available in a variety of lofts, or thicknesses. Due to the different ways cotton batting is manufactured, there are differences in how far apart the quilting should be spaced. Check the label of your batting for those minimums.

Cotton/polyester batting is usually produced with an 80% cotton and 20% polyester blend. This batting is a great alternative to 100% cotton for quilts you'll be displaying. That little bit of polyester will allow your quilts to hang better.

Polyester batting ranges from narrow to high loft. It drapes differently than cotton and does not shrink, so consider using it for wall hangings or small projects you wish to stay flat, such as table runners and place mats. Other fibers used in making batting include wool, silk, and bamboo.

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BACKING

The bottom layer of a quilt, or quilt backing, typically uses as many length-of-fabric cuts of yardage needed to cover the entire back with some extra. The lengths are stitched together along the selvage edges to make a pieced backing. A simple way to determine how large of a finished backing you need is to add 10" to both the width and length of the finished size of the quilt top.

Pieced backings are simple to make and probably the most commonly used. You may also consider making a scrappy backing using the leftover fabrics you used to make the quilt top.

Another option is to use fabric labeled as "fabric backing," which is typically 108"-wide. Some quilters prefer this to piecing a backing for large, bed-size quilts.



QUILT LABELS

Adding a label to the back of your quilt personalizes it for the receiver. Because quilts can be handed down from generation to generation, a quilt label containing your name, the date you made it, the name of the recipient, the occasion, and any other details are important facts to include for future generations to enjoy.

TOOLS AND NOTIONS

Here are some basic tools that will help you begin quilting immediately with your sewing machine:

- Quilting or universal sewing machine needles
- 40-wt. or 50-wt. neutral color thread (light gray, cream, or tan) for machine sewing and hand sewing
- 45 mm rotary cutter
- 6" x 24" acrylic quilter's ruler
- 24" x 36" self-healing rotary cutting mat
- Straight pins for pinning fabrics together
- Needles for hand sewing
- Scissors dedicated to fabric and thread cutting
- Iron and ironing board
- Seam ripper
- Spray starch or pressing spray



The list of additional notions and tools that are useful to quilters is long and constantly growing, but here are some items that many quilters find helpful:

- Acrylic rulers in various square and rectangular sizes
- Acrylic rulers storage tray
- Small cutting mat for smaller projects or for trimming up block units
- Water-soluble marking pen
- Pencil or pen for tracing and marking
- Curved safety pins for basting quilt layers
- Thread in a variety of colors
- Acrylic quilting templates in a variety of sizes
- Small (28 mm) or large (60 mm) rotary cutters
- Quilter's template plastic sheets
- Binding clips

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THREAD

For quilting, using 100% cotton thread is ideal. It comes in a wide variety of thicknesses, or weights, and the weight you choose should depend on what type of sewing you're doing. Here is a list of thread weights and their purposes used to make quilts:

60 wt.—This is a fine thread that's good for hand appliqué and fine machine embroidery.

50 wt.—This thread is appropriate for sewing machine and hand piecing, hand appliqué and fine machine appliqué, foundation paper piecing, English paper piecing, and quilting.

40 wt.—This is a universal thread weight suited for machine piecing and quilting, and can be used for hand or machine appliqué and basting.

30 wt.—This is a thicker thread ideal for emphasizing machine- and hand-quilting motifs.

Other thread types:

- **COTTON/POLYESTER BLEND AND 100% POLYESTER**—Known as all-purpose threads, they can be used in quilting, though many quilters believe that polyester thread can damage and cut into cotton fabric over time.
- **MONOFILAMENT**—This is nylon or polyester thread used for invisible stitching. Use caution when ironing.
- **HAND QUILTING**—This thread is only used for hand sewing and should not be used in a sewing machine. It is a thicker thread that has a wax finish to make it glide through the layers of fabric and batting more easily.
- **SILK**—This is a strong, thin, fine-quality thread used for hand appliqué.
- **RAYON**—This thread is often used for machine embroidery but not durable enough for piecing and quilting.
- **PERLE COTTON**—This thick embroidery thread is available in varying weights, and it is ideal for big-stitch hand quilting and surface design.
- **METALLIC**—This thread is made from polyester and metal. Used in hand and machine quilting, these decorative threads are great for surface embellishment and artistic touches. Use caution when using an iron.



- Foundation paper piecing paper
- Appliqué scissors or snips
- Fabric glue
- Fusible web
- Pincushions; one for cutting table and one for sewing machine
- Needle minder
- Thimble
- ¼" sewing machine foot
- Walking foot for quilting
- Hand-quilting hoop or frame
- Sewing machine extension table
- Extra lighting for your sewing machine or sewing room

TECHNIQUES

MACHINE PIECING

Machine stitch lengths are measured in millimeters, and there are a few settings that quilters use. The length quilters typically use for piecing is 2.5 mm. If you are foundation paper piecing, we recommend that you shorten the stitch length to about 2 mm or less to make it easier to remove the paper foundations when finished. For machine quilting the quilt sandwich, you may want

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to lengthen the stitches to 3.5 to 4.5 mm. Because every sewing machine is unique, doing some quilting test samples will help you determine the best look you wish to achieve. The maximum length allowed on your machine is useful for basting the quilt sandwich.

ACHIEVING A ¼" SEAM ALLOWANCE

A scant ¼" seam allowance typically works best and seems to produce spot-on piecing when measuring your blocks after you've completed them. However, when first starting out with quilting or quilting with a new sewing machine, it's important to test your seam allowances, as every sewing machine behaves differently.

A helpful way to test your seam allowance is to cut three 2½" x 6½" strips of fabric and then sew the strips together along their long edges. Press the seams to one side. The center strip should measure exactly 2" wide. If not, adjust the seam allowance by taking a slightly wider or narrower seam allowance until you find the correct width. For instance, if the center strip is wider than 2", then your seam allowance is too small, and if the center strip is narrower than 2", your seam allowance is too large. It's worth the extra time to figure out how to achieve a perfect seam allowance ahead of time, because your quilt top will result in piecing together perfectly.

CHAIN PIECING

Chain piecing is a huge time-saver and takes a production line approach to piecing your quilt. Using a sewing machine, sew all similar units one after the other without lifting the needle or cutting threads between each one. You will end up with what looks like a long garland of pieced patches that can quickly be snipped apart and pressed open, ready for the next step in the pattern.

HAND PIECING

Patches for hand piecing are prepared by using a template, tracing it to mark the stitching lines on the wrong side of the fabric, and cutting patches out with an approximate ¼" seam allowance. Beginning with a backstitch at the start of a marked line, toggle your hand-sewing needle through the fabric using a short running stitch along the inside edge of the marked line and stop stitching at the end mark; do not stitch into the seam allowance. Backstitch a few times at the end point; press to one side. Once you begin stitching units together, the attention is focused on matching stitching lines instead of matching the raw edges, as you would do in machine piecing.

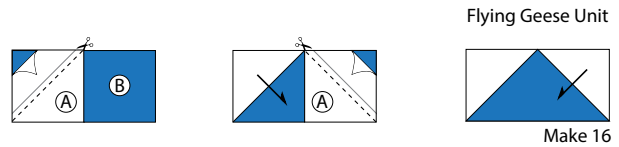
QUICK PIECING TECHNIQUES

STITCH & FLIP

The Stitch & Flip technique is a time-saver. It is typically used to add triangular patches to the corners of a square or rectangle. For this example, we'll use (2) **Fabric A** 2½"

squares and (1) **Fabric B** 2½" x 4½" rectangle to make a **Flying Geese Unit**.

Referring to **Flying Geese Diagram**, draw a diagonal line on wrong side of (2) **Fabric A** 2½" squares. Place 1 marked square on one end of **Fabric B** 2½" x 4½" rectangle as shown. Sew on drawn line and trim away excess fabric with a ¼" seam allowance. Repeat on opposite end of rectangle to make **Flying Geese Unit**.

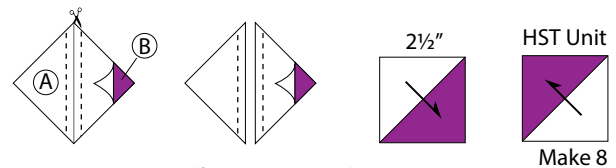


Flying Geese Diagram

HALF-SQUARE TRIANGLE UNITS

Half-Square Triangle Units (HSTs) are used in many patterns and add interest to a quilt design. For this example, we'll use two different fabrics: (1) **Fabric A** 3" square and (1) **Fabric B** 3" square to make (2) **HST Units** as follows:

Referring to **Half-Square Triangle Diagram**, draw a diagonal line on wrong side of (1) **Fabric A** 3" square. Place marked square over (1) **Fabric B** 3" square. Sew a ¼" seam allowance on each side of drawn line. Cut in half on drawn line and press to make (2) **HST Units**. Trim to 2½" each.

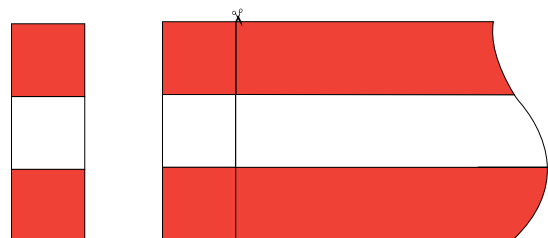


Half-Square Triangle Diagram

All *Quilt Street* patterns that use HSTs call for the initial squares to be cut ⅛" larger than needed. Once the units are made, they're trimmed down to the exact size for accurate piecing.

STRIP SETS OR STRIP PIECING

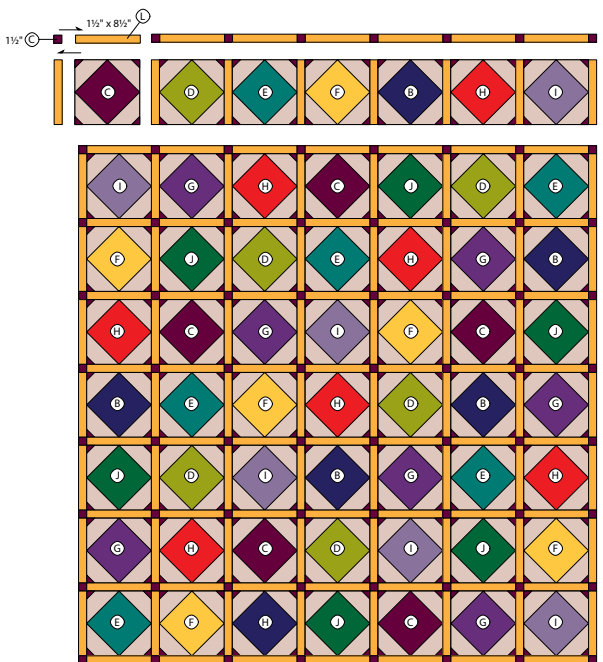
Sewing strip sets is an efficient way of making joined units. To make a strip set, one or more width-of-fabric (WOF) strips are cut from the required fabrics and then joined along their long edges to make a strip set; press toward dark fabrics. Use your acrylic ruler to measure the width of the unit called for and cut with your rotary cutter. Using this method allows you to make many identical units with minimal effort.



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TIPS FOR JOINING BLOCKS, ROWS, AND SASHINGS

When making a traditional quilt consisting of rows of blocks, once you're finished making your blocks, lay them out into rows. If you're making a scrappy quilt, reposition the blocks until you're satisfied with the placement. Once satisfied, sew the blocks into rows, keeping in mind to press each row in opposite directions (unless otherwise instructed). For instance, press all odd numbered rows toward the right and press all even numbered rows toward the left. The reason you press each row in an opposite direction is to create what is known as "nesting the seams." Doing this alleviates bulkiness of fabric at the seams when sewing and allows the rows to fit together like a puzzle. Once rows are sewn together to make the quilt center, press the rows in one direction.



BORDERS

Quilt Street patterns include steps that instruct you to stitch together one long strip from a number of WOF strips. From this long strip, cut two lengths equal to the measurement (given in the pattern) of the sides of the quilt center and then sew the lengths to each side; press toward the border strips. From the remaining long strip, cut 2 lengths equal to the measurement given for the top and bottom edges of the quilt center, sew the lengths to the edges, and press toward the border fabric.

BASTING THE QUILT SANDWICH

Follow these instructions if you are planning to do the quilting yourself:

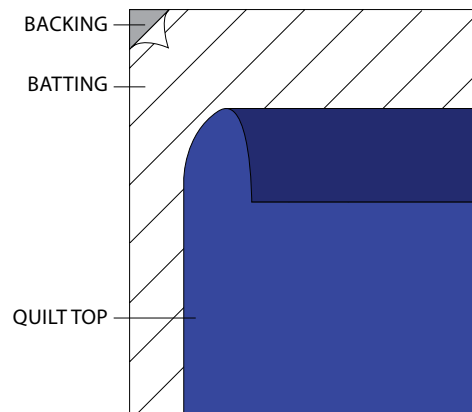
Basting is the process of layering the backing, batting, and quilt top together and then temporarily securing the layers together before quilting. First press the backing and

then lay it out with right side facing down onto an open flat surface, such as a floor space or large table that will accommodate the size. Secure the corners with painter's tape avoiding overstretching the fabric. Next, spread out the batting on top of it and use your hands to smooth it out even with the backing fabric. Finally, trim any loose threads from your quilt top and press well. Center the quilt top on top of the batting and backing layers, right side up, and gently smooth out any wrinkles.

Generally speaking, quilters use large safety pins to secure the layers together if they are planning to quilt with their sewing machine. Meanwhile, hand quilters traditionally use large basting stitches that won't interfere with a quilting hoop or frame, although how your baste is up to your personal preference. Because hand quilting takes more time and handling than machine quilting, many hand quilters also fold the excess backing to the front and baste the edges close to the edge of the quilt to protect the batting from getting stretched out.

SAFETY PIN BASTING: Working from the center of the quilt, baste using safety pins spaced approximately 4" to 6" apart; some quilters use the width of their hand flat on the surface as a measure to approximate the placement of the basting pins.

NEEDLE-AND-THREAD BASTING: To baste with hand stitches, thread a needle with a long thread that contrasts with your quilt top so that it will be easy to identify when it's time to remove the basting stitches. Working from the center of the quilt sandwich toward the edges, take long running stitches through all layers of the quilt sandwich, creating a grid of stitches approximately 4" to 6" apart in vertical and horizontal rows.



Additional basting methods include using an adhesive basting spray (refer to manufacturer's instructions for best results) or using a longarm quilter to baste the layers for you.

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QUILTING

BY HAND

Hand quilting doesn't require a lot of supplies. You'll need a needle, quilting thread, a quilting hoop, and a thimble. Traditional hand quilters mount their quilt sandwich in a large hoop or frame, although some hold the basted sandwich without extra support at all. The most common needles used are called between; short needles that are easier to control when using the rocking stitch technique. Use thread specific to hand quilting from your local quilt or fabric shop.

Follow these steps to begin hand quilting:

1. Thread the needle with one strand of thread and knot the end of the long tail.
2. Begin in the center of the basted quilt sandwich and work your way toward the edges, which will allow you to smooth out any distortion or waviness in the layers, if needed, as you sew.
3. Insert the threaded needle into the quilt top and batting about ½" away from where you want to begin stitching; do not stitch through the backing.
4. Poke the needle up through the top at your beginning stitch point and pull the thread taut to pop the knotted end so it will rest in the batting layer.
5. Position the needle perpendicular to the quilt top while pushing through all the layers just until you can feel the point come through at the back with your other hand. While maintaining control of the needle with a thimble on your top hand, use your hand at the back of the quilt sandwich to angle the tip of the needle back up through the quilt as perpendicular as you can until the point appears on the top, but do not pull the needle all the way through.
6. Coordinating the motion with both hands, angle the needle back down again and up through the layers to load another stitch onto the needle. In this manner, load a few stitches onto the needle before pulling the thread taut and continuing to stitch. This up and down stitching is known as a rocking stitch.

Loading a few stitches onto the needle at a time helps keep them aligned and allows you to work on keeping them even. If needed, adjust the tension of your hoop or frame to allow you to rock the needle up and down without letting the quilt sandwich get too loose.

As a beginner, focus first on making your stitches even

HAMPDEN AVENUE



before you focus on taking smaller stitches. Hand quilting isn't difficult to learn, and you may find yourself discovering what the right combination of thimble, needle size, and hoop or frame tension works best for you. But before you know it you'll get into a rhythm with your rocking stitch, and the time it takes to hand quilt will be something you'll enjoy doing. In fact, the practice of hand quilting offers even a new quilter a high level of accuracy in creating designs as complex as you desire.

BIG STITCH

Big stitch quilting has grown in recent years due to traditional Japanese sashiko hand-stitching embroidery

CASTAWAY



QUICK GUIDE TO QUILTING

techniques becoming popular. Instead of using fine thread and aiming for 12 stitches per inch in traditional quilting, big stitch quilting employs thick Perle cotton thread and large-eyed, sturdy needles, resulting in a charming, less-structured, and more rustic look. Depending on the size of your needle, you can use a long running stitch or take each stitch individually, whatever works best. Since this form of stitching is more relaxed, there is no standard stitch length; make stitches long enough to see the texture you're creating ($\frac{1}{8}$ "– $\frac{1}{4}$ ") but not so long they can easily get caught on something. Experiment by using different colors of thread for added design interest. Big stitch quilting is a wonderful option for those who enjoy hand stitching and the textured look they'll create.

BY MACHINE

When using a domestic sewing machine, the two main ways to quilt are straight stitch and free-motion quilting. When straight-stitch quilting, you'll achieve best results by starting at the top center edge of the quilt sandwich and continuing to stitch in a top-to-bottom direction throughout. As with hand quilting, it is best to begin free-motion quilting at the center of your quilt sandwich and work your way to the outside edges.

STRAIGHT-STITCH QUILTING

Straight-stitch quilting is done using a walking foot or dual-feed foot, which moves the top and bottom layers through the machine in conjunction with the feed dogs at the same rate. It's rather easy to get the hang of, if you're



Standard sewing machine walking foot.

new to machine quilting.

Follow these steps to begin straight-stitch quilting:

1. Attach a walking foot or dual-feed foot, or engage the dual-feed option if it is available on your sewing machine.
2. Start stitching a few inches above the top edge and at the midpoint of the quilt sandwich.
3. Stitch your first line of straight stitch quilting and sew to a few inches below the bottom edge.

4. Continue stitching lines in one direction to help prevent distorting the quilt.

FREE-MOTION QUILTING

The key to success with free-motion quilting is learning how to coordinate the speed of the needle with the speed you move the quilt with your hands. Assemble some practice quilt sandwiches and start experimenting to get used to the basic feel. If your machine has different speed settings, try setting it to the lowest speed and work on finding and maintaining a steady movement with your hands until your stitches are coming out even. Free-motion quilting requires patience and persistence to build your skills, which will pay off when you're able to finish your quilts in a way that's uniquely your own. Free-motion quilting requires a different foot. The names of free-motion presser feet vary, depending on the sewing machine manufacturer; check the owner manual or manufacturer's website to determine what you need.



The BSR—Bernina Stitch Regulator—adjusts the speed of the sewing machine automatically when free-motion quilting with the feed dogs lowered.

Follow these steps to begin free-motion quilting:

1. Attach a free-motion presser foot.
2. Lower the feed dogs and arrange your quilt sandwich to begin sewing in the center.
3. Pull the end of the bobbin thread up through the layers so it is next to the needle thread tail at top. Most modern sewing machines have a needle down and up function that will bring the bobbin thread up. This will allow you to pull the tail end through to the top; check the manufacturer's owner manual if needed.
4. Gently hold the thread ends with one hand as you take the first couple of stitches.
5. Space your hands an even, safe distance away from the machine needle and begin moving the quilt sandwich around under the needle to create a wide variety of organic shapes and motifs.

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Remember that a layered quilt sandwich of any size larger than a table runner is bulky and heavy, and a lot of your time sitting at your machine will be spent bunching, rolling, and adjusting the quilt to make it easier to stitch the small section you're working on under the needle. Any amount of drag on the section you're working on will pull against the needle and interfere with achieving even stitches, so do your best to distribute the weight evenly between the sewing table, your lap, or even an extra side table, to allow the quilt to move as freely as possible while you stitch. Stop stitching to readjust the quilt sandwich as needed until you are finished—it'll be worth it and prove to be a satisfying accomplishment.

BY PAYMENT

There are many quilters who don't layer, baste, and quilt their quilt sandwiches. They love making quilt tops but prefer not to do the quilting themselves. There are professional quilters who use longarm sewing machines that you can employ to do the work for you by paying them for their services. The machines they use typically come with frames and rollers that the quilt top, batting, and backing are loaded onto, taut and flat to avoid wrinkles. The longarm sewing machine then travels back and forth along a track mounted on the frame, sewing a motif you've selected from their library. Some longarm sewing machines are operated manually by the quilter, and others can be digitally programmed to quilt on their own.



If you plan to use the services of a professional quilter, talk to them in advance about how they would like you to prepare your quilt layers. For instance, ask if they would like you to have the backing ready (pieced together if needed), if they want you to have the backing and quilt top pressed ahead of time, and if they want you to supply the batting. There may be extra costs involved, so be sure to ask ahead of time. You'll also want to consider whether you will be adding the binding after the quilting is completed or whether you'd like the professional quilter to do it for you. Lastly, discuss realistic turnaround times, particularly closer to holiday gift-giving seasons. Once

your quilt top is sent off to be finished by a professional quilter, you can get back to the fun process of making your next quilt top.

SQUARING THE QUILT

After the quilt sandwich is quilted, trim the excess batting and backing even with the edges of the quilt top. Do this by aligning a large square acrylic ruler or the right-angle corner of a large rectangular ruler with a corner of the quilt. Using a rotary cutter, trim the batting and backing along the edges of the ruler. Use a long acrylic ruler along the sides and trim the remaining three corners of the quilt using a large square ruler (or large rectangular ruler), as instructed.

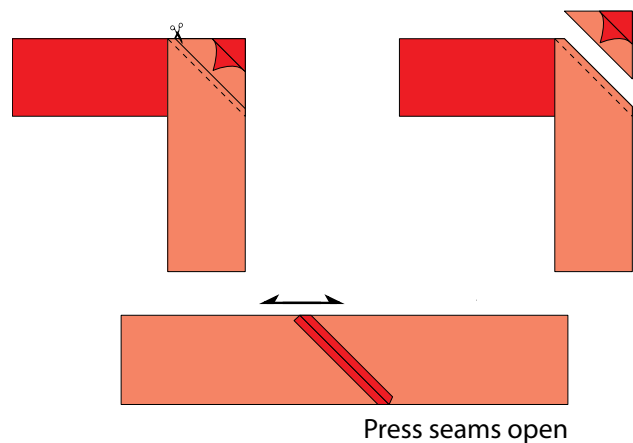
BINDING

Likely the most common binding technique used today, the double-fold (or French-fold) binding method provides two layers of protection from wear and tear adding durability along the edges of a quilt.

Art: Insert Binding Diagrams

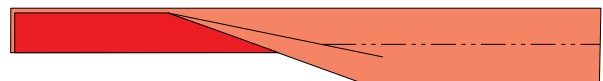
HOW TO MAKE DOUBLE-FOLD BINDING:

1. Cut the number of 2½" x WOF strips as directed in the project instructions.
2. Join the strips end to end at right angles with right sides together and edges aligned; stitch across the corner diagonally and then trim the corner to a ¼" seam allowance and press seams open to create a long, pieced strip.



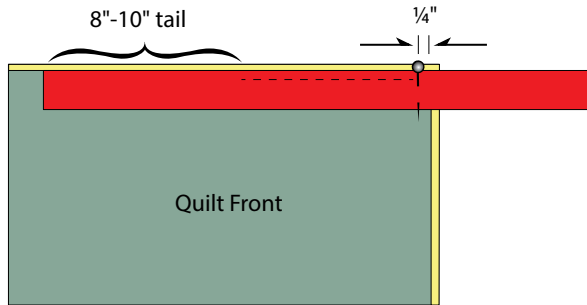
Joining Binding

3. Press the strip in half lengthwise with wrong sides together and raw edges aligned.

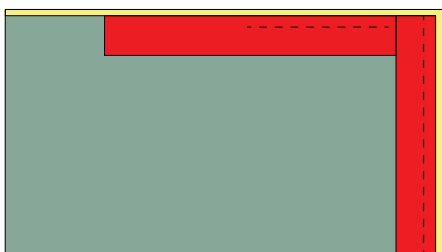
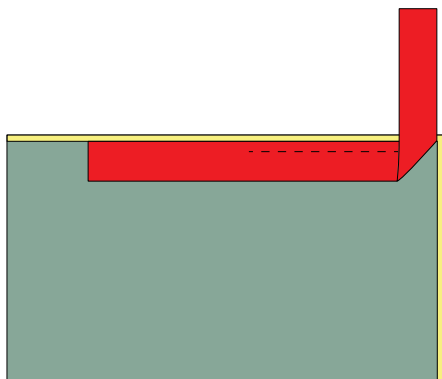


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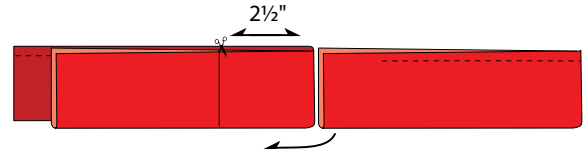
4. Attach a walking foot onto your sewing machine. Starting in the middle of one side and aligning the raw edges, begin stitching 8" to 10" from the start of the strip using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. Stop stitching $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the first corner and backstitch.



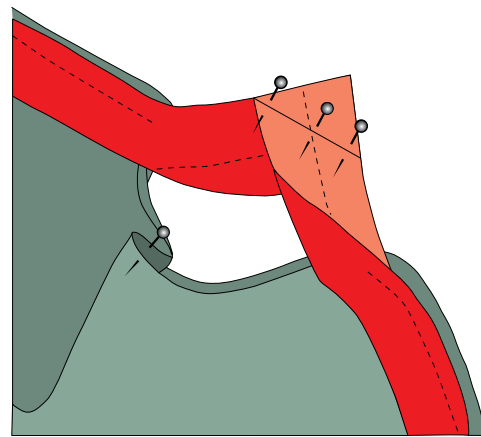
5. Remove the quilt from the machine and rotate it 90° so that you'll be stitching along the next side. Fold the strip up and away from the quilt; then fold it back down onto itself, even with the raw edge of the quilt top and finger-press the corner folds. Begin with a backstitch and continue stitching along the edge of the quilt top, mitering each corner as you come to it.



6. Stop stitching 8" to 10" from the starting point with a backstitch and remove the quilt from the machine. Lay the quilt edge on a flat surface. Fold the ending strip back as shown, mark the strip $2\frac{1}{2}$ " from the fold and cut off the excess strip.

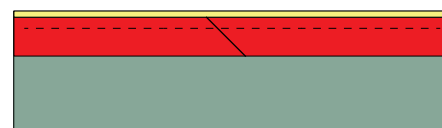
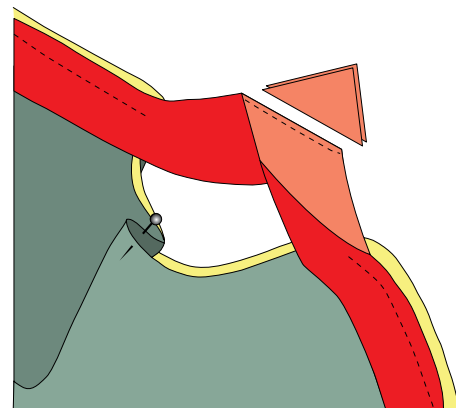


7. Gather the unsewn portion of the quilt edge into a pleat and pin in place. This will make it easier to sew the binding ends together. Unfold the binding strips and overlap the ends at right angles, right sides together as shown. Pin the ends together and draw a line diagonally from corner to corner.

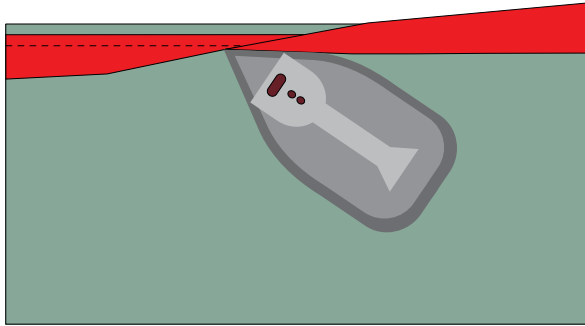


Pin ends together. Draw a diagonal line.

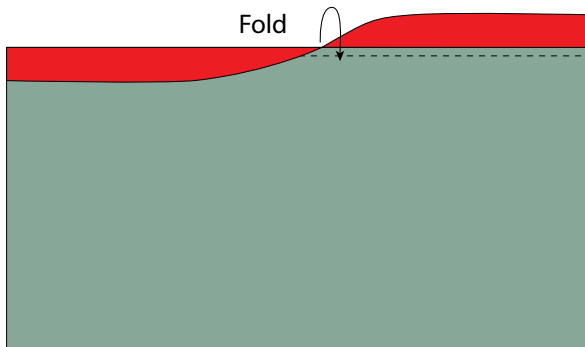
8. Sew along the drawn line. Trim the excess fabric, leaving a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. Remove the pins. Press the seam allowance open and then refold the binding strip and sew it in place on the quilt.



9. From the front of the quilt, press the binding away from the quilt around the entire edge. Fold the binding strip over the raw edges of the quilt sandwich to the back. Cover the row of machine stitching with the folded edge.



Quilt Front



Quilt Back

10. Cover the row of machine stitching with the folded edge of the binding and stitch in place by hand using a whipstitch or blind stitch.

BURGOYNNE SURROUNDED



FIRST FROST



AIDEN COURT

