

Understanding The Basics Of Quilting!

# UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF QUILTING

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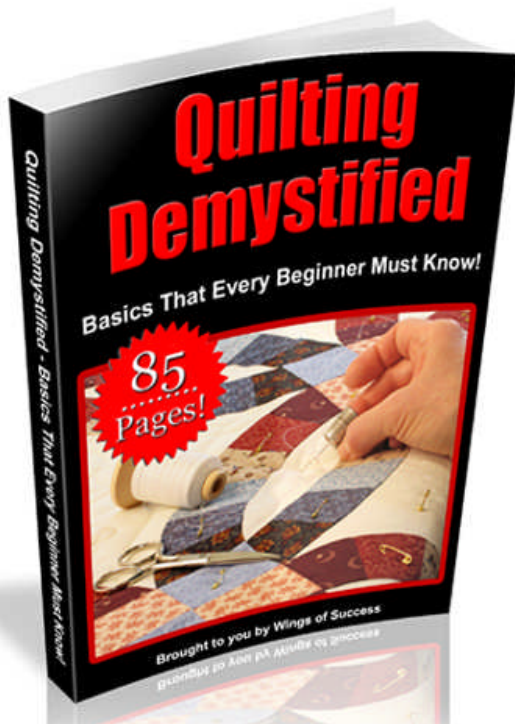
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  - The Appliqué Process.
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- SETTING TOGETHER
  - Various Methods.
  - Quilt Sizes.
- BORDERS
- QUILTING PATTERNS
  - Methods of Stamping.
  - Suggested Perforated Quilting Patterns
- QUILTING THE QUILT
  - Marking Out.
  - "Apartment Quilting."
  - Putting Into the Frames.
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  - Bird Life
  - Flower Garden
- ORIGINAL QUILT DESIGNS
  - Butterfly Quilt
  - Dresden Flowers
  - Honeymoon Cottage
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## All About Appliqué

Appliqué is a quilting technique which involves applying layering one fabric above another and sewing it on. The term appliqué comes from the French word *appliquer*, which is a French verb meaning "to put on." Even though the word comes from the French, the technique has been used in many cultures and throughout history, with the earliest examples of appliqué being found thousands of years ago. Learning the uses and how-tos of appliqué will expand the possibilities of quilting enormously for you. Appliqué is a versatile technique which is useful for design options regular quilting can't accomplish.

The first step in learning appliqué is selecting a design. Small, intricate shapes will not work well for this technique, at least not when you are first learning. Start with a simple shape for your beginning appliqué project. Something basic like a circle or heart will serve you well for your first attempt. In order to create a pattern for your appliqué design, many people choose freezer paper, because it is stiff without being too thick. Trace your design onto the freezer paper and cut it out and then you can easily trace your appliqué onto the fabric you've selected (cotton is a good choice). Next, carefully cut the appliqué design out, leaving 1/8th inches all around.

In order to stabilize the appliqué, you can either glue the freezer paper to the fabric design, or pin it. Now you will have to deal with the raw edges. Since the fabrics are being layered atop one another, as opposed to being sewn in seams as with traditional quilting, it's very important to learn to finish the raw edges so they won't unravel and be unsightly. One way to do this is to take your scissors and carefully snip to the marked line and then press the seam allowance under all the way around your design. Use the tip of a Popsicle stick or a chopstick to help smooth the little edges of fabric down.

Now position the appliqué design where you want it on the base fabric and hand stitch it down. There are several possibilities for stitching your appliqué. Do you want to hide the stitches or use it as a decorative element for your appliqué? If you want to hide the stitching, blind stitch or hem stitch are good possibilities. For decorative touches, try buttonhole stitching. You can use



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any embroidery stitch that strikes your fancy, but with some of the more complicated stitches it's a good idea to anchor your appliqué with a hem stitch first.

The last step is to very carefully cut a small slit in the background fabric only, behind the appliqué. Be certain not to cut through the appliqué itself! Then gently reach in and remove the freezer paper. Now turn your appliqué over and press it, smoothing the edges and taking care if you've used a decorative embroidery stitch. That's it! That's how easy it is to learn to appliqué. Once you've tried your hand at appliqué, you will be glad you've added it to your quilting repertoire.

## Choosing And Preparing Fabric

Choosing fabric for a quilting project can be as much fun as doing the project itself. Even if to quilters choose the same quilt pattern, different choices of fabric will make each quilt unique. Most quilter's prefer using fabric that is 100 % cotton because they are easier to sew, mark, press and hand quilt. If you are shopping for fabric in a quilt shop you will rarely find fabric that is not pure cotton. Fabrics will also probably be arranged according to colors and print types.

With more experience fabrics other than cotton may be added for variety. Not all fabrics are suitable however. If you are using an unusual fabric for the first time, or want to use different types of fabrics together, try a small test block first. Fabrics of a medium density, with an even weave work well. Loosely woven fabrics are prone to distortion, as are stretch fabrics. Silk, lightweight wool and some plastics may be used with experience.

Both the color and tone of the fabric you choose will influence the overall effect of the pattern that you choose. Tone may be used to create depth and interest with greater effect than when using color alone. Good planning is necessary to achieve the desired look.

Color is greatly affected by the colors around it. Using contrasting colors will make pieces of a quilt block stand out from each other. Combining certain warm colors such as reds, yellows and oranges, in the same quilt block as cool colors like blues, greens or violets, will make them look more vivid.

Combining fabrics with various print scales and styles can add visual texture to your quilt. Interesting visual effects may also be achieved by using colors of graduated values. Printed cotton fabrics are available in many designs and styles including batiks, homespun plaids and florals, tiny-grained prints that look like solids, reproduction prints, and soft flannels. Solid-color fabrics come in just about every color, shade and tint that you can imagine.

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Quilt blocks made from fabrics of the same or various shades of one color, but of contrasting textures can create pleasing results. Fabrics with a nap such as velvet, or fabrics with sheen like taffeta also provide interest.

Whatever fabric you choose for your quilting project, you must prepare it properly before you begin. Most cotton fabrics shrink when they are washed and dried. If you do not preshrink your fabric before you make your quilt, the fabrics may pucker at the stitching lines and the finished product may shrink in size the first time it is washed.

To prevent this wash all fabrics first in a washing machine on a short gentle cycle. Use cool or warm but never hot water. You may use a mild detergent, but it is not necessary unless the fabric is soiled. Wash like colors together in case they are not colorfast. Machine dry the fabric and press it with an iron. You are now ready to begin your project.

## Choosing Quilt Fabric

There are many different types of fabric that may be used in patchwork, quilting and appliqué. The following information will help you identify and choose the best fabric for your projects.

Calico is a strong, plain weave fabric. It is available in a variety of weights and is usually white or natural with darker flecks.

Corduroy or fine-wale corduroy is a plain-weave fabric with vertical pile-effect ribbing. It frays easily but is suitable for appliqué and large-scale patch pieces.

Cotton is the choice of most quilters. It is hard-wearing and easy to work with. Cotton comes in a wide range of plain and patterned print colors. It is the best choice for patchwork quilt fabric.

Felt is made from wool. It is non-woven fabric. Instead, the fibers are compressed with moisture and heat. Felt shrinks making it unsuitable for most articles that need frequent washing. It is ideal for appliqué

Gingham is a cotton or cotton blend fabric. Alternating stripes of colored and white threads in the warp and weft produces a checkered pattern.

Lawn is a fine crisp cotton, or cotton blend fabric. It is available in prints and plain.

Linen is fabric that is woven from fiber produced by the flax plant. Linen frays and creases easily but is suitable as a ground fabric.

Muslin is a white or natural open-weave cotton or cotton blend. This fabric is suitable for backing quilts and is also used in shadow quilting and appliqué.

Organdy is a fine cotton fabric that is starched. It is used for shadow work.

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Organza is a gauzy fabric woven from silk or synthetic fibers. It may also be woven from silk and a synthetic blend. Organza is available in plain colors and with metallic and iridescent effects making it suitable for appliqué and shadow work. It is also sometimes used for delicate patchwork.

PVC is a plastic, cotton-backed cloth. It is difficult to work with because of its lack of flexibility. It is used for patchwork and appliqué.

Sateen is a soft fabric that has a surface sheen. It is a popular quilt fabric.

Satin is a shiny fabric that can be woven from cotton, silk, or synthetics. It is used in appliqué.

Silk is fabric that is woven from natural fibers produced by silk worms. It works well for almost any project and is available in a variety of textures, colors, patterns and weights.

Shantung fabric is woven from yarns of irregular thickness giving it an uneven surface. It is used for quilting and patchwork.

Taffeta is a plain-weave fabric with a two-tone effect. It is suitable for appliqué and small patchwork.

Velvet has a closely woven backing and a dense cut-pile surface. It is used in patchwork, especially crazy patchwork, but the nap should lie in the same direction as the patchwork.

Voile is a fine woven fabric that is used for shadow work

Wool is made from woven fleece. Wool does not launder well and should only be used for inlaid appliqué, unless it is lightweight. Light weight wool may be used in patchwork.

## How To Choose The Right Batting

Many crafters do not take the time to learn about the correct batting for their quilting projects, but it can make the difference between a successful quilting project and an unsuccessful one. The right batting can have an enormous effect on the finished appearance of your quilting project. It can also make the difference between enjoying the process of quilting or hating it. You spend hours planning the design and look of the outer layers of your quilting project, why not take the time to learn a bit about the batting that goes inside?

Batting is the insulating fabric, which is the part of the quilt that creates warmth. Batting is layered between the quilt top and the backing. This quilting sandwich of three layers of fabric is then pinned at the edges in order to temporarily secure it. Most commonly it is then sewn together, either by hand or machine, but sometimes crafters tie the layers of batting and fabric together. Usually yarn is used to tie a quilting project together, but sometimes several strands of thread are used also. Be certain to tie a tight square knot if you choose this method of securing the batting to the fabric. You want to be sure the quilt will stand up to years of use.

Batting comes in several different fibers, most often polyester, cotton, and wool. Polyester batting has a high loft which will remain through repeated washings. It is generally hypo-allergenic and usable for either hand or machine quilting projects. Cotton batting is a quilter's dream. It has a much lower loft than the polyester batting, and is often used when quilters want to achieve an antique look. Because cotton is a natural fiber, it "breathes," meaning it will help you to remain cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Cotton batting is not as suitable for tying, as it has a tendency to clump. Like cotton, wool batting breathes. It is easy to quilt, and thus a much beloved batting of many quilters. There are two different ways batting is manufactured--needle punched or bonded. Needle punched batting is a good utilitarian choice for a quilting project that needs to stand up to hard use. It is made by thousands of needles piercing the batting, interlocking the fibers. The needle punched batting is firmer and heavier than bonded batting, which is manufactured by using a bonding agent to adhere the layers of the batting together.

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Many battings, whatever form you choose, are available either pre-cut or rolled on a tube so that you can cut your own to size. If your quilting project is a standard quilt size (such as twin, full, queen, or king) you will probably be able to find a pre-cut batting quite easily. For other sizes you may need to buy batting on the roll.

Taking the time to learn about your choices in batting can change your quilting for the better, making it easier to complete projects, and increase your chances of being satisfied with the finished project.

## How To Use Stencils For Quilting

When the average person thinks of stencils, the word probably brings to mind early American style-painted floor cloths, or stenciled walls. Stencils enjoyed a great resurgence in style in the 1980's as everyone went mad for the country look. However, when a quilter thinks of stencils, a very different use comes to mind. The crafter unfamiliar with the use of stencils in quilting may be quite perplexed as to how they are used. After all, when you look at a quilt, there's no evidence that anything to do with stenciling in the traditional sense has occurred!

However, stencils are actually very useful in the art of quilting and advances in technology are quickly making them a must-have tool. Quilting stencils are very similar to stencils for paint, and often look about the same. They are most often made from a sturdy plastic, with holes punched in it for the design. However, while painting stencils are used to create decorative elements, quilting stencils are used to lay down a pattern to follow when stitching. The use of quilting stencils allows quilters to reproduce elaborate patterns on their quilt tops. With quilting stencils, you have an easy way to transfer and then follow a stitching design. You don't need to worry if you feel you can't draw. With quilting stencils, the drawing has all been done and all you have to do is follow someone else's design.

Many companies offer quilting stencils and the supplies you'll need to go with them. You'll find designs ranging from traditional florals and fans to very contemporary styles. Take a look around some of the quilting sites on the internet or visit your local quilting store to get an idea of how many stencils await you.

Quilting stencils are easy to use. To transfer the design you can use chalk or stitching or water-soluble pens. (It is very important that you test the water soluble pen with your fabric before using it with a stencil-you don't want it to ruin your beautiful pieced quilt top!) All you have to do is lay the quilting stencil atop your fabric and trace the pattern. Voila! You now have a stitching pattern to follow without a lot of muss and fuss. After all, most quilters prefer to spend their time designing, piecing a quilt top, or doing the actual quilting, not messing around with pattern transfers. A simple rule of thumb is to choose a design about a half an inch to an inch smaller



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than your block, so that the resulting pattern doesn't look crowded. You can also take one of the smaller stencils and repeat the design by laying it down in a pattern on your fabric.

Quilting stencils are one of the most useful advances in notions for the home crafter. The average quilter of yesteryear would be amazed to view all the notions and supplies that are now available for the home crafter. Why not take advantage of these advances yourself? Quilting stencils are a great time-saver.

## How To Use Templates In Quilting

With the recent increased interest in quilting and other crafts, manufacturers are constantly searching for new products to make quilting easier for busy modern crafters. One of the innovations that has become a necessity is quilting templates. Usually made from sturdy clear acrylic, and designed to be used over and over again, templates make marking and cutting pieces for a quilt block a breeze.

Templates generally have seam line and other markings on them for the convenience of quilters. The best templates are laser cut to ensure exact precision for measurement. With quilting templates, a rotary cutter, and a mat, you can cut the pieces for numerous blocks at one time. Before templates and the use of rotary cutters, a quilter used paper patterns and cut block pieces with scissors, in much the same way that dressmakers cut patterns. For quilters who are often cutting small pieces for blocks, cutting in this manner meant precision in measuring was very difficult. In quilting, accuracy is crucial. One of the frustrations of quilting was making sure the pieces of the quilt block fit together, and with the old-fashioned style of cutting, it was a constant problem. But with templates all such worries are a thing of the past.

Quilting templates are available in every size and shape imaginable. Every geometric shape is represented, and you can buy a set of basic templates for squares and circles and rectangles so you always have them on hand. You can also buy sets of templates for a specific quilt block. For instance, if your daughter is getting married and you want to make her a Double Wedding Ring quilt, you can buy a set of templates for that pattern. Or perhaps your best friend is having her first baby, a son. You want to make a quilt for him, and so you choose a set of templates for a square that looks like an airplane. The options are truly unlimited.

Beginning quilters will want to start with simple shapes such as rectangles, squares and circles. The process is simple-lay your neatly ironed fabric on the rotary mat, place the acrylic template atop it, hold it firmly and use the rotary cutter to trim around the edges. Once you get the hang of it, you can cut several layers of fabric at once. Using templates, you can spend an hour or two cutting pieces for quilt blocks, and get to the actual sewing and quilting so much faster.

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Quilters may also want to take the time to browse the web or go to the library or local bookstore for books. Many quilting sites and books contain useful information about using templates, with tips and techniques listed that will make the process even easier. The quilting sites contain are often also laden with photos showing the use of templates in a step-by-step manner, which can be very helpful. Although the process of using templates is simple, there are always trade secrets that can make it even easier.

Investigate the use of templates in quilting today, and you'll find renewed pleasure in your craft.

## Making Sense Of Quilt Patterns

There are literally thousands of quilt patterns already in existence, and more being designed everyday. If you are a beginning quilter it is best to stick to the simpler patterns. As you become more experienced, you will never run out of new patterns to try.

Some examples of simple patterns use squares. A Four Patch uses four squares of fabric sewn together to make one block. A Nine Patch uses nine small squares to make up one block. Different prints and colors can be mixed and matched to create different looks with these basic blocks. A Double Nine Patch is made up of nine 4-inch squares. The middle square is divided into nine 1 1/3 inch squares. Traditionally the large squares are cut from 4 dark and 4 light fabrics, while the small squares are cut from 4 light and 5 medium colored fabrics. Color combination may be varied to create different patterns.

The Churn Dash is another easy pattern. This block uses 3 different fabrics-2 designs and one background fabric. Variations of this pattern include the Grecian Design, the Greek Cross and the Wrench. There are three major pattern pieces: a 4 inch square, a 2x4 inch rectangle and a large triangle.

The Log Cabin design is probably the most well recognized quilt pattern. It is made of strips of fabric sewn together to give the appearance of a log structure.

The names of quilt patterns often reflect certain aspects of life. Names such as Job's Tears, Bethlehem Star, Cross and Crown, Jacobs Ladder reflect the Spiritual aspect.

Love and marriage is reflected in patterns like Hopes and Wishes, Lover's Knot, Double Wedding Ring and Cupid's Own.

Every state has at least one pattern named after it. These include Ohio Star, California Rose and Carolina Lily.

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Not all quilt patterns are suitable for beginners. Drunkard's Path is definitely one. Once you have mastered it, it may quickly become a favorite.

Choosing fabric goes hand in hand with choosing a pattern. In fact there is great debate in quilting circles over which should be chosen first. While once quilts were made from scraps and leftovers, quilter's today have a wide variety of resources to choose from, and may purchase fabric expressly to create a quilt from it. One thing to remember is that it is better to buy too much fabric than to not have enough. Colors can't always be matched from different sources and runs.

Color is probably the most important aspect of any quilt. It is important to study tones, shades and hues. The easiest color scheme for a beginning quilter is probably monochromatic. This means one color, but different shades. Value is the lightness or darkness of a hue. A range of values provides contrast and depth to a pattern. A dominant color should be found in almost all of the quilt's blocks. An accent color should be used to create contrast and a blender color contains both colors in a pattern. When in doubt try a sample block first.

### Moda

Moda may not be a household name for the average person, but for the quilter it is well-known indeed. Since 1975, Moda has been producing quality fabrics for quilting projects and specialty notions as well. Moda fabrics and notions are available at your local fabric store, quilting shop, or online retailer and its well worth seeking out this special line of quilting products.

Moda distinguishes itself with a long roster of designers, both in-house and independents and one glance at their line of quilting fabrics and its clear Moda hires only the best. You'll find well-known designers such as American Jane, April Cornell, Sandy Gervais, and Urban Chicks among the Moda stable of designers. Other Moda designers are Amy Bradley, Erin Michael, Jackie Musso, and Cheri Strole. Moda also features fabric basics as well as seasonal, batiks and many other choices in their selections for quilters.

Moda has won the heart of many quilters nation-wide and internationally with their consistent understanding of the kinds of designs quilters want to use for their projects. Many of the Moda designs have a uniquely American look and feel to them, which is only fitting since quilting is a craft which has its roots deep in American history. Moda also distributes a huge list of books and a wide variety of quilting notions from their Dallas warehouse. The company reveres its retailers and only sells wholesale. You can investigate Moda designs online and find many online retailers that will sell you Moda products.

While customers appreciate the line of notions that Moda distributes, it is the quilting fabrics that have made Moda's name in the industry. Most of the Moda line is given over to traditional cotton fabrics, but they also produce a line of vibrant wools. Browsing through their design line, you'll enjoy clever designs like Building Blocks or Building Blocks ABCs with its all-over sprinkling of letters. Or how about the Moda design line of Serendipity with its striped and plaid fabrics on muted colors? Take a look at Tropical Camouflage with its bright colors that will make you feel you are on a Caribbean vacation every time you work on your quilting project. Moda excels at designs like Bound to the Prairie with its earthy feel, or fun fabrics like Oodles of Poodles, another cheerful selection. The Moda line also includes such fun designs as Nell's

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Flower Shop, a gorgeous collection of florals, and Funky Monkey, with pictures of, you guessed it, sock monkeys all over. You might also enjoy investigating Sunflowers of Provence or Flamingo Run or Critter Camp for your quilting projects. (Not only are the Moda fabrics beautiful, their names are delightful also.)

For the very best of quality in fabric and design, you'll want to look to Moda for your quilting design needs first. You're sure to find something in the Moda line that will capture your heart and make your next quilting project an absolute joy to work on. With a Moda product, the next quilt you make will be your favorite and most satisfying yet.

## Patchwork Techniques

When many people hear the word quilt they think of many colorful blocks or patches created from old clothes sewn together to form a large rectangular blanket. Pieced patchwork is actual much, much more complicated. Pieced patchwork is made from fabric scraps that are cut into regular shapes and then sewn together in geometric patterns to form blocks. The pieces may be joined by hand or machine. Machine stitching is quicker and more durable but hand stitching is traditional.

Creating an accurate template will allow a quilter to make patches identical in shape and size, and that will fit perfectly together. Templates may be made or purchased. To make a cardboard template transfer the design on to squared paper and cut it out with sharp scissors. Glue the cutout to a piece of cardboard. Be sure to include a seam allowance. Cut out the cardboard template and protect the paper seam allowance by coating it with a thin layer of clear nail varnish or polish. Always make new templates for each shape required in a project.

To make a plastic template, place the clear plastic over the design and draw around each shape. Draw a seam allowance around each shape and cut out.

Once you have created a template, place it on the fabric, lining up one straight edge with the grain of the fabric. Draw around it with a quilter's pencil or tailor's chalk. To create several patches at once fold the fabric in several layers-accordion styles. Staple the template to the layers and cut out the pieces, preferably using a rotary cutter and a cutting mat.

If you are using backing papers or iron on interfacing they may be attached now.

To join the patches and form the patchwork, first lay them out and make sure you are happy with the design. Once you are, you may begin piecing. Hand piecing requires the patches to be placed right sides together and pinned. Pin each corner first. Join each patch with a small whipstitch, inserting the needle in one corner and working across to the other. Remove the pins as you go.



## Understanding The Basics Of Quilting

If you are machine piecing your patchwork, you may join several pairs of patches at a time by using the flag method. Pin the patches right sides together in pairs. Machine stitch along the seam line using the foot as a guide. Leave a short uncut thread between the pairs. Cut each into units. Join enough pairs to make one patched piece. Remember to press the patch seams flat to one side to avoid bulk. Do not press them open.

Once your patchwork quilt top has been completed, layer it together with batting in the middle and backing fabric on the back. Baste the layers and quilt as desired. If you are quilting straight lines and using a machine, a quilting foot made for this purpose is available. For free-form quilting remove the foot completely and lower the foot lever. Use your hands or a hoop to stretch the fabric taut, and stitch slowly.

## **Quilting Is A Hot D.I.Y. Craft!**

You may have heard the initials D.I.Y. and wondered what they stand for and what all the fuzz is about. D.I.Y. stands for Do It Yourself, and it is a hot trend in the craft world. One of the hottest trends in the world of craft, is an old, old tradition-quilting.

Quilting has its roots in the utilitarian needs of our ancestors. They needed warm quilts to sleep under and they didn't have a lot of materials to work with. So they took whatever fabrics they could salvage or cut from old, worn clothes, and somehow managed to craft these scraps into quilts that were not only warm but beautiful. For a time, the craft of quilting died out. Busy modern women of the fifties wanted no part of piecing together old bits of fabric! But then the craft experienced resurgence in the eighties. Many believe the burgeoning interest in quilting and other crafts coincided with the development of the computer. High tech, high touch, the saying goes. When we are surrounded with technology all day we long for tactile satisfaction. Fibers such as wool and cotton have become very popular because of this, and also hobbies like knitting and quilting, which have much to do with the sense of touch.

The ironic thing is that technology itself has had much to do with spurring interest in craft and quilting. Technology has created better and easier-to-operate sewing machines, found ways to cheaply produce plastic stencils, and come up with innovations like the rotary cutter and mat that are huge time savers for quilters. The more time-saving ideas craft companies come up with, the more popular quilting becomes. Contemporary quilters have the best of all worlds-access to incredible numbers of patterns, both traditional and modern, and all the best tools the craft world has to offer.

Today's quilter also has access to so much more information than their pioneer ancestors could ever have dreamed of. Books and patterns and websites offer a constant flow of information on the craft. Then there are the television programs. With the advent of cable's dominance, many television channels now focus on the home. And many of these home channels have a large preponderance of shows on craft, including quilting. The information explosion is a huge boon for today's crafters and this has driven the expanding popularity of the D.I.Y. movement.

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This movement has made it hip and trendy to love all kinds of craft again, which is wonderful for lovers of craft. Once something is trendy, all kinds of companies offering new products and information are sure to spring up. Becoming hip has also assured that quilts now have a place in the finest of galleries and museums. Quilters are at the forefront of the D.I.Y. movement, constantly improving their craft and delving into its history. Our pioneer ancestors could never have imagined that there would come a day when their utilitarian, functional craft was considered not only trendy and hip, but so beautiful as to be art!

## Sewing Tips For Beginning Quilters

Sewing by hand, or with a needle and thread is the traditional method used to piece together quilt blocks. Even if you own a sewing machine you should practice these stitches. Remember to choose the smallest size needle that you can comfortably work with. Be sure that you are using special quilting thread. Quilting thread is thicker, more durable and doesn't tangle. Cut a piece of quilting thread about 2 feet long. Thread the needle and place a single knot in the end of the thread with a short tail to prevent unraveling. Do not double the thread. Sew with one single strand.

Place the two quilt pieces that you are connecting together, with right sides facing each other. Pin them using three pins. Place one pin in each of the top two corners, and the third pin in the middle of the piece. Begin at one corner and poke the needle through both layers of fabric then bring it up through the fabric about 1/8th of an inch down the seam line. Take one backstitch to keep your end secure, and then continue this in and out stitching. This is a running stitch, also called a piecing stitch. It takes practice to get a straight line. You may draw a line in pencil on the wrong side of the fabric if this helps. Once you have reached the other corner take a backstitch in reverse and make a 90-degree turn into the seam allowance. Make two stitches and cut the thread. Many quilters do not knot the ends of their thread, as they feel knots rub and wear out the material faster.

Another stitch that beginners should learn is the appliqué stitch. In appliqué blocks a fabric motif is cut out, layered and stitched onto the background of another fabric. This method of sewing the layers together needs to be almost invisible to the eye. The appliqué stitch should leave a small visible dot of a stitch. To begin, start with a quilting needle and knotted quilting thread in a color that blends with the appliqué motif. Prepare the design by basting the raw edges under. Pressing with the tip of an iron first will help. Next baste the fabric motif onto the background fabric in the desired position.

Now it's finally time to appliqué. Start by placing the needle under the background fabric. Push the needle up through the background fabric and the edge of the appliqué motif. Pull the thread through both layers. Now position the needle right next to where the thread comes up, but only

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on the background fabric. Make an 1/8th inch stitch through the background fabric and bring it up at the edge of the appliqué motif. Continue this stitch all around the fabric motif, ending underneath the background fabric on the wrong side. Knot and trim.

Hand sewing seems like a very time consuming process. Once you develop a rhythm, it proceeds much faster. Hand sewn quilts are often prized over machine-stitched creations.

## So You Want To Make A Quilt

The process of making a quilt involves several basic tasks: measuring, cutting, marking and stitching. Each step has special tools and or techniques that can save time and make the project you choose easier to complete.

The first step is to select a quilt design or pattern, and your fabric. If you are a beginner, choose a simple design to begin with. Try to envision you finished quilt. What color do you want it to be? Do you want to incorporate different prints with solids? Prints may range from plaids to florals and even stripes. Solid fabrics come in just about every color imaginable. Cotton fabric is generally the easiest fabric to work with. Do not be afraid to experiment. All fabrics should be pre-washed in mild detergent and warm water, dried and pressed.

Step two involves measuring and cutting. If you buy quality-cutting tools, use them only for sewing. This will keep them sharp and make your cuts precise while saving time too. Rotary cutters are available in different sizes. They allow you to cut smooth edges on multiple layers of fabric quickly and easily. Small cutters work well on curves: larger cutters are great for long straight lines and many layers of fabric. Cutting mats should be used with rotary cutters. A good clear ruler is also a valuable tool. Sewing scissors and shears are also necessary. Accuracy is important in quilting. Taking the time to cut accurately will ensure your quilt pieces fit together perfectly.

Marking tools should be tested before you use them. You want the marks to come out easily without damaging the material. Special quilter's pencils are available with white or gray lead, and an eraser on the end. Other types include soapstone, which is made of pressed talc, and water-soluble, which is great for darker fabrics. Marks from both types may be removed with a damp cloth.

Step three involves stitching. Every quilt project should be layered and basted before the actual quilting is involved. Quilting pins should be used to hold pieces together. If you are hand basting there are special needles, with small round eyes, that are favored by quilter's. Use a single strand of white cotton thread to baste. You may however, prefer to use curved, rustproof safety pins to make the basting process quicker and easier.

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Pressing at each stage of the construction is also important. Use the tip of the iron and move in the direction of the grain lines. The general rule of quilting is to press each stitched seam before crossing it with another.

Quilting is the fourth step. Quilting holds the quilt top, batting, and backing together. It also adds texture and enhances the design. You may quilt by hand or by machine. Hand quilting is the traditional method; machine quilting takes less time and is more durable.

Binding is the final step in creating a quilt. Binding fabrics may either match or complement the other fabrics in the quilt. Binding also helps to square up your finished quilt.

## The Best Quilting Pattern For Your Needs

Quilting has enjoyed an incredible upsurge in popularity over the last couple of decades. This is a boon for the quilting enthusiast, because it has resulted in a huge number of patterns that are now available. Even a brief look around the internet or your local bookstore will prove to you that it's a confusing world when it comes to buying a quilting pattern. The new quilter may well be wondering what kind of quilting pattern is best suited for her needs.

It's interesting to ponder that, historically, our ancestors probably didn't have as much use for the quilting pattern as we do. In Colonial and pioneer days, when quilting originated, quilts had a utilitarian function. Women pieced together quilt blocks from whatever scraps of clothing they could find, arranging the bits and pieces of cloth into a pleasing pattern. They shared ideas for their various patterns at quilting bees and other social gatherings. As so often happens, the pattern that started as a necessity is now a tradition. Blocks like Log Cabin and Lone Star and Bridal Wreath have been handed down for generations. At first, simple directions would have been scrawled on a scrap of paper, if at all-our ancestors might even have scoffed at the idea of following a pattern. Quilting fell out of favor for awhile, and any patterns that did exist would have been relegated to the attic.

But once quilting came into vogue again, a new generation discovered it and the new quilters were hungry for patterns. While many art and adventurous quilters take off on their own and refuse to follow a pattern, the contemporary quilter is more likely to want some directions. Thus many quilters search endlessly for the proper pattern.

The good news is that there are options aplenty. Free patterns abound on the internet, as do patterns for purchase. Individual patterns are available for various quilt blocks. If you know what quilt you want to make, it can be a good idea to purchase one of these, as it will have detailed directions on every aspect of the specific block. You'll find step-by-step directions that cover every aspect of the pattern for your quilt. The pattern may also give you tips and techniques you wouldn't otherwise know.

Another excellent source for patterns is to visit your library or the bookstore and peruse the quilting section, where you'll see pattern book after pattern book. These books can be especially valuable if you haven't yet decided on a certain quilt pattern. But be forewarned-



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browsing quilting books and viewing all the beautiful patterns can be quite addictive! These books will often also feature general directions for each pattern, with more instruction on quilting. If you already know the basics of quilting, spending the lesser amount of money for an individual pattern might be your best bet.

Don't let the world of quilt patterns overwhelm you-with a little research, its easy to find the perfect pattern for your quilting needs, and you'll have a lot of fun along the way.

### What Are Quilts?

Quilts are bed coverings made up of three layers: a quilt top, a layer of batting, and a layer of material for backing. The layers are usually combined using the technique of quilting. Quilting is the process of using a needle and thread to combine two or more layers of cloth. This step may be only functional, or if more elaborate, for decoration and design.

Tying is another method of connecting the layers in quilts together. This method is usually chosen when a quilt is needed quickly for functional purposes. The three layers still need to be prepared and basted. Thread or yarn is used for the process. Square knots are used to finish off the ties, which are placed 3-5" apart all over the quilt. A quilt that is tied is sometimes called a comforter.

Once upon a time quilts were created for necessity. Today creating quilts has become an art form. Gifted quilter's are called fabric artists instead of the outdated seamstress or quilter. Not only are bed quilts popular, but quilted clothing and wall hangings as well. Handmade quilts may sell for hundreds of dollars and hang on museum walls, not just bed frames. Amish quilts from Pennsylvania and Ohio are especially sought after, as are vintage and antique quilts.

If you are lucky enough to have inherited or purchased such an heirloom, taking proper care of it will maintain and perhaps increase its value. Quilts should never be stored in plastic bags, cardboard boxes or wooden trunks. Quilts should be aired at least twice a year, but not in direct sunlight. Very old quilts should be aired flat to avoid stressing the stitches. There is always a risk in washing antique fabric. Spot test it first. If you are using a machine, wash in cold water with a mild detergent and a gentle cycle. Dry your quilt on a flat surface. Using a fan and rotating it will speed up the drying process.

Quilts throughout history tell the stories of their times and makers. This is especially true during the depression when fabric was scarce. Some historians even believe secret messages and codes were hidden in handmade quilts at different times throughout history. One such story relates to the Underground Railroad. A certain quilt pattern would mean it was safe for escaping slaves to continue on their journey. Not all historians believe this theory, however it is true that signature quilts were a popular method of raising funds both before and after the Civil War.

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Signatures were added after a donation was made. These quilts were also known as friendship quilts.

While not all historians agree on this usage in the past, it is becoming increasingly popular today. Memory quilts and t-shirt quilts are popular and treasured gifts. Technology has even made it possible to add photos to fabric. Quilts are still used to raise money at raffles and charity events. Quilt guilds are being created and growing at a rapid rate, preserving and passing on treasured patterns and techniques.

## Where To Find Free Quilt Patterns

Back in the early days of American history, women made quilts with scraps of whatever fabric they had on hand, using patterns they had memorized or shared freely with each other. That trend continues today within the quilting community, and if you are in the market for free quilt patterns, you'll find a wide variety of them available from many different sources.

Many online sites offer free quilt patterns as a way to get you to visit their site. Google "free quilt patterns" and a huge number of listings will come up. Many sites list hundreds or thousands of free quilt patterns. Among the categories of free quilt patterns you will find there are quilts for babies, traditional American quilts such as the Log Cabin, Hospitality Pineapple or Lone Star, holiday designs, designs with animals or flowers on them, and many, many more. There are even free quilt patterns for food and drink, nautical designs, or angels and butterflies. While many sites feature free quilt patterns for old traditional designs, some also offer original patterns. Some sites have lists of links that will take you to more sites full of free quilt patterns. Quilting is such a time-honored craft that many patterns have been passed around from quilter to quilter for years. It's a good idea to look at several different sites that offer free quilt patterns as you may find one particular site's patterns of more use to you than others. Variations in the way the free quilt patterns are written are common, and it takes only a bit of research to find a site which is compatible with your needs. You may get so engrossed in the free quilt patterns on one site that you'll never need to go any further!

But it is a good idea to keep browsing, because while searching for free quilt patterns you will also find yourself on sites that offer all kinds of other goodies for quilters, from fabrics to notions to books to patterns to purchase. Spending time looking for free quilt patterns is actually a good way to acquaint yourself with what's available in the world of quilting and learn more about the craft along the way. A sure way to expand your knowledge about your hobby is to become familiar with all the tools and notions that are available.

Another place to find free quilt patterns is to ask your friends, family and neighbors. Many people have learned to quilt from their grandmothers or mother and they may have written down patterns from family members. These are wonderful free quilt patterns to get your hands on! All quilters can be grateful that quilting has been a social activity-first out of need, and later for

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reasons of entertainment-and this has caused quilters to share not only information but patterns as well.

Browsing for free quilt patterns, whether on the internet or asking friends, is an enjoyable aspect of the hobby of quilting, one that is certain to keep you engrossed for many hours.



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