

17 Quilting Tutorials

Quilting for Beginners
and Top Tips for How to Quilt



FAVEQUILTS 

17 Quilting Tutorials: Quilting for Beginners and Top Tips for How to Quilt

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Letter from the Editors

Hi Quilters,

Whether you're a beginner looking for tips on how to make your first quilt, or you're an experienced quilter in need of a refresher, quilting tutorials are always useful in providing information on how you can improve your quilting.

We wanted to give you readers a handy little guide to some of the most popular quilting tutorials and tips from across the web so you can easily access the answers to your quilting queries. Get some excellent advice on the basics, as well as advanced techniques from some of our best bloggers from around the web, and put them to use in your next pattern.

Happy Quilting!

You can find more quilted bag patterns, techniques, and quilting tutorials at www.FaveQuilts.com.

Our eBooks, like all our quilting projects, are absolutely FREE to members of our quilting community. Please feel free to share with family and friends and ask them to sign up at our website for our [free e-mail newsletter](#).

Happy Quilting,

The Editors of FaveQuilts

www.FaveQuilts.com

17 Quilting Tutorials: Quilting for Beginners and Top Tips for How to Quilt

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Quilt Preparation

Tips for Buying and Selecting Fabric

By: [Heidi Ferguson](#) from [HoneyBear Lane](#)

Identify some important strategies for how you will choose and purchase your materials with this helpful resource on all things fabric.



In my near-three years of blogging, the number 1 question I get asked is “Where do you get your fabric?!” People have told me many times that I have an eye for colors and design and I choose excellent fabrics that go together. Here’s what I have to say to that—Thanks!! But also, I’m going to let you in on some of my secrets to buying and selecting fabric.

DISCLAIMER: This is not a post about how to get fabric on the cheap. I have spent many hundreds (probably thousands, yikes!) of dollars on fabric. If you want high quality—you will have to pay for it.

When I first started sewing again, I noticed that the things people were selling on Etsy were made of these exquisite fabrics that would not be found at places like Joanns or Hobby Lobby. I also noticed that I was seeing certain prints more frequently than others (like Amy Butler or Michael Miller, but I didn’t know at the time.) I started looking into this more and discovered a

whole world of fabric I didn’t even know existed: DESIGNER FABRIC.

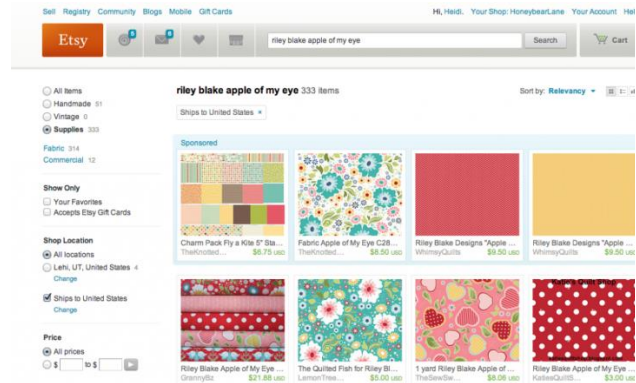
Designer Fabric is sold almost exclusively online. However, you will come across a quilt shop here and there that sells some of it too, but they usually sell at about \$10-\$13 a yard. Designer Fabric is sold for around \$8.50/yard online, but once you factor in shipping, it comes out to about \$10/yard. But you can get nearly everything online, whereas the quilt shops only sell certain prints.

Designer Fabrics are sold by companies like Michael Miller, Amy Butler, Riley Blake, Alexander Henry, Moda, Robert Kaufman Fabrics, and so many more. Within those companies are the actual fabric designers. Most of the companies have in-house designers, but some start off doing work on a more contractual basis, which is where you hear their names. My friend Sarah Jane whose lines of fabric “Children at Play” and “Out to Sea” are some of the most amazing fabrics I’ve seen, was discovered and approached by Michael Miller Fabrics, who asked her to start designing for them. She was originally an artist and illustrator and I also love her art (I have a couple of her prints.) So if you are looking into being a fabric designer, you need to work on your art and graphic art because that is what they look for! Fabric designers will spend a year coming up with a ‘line’ of fabric—fabric that is all based on a similar theme and done in different colors.

Where to Buy Fabric:

So where do you buy these fabrics? Well you can’t buy them directly from the companies because they only sell wholesale (unless you want to buy a whole bolt!) But just to get a yard or two, you will need to purchase from Fabric Shops. In the course of my blog, I have introduced you to MANY different fabric shops that I’ve shopped at. Here’s a few you might remember: Skye Reve Fabrics, The Fabric

Shoppe, Raspberry Creek Fabrics, Poppy Seed Fabrics, Hawthorne Threads, and the Fat Quarter Shop. They are ALL online. Several of those are shops in Etsy.



So if I have a particular fabric in mind, I go to Etsy and search for it by name. Then I select “Supplies” on the side and it will bring up only the fabric for sale. That is how you find out how popular or rare a fabric is. For a while, I was crushing hard on the fabrics from the Ruby line by Bonnie & Camille (Moda.) Well one thing I’ve learned about Moda fabrics is that they disappear. Some companies will sell their fabrics as long as they continue to sell. But Moda only seems to offer them for a limited time and then stop producing them. Michael Miller produces as long as it sells. After the Ruby line had been out for a while, I would search for the fabrics on Etsy and less and less sellers would have any in stock. If I wanted to get more than a yard, I couldn’t (from one shop.) So if you see this happening to your favorite fabrics, better buy it while you can because you won’t be able to get it again.



I frequently shop at Hawthorne Threads because they have a color selector that enables me to shop by color VERY easily. I can just go Shop by Color, then choose my color, and find a suitable fabric. They also frequently show samples of items made with that fabric so you can see how it looks in real life. Sometimes fabric doesn’t match how it looks online and that can be frustrating. I also like to shop there because they have a very large selection and I can bundle my shipping costs.

The Fat Quarter Shop seems to carry mostly only fabrics by Moda. So if they don’t have a fabric by Moda, you know the line has been discontinued. They also have lots of fun packs like layer cakes, jelly rolls, charm packs, etc. They also have a bunch of quilt patterns for sale...I sell mine there! If you have quilt patterns you’d like to sell, just contact them and they will be happy to sell them for you. I try to stay away from Moda fabrics (unless I’m totally in love with them) because they discontinue so quickly and I can’t get them again.

But what about poor old Joanns and Hobby Lobby? Yes, I still shop there! Joanns has a good selection of solid fabrics so I always go there for that. I also buy my muslin there in bulk because using my 50% off coupon saves me a TON of money. And then they hate me because they have to roll out an entire bolt of fabric and roll it back up. Man, the ladies at the Mesa Joanns were SO grumpy and mean. I also

buy all my batting there. As for Hobby Lobby, their fabric is always 30% off and I get solids there too, as well as some broadcloth and polka dots. I also get my minky there mostly. Hobby Lobby's minky is the soft, high quality minky that you can buy online. Joanns is not. Joanns may have more color options but it's not as plush. And I buy my ribbon at Hobby Lobby when it's 50% off.

How to Choose Fabric:

Now...how to CHOOSE fabric. So many people seem to struggle with putting fabrics together. It comes very easy to me, and it helps when you have a gigantic fabric stash. Here is how I do it:

I will sometimes choose my favorite fabrics from a new line and go from there. I rarely make something from the entire line...I'm pretty picky and have never actually purchase an entire line of fabric (except for Riley Blake Chevron.) When I choose the fabrics I like, I choose fabrics that will go with lots of different things, so the print has to be fairly neutral. I stay away from characters and pictures. I bought this beautiful hummingbird fabric once a long time ago and still haven't used it. It just has too many odd colors that it never matches anything. That's why I buy a LOT of polka dots. I also love the chevrons (so many colors, go with so many things.) I wish there were better stripe options. I will sometimes buy a fabric with a damask print or something similar (swirly pattern) to have something different. And I stay up with the trends and buy things that are very popular because that increases the chance that people will like it (and hence want to buy it!)



One problem that I frequently run into is the variance in shades of colors. In the quilt pattern "Puffy Island", you will notice that the orange is more like a pink-orange. I already had a ton of yellow-orange (there is one yellow-orange on the end there) and it didn't really match. However, I already had all the puffs sewn before by my seamstresses and so I used the yellow-orange puff to demonstrate how to make a puff for that quilt. You can see how they don't really match perfectly. This is just a game you have to play, which is why is it important to try and see something made with the fabric before buying it. You can search the fabric on Etsy and search the Handmade Items to see things made with the fabric. Also, if you are going to make something for someone else custom, it is a good idea to send them swatches of fabric before making it.

Putting Fabrics Together:

I have so much fabric these days that it's pretty easy for me to find colors that work together. I just go into my stash and pull out colors that just seem to mesh well. But I have always been very in tune with color and I know which combinations look amazing together. Aqua and turquoise pretty much look good with anything, so you will find a lot of that in my quilts. I usually find two or three colors that look great and mix in one or two neutrals. White, cream, black, brown, and gray are all neutrals. In my Mary Jane quilt (which mostly came from the Apple of my Eye line by Riley Blake), I had two very bright colors—red and turquoise, so I had to really neutralize it with a lot of white. I love white—it makes the color really pop out, takes one for the team.



Or you can stay within the same family of color. One of my all-time favorite quilts was “La Mer” (French for The Sea) because the colors just mixed so well and conjured up images of the Mediterranean Sea (or what I think it looks like). I stayed in the same color range here, using dark blues, lighter aquas, and green. I think a pretty quilt would also have pinks and oranges too—staying in the same color range.



Like I said, I will sometimes start off by using a few fabrics from the same line because they were designed to go together. But I inevitably find other fabrics that match them and they are not from that same line. I use a LOT of the Ta Dot fabrics by Michael Miller because they come in every conceivable shade and are so cute and visually interesting. I hope they never stop selling those.

Sometimes I find one or two fabrics that are just amazing and I will design a whole quilt around it. But that is more rare. Usually I work on a color basis, finding colors of fabrics that go together well and filling in the rest. It really makes me sad when I've designed a beautiful quilt that sells well and then one of the fabrics is discontinued (a problem I'm currently having with the purple Amethyst quilt.) I have to start over usually because it's pretty difficult to just sub in a fabric and get the same result. Each design is a work of art.

Getting to Know Your Sewing Machine

By: [Deborah Schlegel](#) from [Art Threads](#)

What's a quilter without their sewing machine? Take some time out before you start working on your next quilt pattern to really get to know your machine with this tutorial that you can use for practice.



MATERIALS:

- Scrap fabric
- Thread
- Bobbin
- Sewing machine needle

Every sewing machine is the same and every sewing machine is different - very Zen! They all have the same basic parts but they have these in different places. So it's time to get out the manual that came with your machine and with any luck is someplace easy to find, like in the bottom of your sewing basket. If yours has totally disappeared, try finding a copy online. As I talk about different parts of the machine on mine, you'll need to find out where the part of that same name is on yours.

I currently have a Brother 6000i and highly recommend this to anyone looking at getting a new machine. Amazon sells it for around \$150 with free shipping, so the price is right. It has enough basic stitches for a beginner and enough additional stitches to keep someone more experienced busy. I think it's the easiest machine to learn on that I've yet seen. And just to clarify, I have no connection with Brother or Amazon, other than buying way too many books from the latter.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) The first step in sewing, is to thread the machine. There are many good reasons to go ahead, spend a bit extra, and buy a really good quality thread. The main one is, your machine will perform better now and for a longer time. Most machines are currently made with plastic discs and thread going over these discs eventually etches grooves in them. It happens faster with less expensive threads that have lots of loose fibers. [About Sewing](#) has a great article about this with pictures of different brands of [thread](#) taken with a microscope. I use Madeira and Gutterman.



Make sure you have a good, sharp needle. Needles wear out and should be replaced when they begin losing their edge. This is a good time to read [About Sewing's](#) tutorial

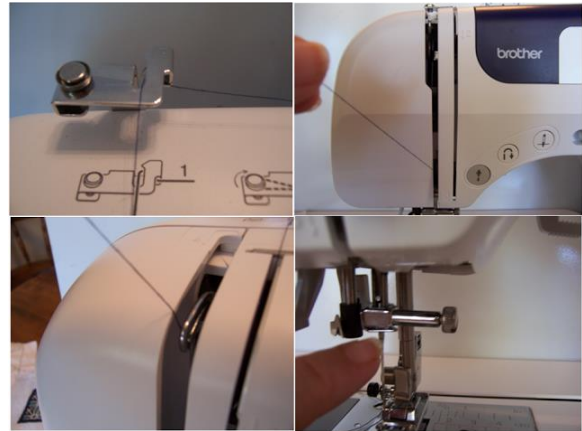
on [sewing machine needles](#).

- 2) To change your needle, loosen the needle clamp screw, pull out the old needle, insert your new needle making sure you have the flat side to the back, and tighten the needle clamp screw. If this is a factory new machine, you may need pliers to loosen the screw. If you have a Brother, they give you a screwdriver for this exact purpose - but you still might need pliers. Seriously - I don't know who tightens these, but they definitely eat their Wheaties!



- 3) Many sewing machines have threading guides printed directly on them. If yours does not, follow the instructions in your manual. Practice threading several times:

1. The thread goes around the thread guide,
2. Down the slot to the left of the tension dial,
3. Through the thread take up lever,
4. And through the needle bar thread guide.



On to the bobbin! The bobbin holds the thread that stitches underneath your fabric.

- 4) [Craftzine](#) has a wonderful animation showing how the [bobbin](#) works. The bobbin case is underneath the needle. Your machine will have a specific type of bobbin it requires - look in your manual. If your machine uses plastic bobbins, replace these every couple of years as they get nicks and worn spots that will affect how your sewing looks.



How you wind your bobbin (put thread on it) varies from machine to machine. I'll take you through the instructions for mine.

- 5) Follow the directions printed on the top of the machine for bobbin winding, paying careful attention that you wind the thread on the bobbin in the direction it tells you to.



- 6) Push the bobbin on its post to the right until it clicks.



- 7) Move your stitch speed switch all the way to the right (the three arrows).



- 8) Your pedal works like the ones on those little cars at Disneyland. Push it down a bit and you'll go slowly, push it all the way down and you'll go fast, fast, fast! Push the pedal part way down and your bobbin should begin winding. If this doesn't happen, check to make sure you've followed the directions exactly for threading it and that it is pushed as far right as it will go. The winding will automatically stop when the bobbin is full or you can stop it at any point.

- 9) Cut the thread



- 10) Remove the bobbin, push the bobbin post back to the left, and return your stitch speed to medium (two arrows).

- 11) My machine has instructions for loading the bobbin printed directly on it. Insert the bobbin with the thread coming off to the left, and pull the thread along the groove (the arrows show you where), pulling the thread across the cutting surface at the end.

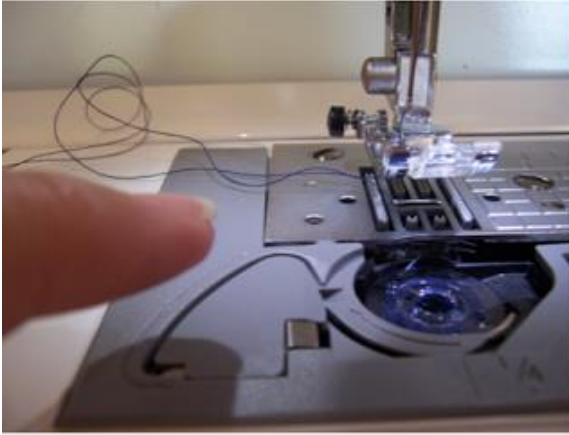


- 12) Now go back to your top thread. Thread your machine as you practiced earlier, this time ending by going through the eye of the needle.

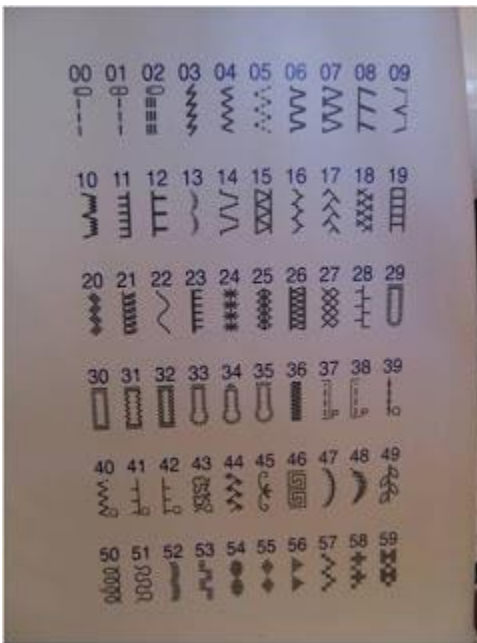


- 13) With my machine, you can replace the bobbin case lid and begin sewing. However, I often have the thread jam up when I try this. With other machines or if you want to avoid jammed thread (I don't know - maybe it's just me), you will need to turn the handwheel on the right side of your machine and draw up the thread from the bobbin. Pull both threads to the back (always do this before beginning to sew).



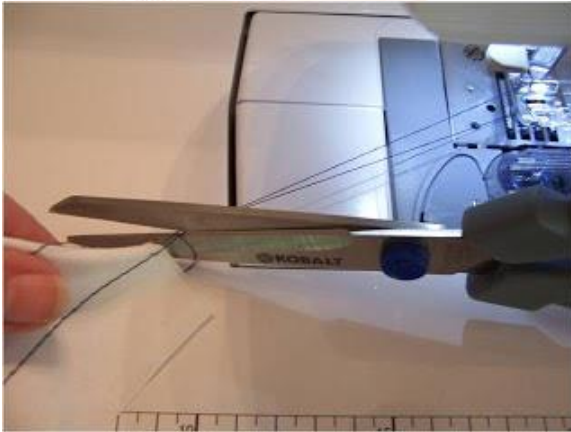


14) Refer to your manual to set your stitch to straight stitching and how to adjust the stitch length. On the Brother, the stitch choices are listed to the right.



15) Choose 00 for a straight stitch, then choose 3 for stitch length (the top number). I generally sew on 2.5 to 3 for straight stitches. A smaller number makes shorter stitches, a larger number makes longer stitches.

16) Put a double layer of scrap fabric under the presser foot (the metal piece directly underneath your needle), lower the needle (top photo to right), lower your presser foot (bottom photo to right), and slowly press down on your pedal. You're sewing! When you reach the end of the fabric, take your foot off the pedal, raise the needle by pushing on the needle button again, lift the presser foot up by pushing up on the same lever you pushed down on, and pull the fabric toward you. Cut the thread near the fabric - remember to pull the threads to the back of the needle when finished.



Now look at the stitching on both sides of your fabric. It should look like the photo above. If the stitches look really wonky or can be pulled out, you have a tension problem.

- 17) The tension dial has numbers on it. The higher the number, the higher the tension on the upper thread. The lower the number, the lower the tension. The Brother 6000i has automatically set bottom tension. For other machines, check your manual on how to adjust the bottom tension. First, check to make sure your thread and bobbin have been correctly threaded. This is often the problem. Next

play around with the tension dial. Turn it one space and try again. If it's a little better, keep going in that direction. If it's worse, go two spaces the other way.

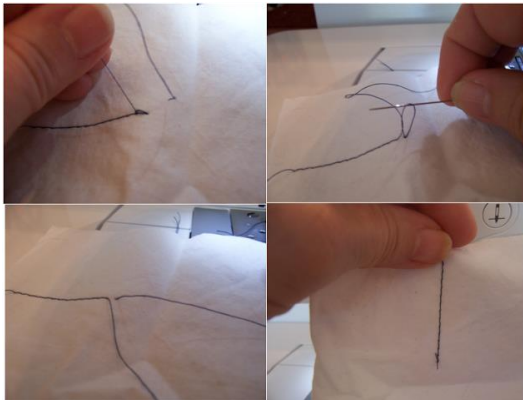


- 18) Put your fabric back under the presser foot, lower the needle, and lower the presser foot. There are two ways to secure the thread when you're done sewing a seam (a line of stitching). You can tie the thread or you can backstitch. In most circumstances, backstitching is easier and faster. To do this, begin sewing forward about 1/2 inch. Push your reverse button and sew back to the beginning. Let go and sew forward until you reach the end of the fabric. Push the reverse button and sew back along the seam about 1/2 inch, let go and sew to the end of the seam. Take the fabric out and trim the threads near the fabric. The photo below shows the backstitch button on the Brother - look in your manual if you have another type of machine. It is often near or on the handwheel.



19) If you have to stop sewing in the middle of a seam for any reason, such as breaking a needle or running out of thread, you will have to tie the thread. To get both strands of thread on the same side of the fabric,

1. Pull the top thread until you see a small loop appear.
2. Use a pin and pull the loop up
3. Until the thread is all the way through.
4. Tie with a double knot and cut the thread close to the knot. Practice doing this.



20) Practice sewing straight stitching until you feel comfortable with this. Try turning the fabric while you sew to form a curve and making right angles (with the needle down, lift up your presser foot - use the presser foot lever - turn the fabric, lower the presser foot, and continue sewing).

21) The zigzag stitch on the Brother is 04. Locate how to switch to zigzag on your machine. The zigzag stitch is a good one to use when sewing stretchy fabrics or finishing seams. For sewing seams, I like to set the stitch length (upper number) on 3 and the width (lower number) on 4. The stitch length determines how far apart the "zigs and zags" are. The width determines how fat the zigs and zags are.



22) Practice using the zigzag stitch the same way you practiced straight stitching.



- 23) If you followed Monday's post on applying appliques to fabric with embroidery, you can use a tighter zigzag stitch to sew around the applique after you've ironed it onto the fabric. In the example below, I set the length to 0.2 and the width to 4.0. If you're just beginning and all this sounds confusing, don't worry - we'll cover it another time in more detail.

Rotary Cutting

Squaring Your Half Square Triangles

By: [Amy Smart](#) from [Diary of a Quilter](#)

One of the easiest ways to put together your quilt is with half square triangles. Before you piece your quilt together, make sure you've used this tutorial to neaten up your fabric.



I've decided to make my own version and spent the morning pulling fabrics from my stash in a new palette I've never tried. It's a bit of a breakaway from my traditional primary-color palette that I use most often. I'm kind of excited. Most of the fabrics are bits and pieces from favorite fabric collections from days of yore like Denyse Schmidt's Hope Valley, and a few of her collections from JoAnn's, Joel Dewberry's Deer Valley plus I've thrown in a bunch of the recent [Bike Path Dots by Alison Glass](#) that I've been itching to create with. I'm excited to play with this stack.



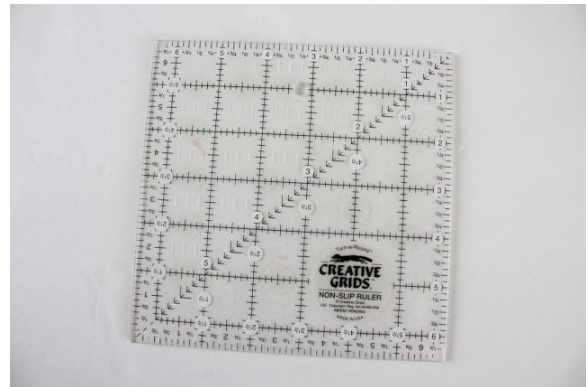
It has been so fun to already see blocks popping up in the [Virtual Quilting Bee Flickr group](#). One of my favorite things about quilting is seeing the variety of colors and fabric choices people use.

INSTRUCTIONS:

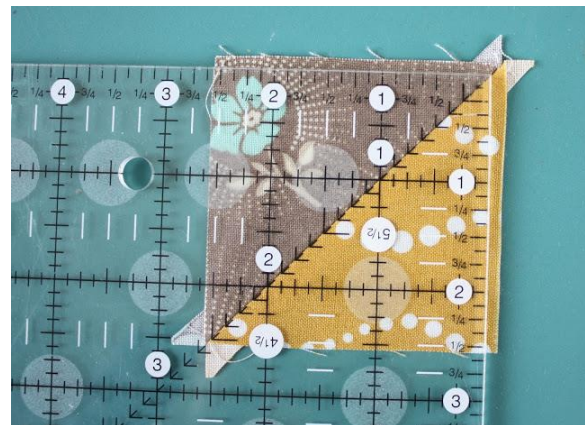
- 1) When making my block, I remembered that a couple of people have asked me for a quick tutorial on squaring up half-square triangles. So here's a quick explanation: Half-square triangle (HST) blocks are one of the most versatile blocks in quilt making. They are quick and easy to make as [Sherri showed](#) by drawing a diagonal line on the back of one of the squares, matching the two prints right sides together, and then sewing down either side of the line with a [scant 1/4" seam allowance](#).

- 2) Then cut on the drawn diagonal line and press both blocks open and voila: two identical half-square triangle blocks! As Sherri mentioned in her tutorial, you are going to want to square-up these particular HST to 2 1/2 inches - that means trim them to the right size and make the sides straight - or "square". I personally like making my HST's slightly large and squaring- up the block when I'm done because it makes the blocks so much neater to work with.

- 3) Even with the most careful of sewing, when you sew on the diagonal you are sewing on the bias. Drawing that line and sewing before you cut, will help keep the diagonal edges from stretching but there will still be some misshapen edges on those blocks. Squaring-up will make things nice and neat, not to mention the right size, in many cases.



One of my favorite tools for squaring up HST blocks is a square ruler with a diagonal line. (There are lots of nifty tools for such purposes.) You don't need to have this - it's definitely possible to square-up with any ruler - but if your quilting budget allows for one of these, over time it's a great investment.



- 4) When squaring-up a pieced block, you want to be careful to keep that diagonal seam running from corner to corner. If your ruler has a diagonal line on it, place that line right over the seam. This will keep your seam centered and your block square. If your ruler does not have the diagonal line, place the corner point of the ruler over the seam and make sure the point you are measuring to (in this case the 2 1/2" point) also on the diagonal seam at the other end.



First trim two sides, then rotate the ruler so that the 2 1/2" lines (in this case) are on the newly squared-up edges and square-off the other two edges. I know it's a little more tedious to square off all 4 sides, but it definitely makes that block neat with straight edges on all four sides.

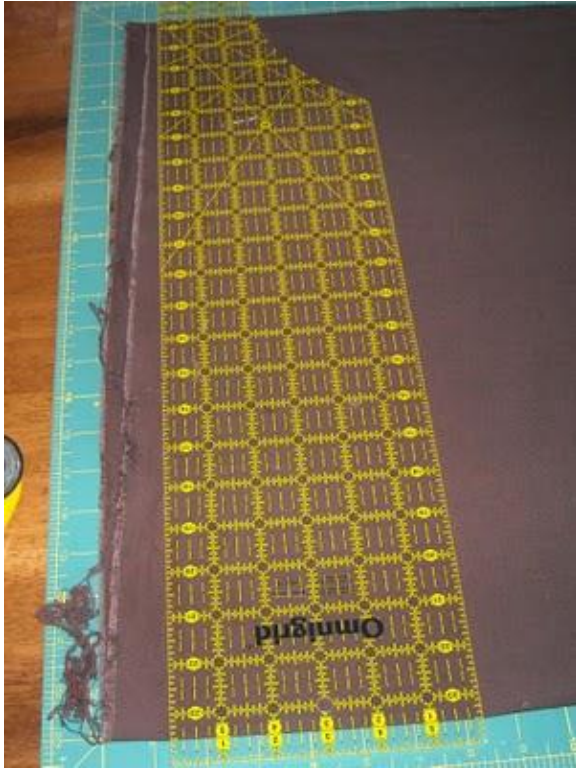


- 5) If the block has fairly square sides before sewing up, you could place the 2 1/2" lines directly on the left and bottom edges (right and bottom if you're left handed) and just square off the right and top edges. Your call. Make sure you trim those little 'tags' in

Left Handed Rotary Cutting

By: Vicky from [Sew Inspired](#)

Even if you're in the minority, don't fret! If you're left handed, find out what kind of tools you can use to make cutting easier and safer.



I decided to make a tutorial for rotary cutting for left-handers--hope this helps some of you out. If anyone has any questions or needs more help on this, please let me know--I'm glad to help!

Some safety tips first:

When rotary cutting, always cut away from your body.

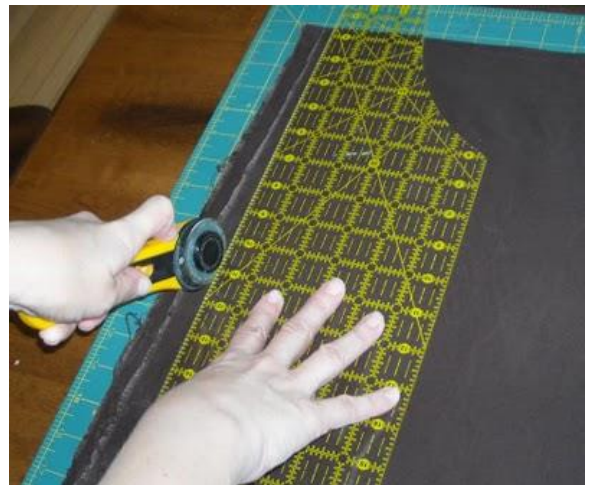
Close the protective cover on the rotary cutter every time you put it down. Every. Time. Thank you.

If you have kids in your house, put the rotary cutter up high when you are stopping working with it, even for a short time.

INSTRUCTIONS:

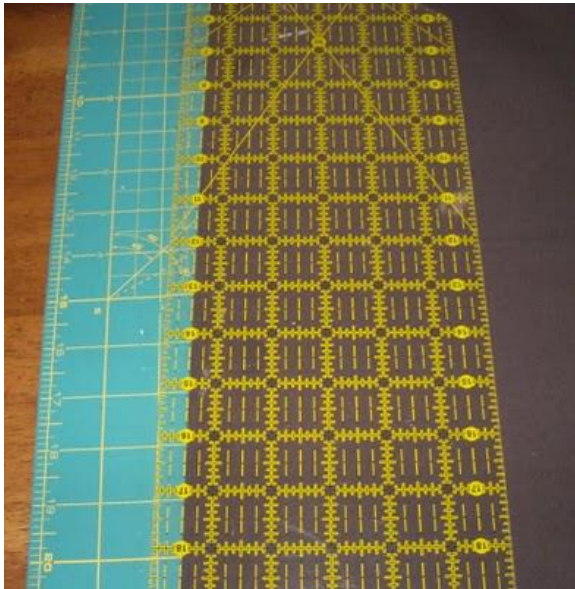
- 1) I started out with a fairly long piece of fabric that was also the complete original width. I needed to straighten my edge so I could get straight strips that went across the whole width of the fabric. First I held up the fabric, with selvedge edges together, and adjusted the two top corners until the selvages were parallel and there were no ripples in the fabric. Amy has a tutorial just for squaring up fabric [here](#), if you want to read more about it.

The photo above shows how to line up the ruler along the fold of the fabric, making sure that the cut edge will be a 90 degree angle to the fold. (The fold is lined up with the 1/2" marks near the bottom of the ruler.)



- 2) For left-handed rotary cutting, you will always cut on the left side of the ruler,

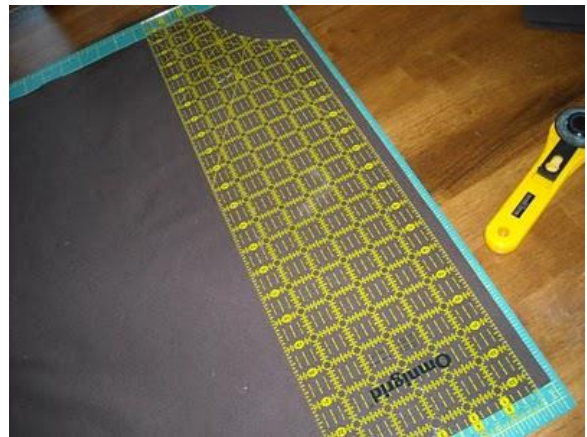
while holding the ruler firmly in place with your right hand. (This action shot courtesy of my 5-year-old.) For long cuts, after you have cut up to where your fingertips are on the ruler, pause for a second and carefully (don't move the ruler!) move your hand higher up on the ruler.



- 3) After I make the straightening cut, I like to unfold my fabric and lay the ruler along the center of the fabric to make sure it is straight. If it's not, sometimes I will try the folded technique again, or sometimes I will cut the edge straight while the fabric is unfolded. This requires carefully shifting the fabric, as the whole width of it doesn't fit on my cutting mat.

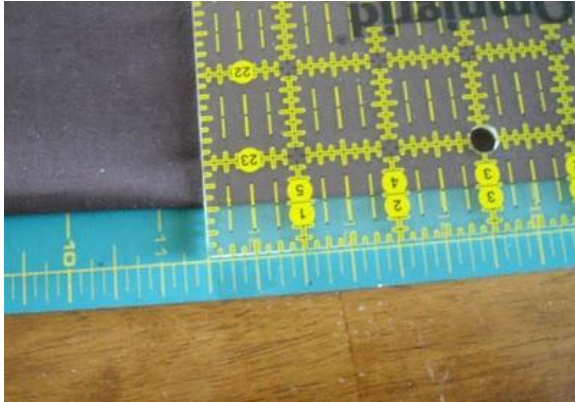


- 4) Now I am ready to cut strips. I move the bulk of the fabric over to the left of the ruler, so I can use the ruler to measure the width of the strip I am cutting (2 1/4 inches, here). It doesn't have to be perfectly lined up with the lines on the mat for this. If you are going to be cutting several strips, it might be a good idea to unfold your fabric and check that it is still straight after 4 or 5 cuts.



- 5) If I need to cut a strip that is wider than my ruler, then I use my mat to help measure. I make sure the edge of the fabric is lined up with a line on the mat, and then line up my ruler using the measurements on the edges

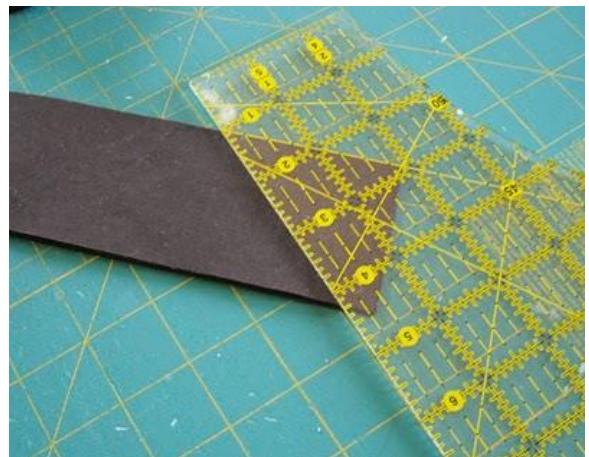
of the mat. The above photo shows the set up to cut a 6 1/2" strip. The left edges of the ruler are lined up with the 11 1/2" mark on both the top and bottom mat edges (see photo below).



- 7) Place the 45 degree line along the long side of the strip, and cut.



- 6) I also wanted to show how to use the 45 degree line on the ruler to cut the edges for binding strips. Line up several layers of fabric on top of each other.



- 8) For the other end of my binding strips, I place the 45 degree line along the long edge of the strip, but in the portion that will be cut off. This is so the strips will sew together correctly into one long binding strip. (More about quilt binding [here](#), if you're interested.)

Basic Machine Quilting and Hand Quilting

Tips for Trouble Free Straight Line Quilting

By: [Nicole Neblett](#) from [Mama Love Quilts](#)

Take a look at this helpful list of tips that will make machine quilting a breeze.



TIPS:

- 1) **Mark:** If you want super straight lines, there is no substitute for marking. Check out my post on [easy peasy marking](#).



- 2) **Pin Baste:** Correctly pin basting will prevent a lot of problems. I pin baste my quilts on an old folding table. I clamp the backing to

the table with clips. You can use special quilt basting clips. Extra large office binder clips work as well.



When you baste your quilt, make sure the backing is smooth and taut. Here is the backing on my table, waiting for the rest of the sandwich. Notice that I've put blue painter's tape to hold the ends of the backing because the quilt was shorter than the length of the table.



I use adhesive spray for my mini quilts, but for anything over 24", I use pins. I like the #1 curved pins as they don't leave large holes in the fabric. Using a Kwik Klip makes the task easier on your finger tips. Ask me how I know!



By the way, you will not want to pin baste on your nice dining room table as the pins will probably leave nasty little scratches.

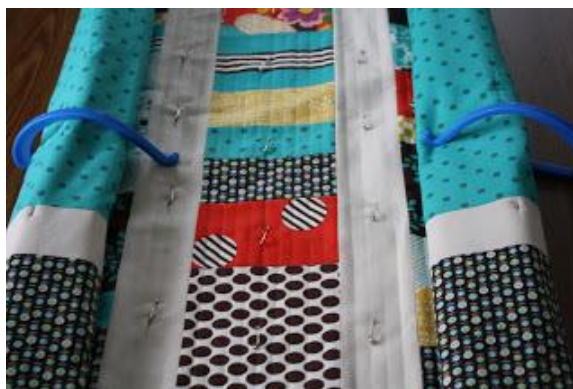
- 3) **Use a walking foot:** A walking foot, also known as an even-feed foot, will help evenly feed the layers of the quilt through the machine. Using a walking foot will help reduce the likelihood of puckers forming or the layers from shifting.



- 4) **Use an extension table:** Unless you have your machine set in a sewing cabinet, you may benefit from having a Plexiglass extension table custom cut for your machine. It helps to support the weight of the quilt so that you can lay it flat while you quilt. They can range from 11.5" x 15" to 24" x 24". Get the biggest one you can. It's great for free-motion quilting too!



- 5) **Roll and secure the quilt:** If your quilt is more than 36" x 36", it's a good idea to roll it on both sides before quilting. Lay it flat on the floor and roll left and right sides toward the center to the area that you are about to quilt. If your quilt is really big, you may find it helpful to secure the rolled sides with clips like these or these. They will hold the quilt taut as you feed it through the machine, making it easier to run it through the machine in a straight line. Also, rolling the quilt gives you two handles to hold as you quilt, which can help reduce drag.



- 6) **Anchor the quilt:** Harriet Hargrave, author of the classic book, [Heirloom Machine Quilting](#), advises that anchoring the quilt is the way to go for trouble-free machine quilting. With anchoring, you stitch in the ditch along the major seams to prevent the layers from shifting during quilting. When I anchor my quilts, I use [water soluble thread](#)

for temporary stitches while I quilt. After I'm done quilting, the stitches disappear with a spritz of water or a trip in the washing machine.

- 7) **Start quilting in the center:** Start in the center and work from left to right. Once you reach the right edge of the quilt, take it out of the machine, turn it around and place it in the center and quilt the other side, working from left to right again.
- 8) **Keep an eye on the line:** Whether you are following a marked line, painter's tape or a seam guide, keep your eye on the line you are following. As long as you've got your foot pressed on the pedal, do not let your gaze wander. The second you let your eyes wander, you'll probably get a wiggle in your line. Straight line quilting requires extreme focus.
- 9) **Quilt every other line:** When I'm doing close parallel lines, I quilt every other line first. Then once I'm done working through the quilt, I go back and quilt the remaining lines. For example, if I want my quilting lines to be 1/2" apart, I will first quilt lines that are 1" apart. I find this helps to evenly distribute the fabric and prevents puckering or pulling of the top layer. Once those initial lines are done, I will go back and quilt the lines in between the first set of lines.
- 10) **Practice:** Okay, so tip #10 isn't really a tip, but rather encouragement. The more you quilt straight lines, the easier it will be to get nice, neat straight lines. As Diane Gaudynski, author of the [Quilt Savvy](#) says, "Keep quilting. Your work gets better every day."

Introduction to Free Motion Quilting

By: [Christa Watson](#) from [Christa Quilts](#)

Once you've mastered machine quilting, you can start adding more intricate details with free motion quilting. This tutorial will help you identify the right tools and techniques to try.



Today I will be presenting an introduction to Free-Motion Quilting (FMQ for short). I will cover topics such as thread selection and tools needed for successful quilting, as well as starting and stopping and the density of your quilting.

I quilt all of my quilts on a Bernina machine that's almost 20 years old. If I can do it, so can you! I hope you will give FMQ a try because I think it's the most fun part of making a quilt!

MATERIALS:



For starters, here are my 3 favorite tools for quilting:

- [Machingers](#) quilting gloves help grip the quilt while quilting which in turn reduces stress and tension on your shoulders. They are machine washable and breathe well.
- A [Supreme Slider](#) helps for two reasons: it allows your quilt to glide smoothly under the bed of the machine. It also acts as a cover for your feed-dogs so you can still have FMQ success even if you are unable to drop them.
- Superior Titanium Coated [Topstitch needles](#) come in several sizes according to the weight of your thread. They have a larger eye which makes them much easier to thread. They also have a longer needle shaft which helps prevent thread breaks. I use a new needle at the start of each quilt and change them about every 8-10 hours of quilting.



For FMQ, you also need to use a darning foot or free-motion foot made specifically to fit your machine.

Speaking from experience, it's best to get this straight from the dealer. The best type of foot has an "open toe" so you can see where you are stitching.

Thoughts on Thread and Tension:

I love lots of quilting on my quilts but I want the quilting to show, not the thread. In order to do this, I try to blend my threads as much as possible on my quilt. I have a rainbow of colors and I don't mind switching thread colors or weights when needed, even in the same quilt.

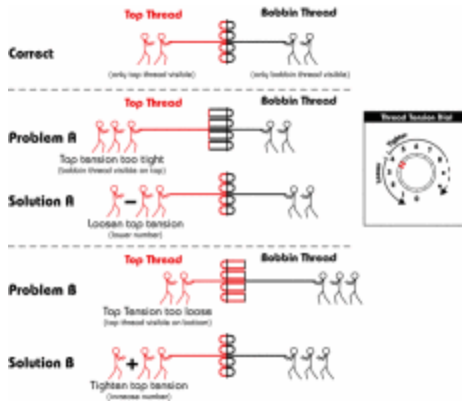


To decide on the correct thread color for a quilt, I will audition several choices and see which one “disappears” most into the quilt. I test the thread out on a practice piece first, to check the tension and to see how well the thread blends or stands out. Here are more tips:

- With a thinner thread like silk or 60 weight polyester, your stitches will blend more, even if the thread does not exactly match the fabric. You can use neutrals to quilt over lots of different colors. If you want your stitches to show, use a heavier 30-40 weight cotton or polyester. A medium 50 weight cotton is a great choice for beginners because it is very forgiving and can cover a lot of area quickly without looking too “thready”.
- Some of my favorite brands that I use are [Superior Threads](#) (in cotton, polyester or silk), [Isacord](#) (polyester), or

[Aurifil](#) (cotton). Unfortunately, I have not had good results with invisible threads so I stay away from them as much as possible!

- Use the same color thread in the top and bobbin. You don't have to use the same weight. You can use a heavier weight on top and a lighter weight in the bobbin, or they can be from the same spool. No matter how well I balance my tension, little thread “pokies” still show through if the thread colors are vastly different.
- If you can't match your thread exactly to your fabric, opt for a darker thread color rather than a lighter color. A darker color will blend more; lighter colors stand out.
- Use a “busy” backing for the lining of your quilt. This will easily hide any less than perfect tension issues or quilting mistakes. A busy back also hides lots of different thread color changes. Save the solid backings for when you want to “show off” your precise quilting, or if “thread play” is a part of your intended design.
- To balance your tension, do not be afraid to change your bobbin tension as well as your top tension. [Superior Threads](#) has a great visual on how to balance your tension:



[\(click to enlarge\)](#)



Starting, Stopping and Smoothing:

When beginning a session of free-motion quilting, I like to use this phrase: needle down – foot down, needle up – foot up to bring the bobbin thread up through the top of the quilt. Be sure that your feed-dogs are disengaged, or covered with your stitch length set to zero.

Hold both thread tails lightly with your hand, then take a few tiny stitches in place to lock your threads. When you come to the end of a quilting session, you will need to end with a few small stitches, then pull up a loop of bobbin. You can either clip the threads close to the surface, or make a knot by hand and “pop” it through to the batting.



When quilting a larger quilt, I use my hands as a hoop and quilt in one small area at a time.



You will want to quilt your quilts enough so that the batting will not fall apart during washing. How much more dense you quilt is a matter of

personal preference. I personally think that quilts look best when all areas are quilted, but this does take some time to do.

When the bulk of a quilt gets too much to handle, I simply move and “smoosh” it out of the way. If it’s been basted properly, all of the tugging, pulling and scrunching of the quilt will not cause any problems.



Practice, Practice, Practice!:

It cannot be stressed enough: you need to practice a lot to get really good at FMQ. Make several practice sandwiches by inserting a piece of batting between two scrap pieces of fabric. It will take some time to find a rhythm that you are comfortable with. It took me a good solid year of FMQ to get to where I was happy with it.



Operate your foot pedal at a speed that keeps you in control of your hands and do not move your hands faster than the speed of your machine. Here’s a good rule of thumb (or foot!): if you are making tiny stitches, you need to slow down the speed of your foot pedal and increase the speed of your hands moving the practice sandwich around under the machine.



If your stitches are too big, you need to slow your hands down and speed up your foot. Practice different combinations of speed between your hands and feet until it feels right. Your stitch movements should not be jerky, they should be nice and smooth.

“Handwriting Practice”

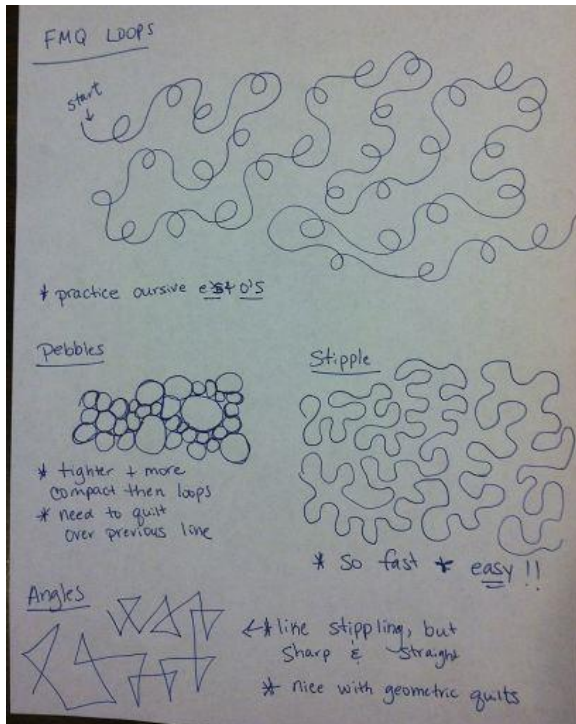
If you can draw it, you can quilt it! Think of your needle as an electric pen writing on a quilted canvas.

You have to practice your handwriting to know where your hand is moving on the paper. The same thing applies to FMQ with needle and thread.

You need to build muscle memory and hand eye-coordination.

The best way to do this is to draw, draw, draw. Take some time and sketch out some doodles like I did. I can sit for hours sketching out pages

full of quilting designs!



But do not overlook the possibilities of quilting with your walking foot, too.

Straight-line quilting can add lots of texture, especially when quilted closely together.

You can also add interesting designs by playing around with decorative stitches, too. The quilt below was quilted entirely with a serpentine stitch and my walking foot.



My final words are to have fun with it and don't stress too much. The point of Alyssa's [Skillbuilder BOM](#) is to build your skills one month at a time. Stick with it and you will see improvement over time, I promise!

These are just a few of my favorite tips when it comes to free-motion quilting.

Basic Quilting by Hand

By: [Ann McKinney](#) from [A Girl in Paradise](#)

Take a break from your sewing machine and start practicing your hand quilting technique. This little tutorial will make it much easier!



MATERIALS:



- **A good hoop** - preferably a large one so you won't have to re-hoop as
- **Needles** - there are ones made special for hand quilting; use a fresh needle for every quilt
- **100% cotton thread** - I like to use thread that is made for hand quilting, it doesn't tangle as easy as regular cotton thread

- **Thimble** - you will need to find one that fits you comfortably
- **A small pair of scissors** - really any pair will do but a small pair will be more convenient
- **a small pair of scissors** - really any pair will do but a small pair will be more convenient

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. To start, thread a needle with a length of thread that is about the length of your forearm, double, and knot at the end. Insert your needle through the top layer of your quilt, just outside your quilt line and bring your needle out on the quilt line. Pull the needle out and gently pop the knot through so it is hidden beneath the fabric.



2. Technically, I do this step "wrong" but bear with me because here is where you will find your own rhythm and style. Most quilters will "rock" the needle by pushing the needle, with their middle finger, in and out of all 3 layers of the quilt towards themselves,

but this was uncomfortable, so I "rock" the needle with my thumb and push it away from me.



3. Regardless of the finger, or direction you use, you will rock the needle up and down, or in and out, all the layers of your quilt, loading about 3 or 4 stitches on your needle before you push it through. This is where your thimble comes in handy because your finger (or thumb) will need a little protection when pushing that needle through all that fabric. Also, because of the thickness of a quilt I will place my other hand under the quilt and help guide the needle along.



4. When you reach the end of your thread, or the end of the line, you will need to secure the ends. To do this simply knot your thread at the last stitch. Then slip your needle back into the same hole your thread is coming out of and push your needle through the top layer of the quilt just outside your quilt line, and gently pop the knot through, so the knot disappears in between the layers of the quilt. Then snip the thread where it exits the fabric, being careful not to cut the fabric. Trust me, you only make that mistake once.

I am aware this is a very time consuming process but if you have a quilt that you are making for yourself and you don't have any time constants, hand quilting can be very therapeutic and relaxing after a long day.

Basting Your Quilt

[Basting a Quilt with Homemade Spray Starch](#)

By: Pat from [Pattilou Quilts](#)

Now you don't have to worry about spending extra money on store-bought products full of chemicals. You can make your very own homemade spray starch.



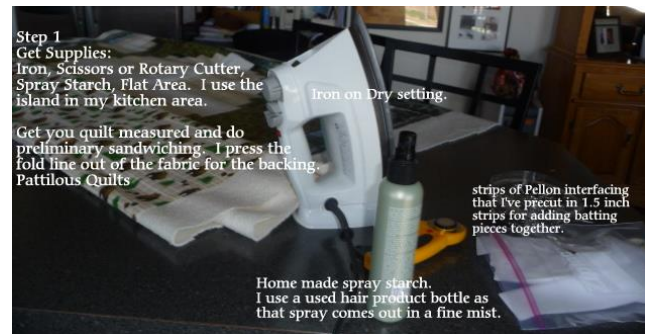
MATERIALS:

- 1 qt distilled water
- 1/4 cup Vodka
- 1 tsp Lavender oil or Lemon Oil or whatever is your favorite
- 5-10 drops of another oil that would blend. I usually use lemon and lavender oil together.
- 1/2 cup liquid starch

INSTRUCTIONS:

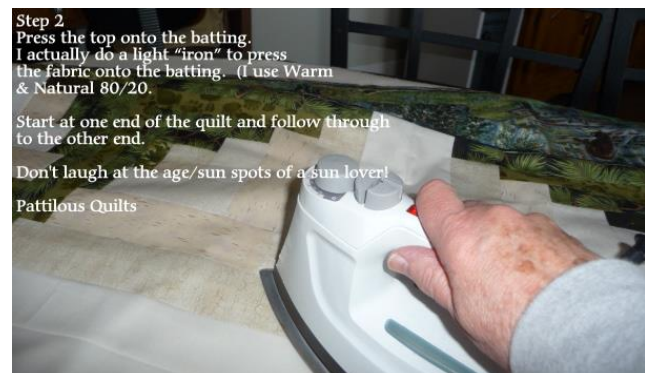
1. Get Supplies: Iron on dry setting, strips of Pellon interfacing that I've precut in 1.5 inch strips for adding batting pieces together, scissors, or rotary cutter, homemade spray starch (I use a used hair product bottle as that spray comes out in a fine mist), flat area. I use the island in my kitchen area.

Get your quilt measured and do preliminary sandwiching. I press the fold line out of the fabric for the backing.



2. Press the top onto the batting. I actually do a light "iron" to press the fabric into the batting. (I use Warm & Natural 80/20).

Start at one end of the quilt and follow through to the other end.



3. Roll the quilt



Check the backing as you roll the quilt.

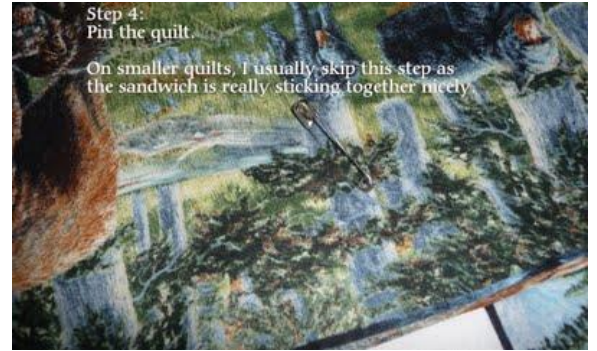
Look here: You see a fold beginning.
Smooth that out and continue.



Area is now smoothed.



4. Pin the quilt. On smaller quilts, I usually skip this step as the sandwich is really sticking together nicely.



Continue pinning.



5. Use a rotary cutter to trim any extra batting away. Save for any piecing in any other project.



Precut strips and leftover batting are

saved for future use.



6. Double check pinning from the side. Sometimes, there will be a wrinkle. This usually happens at the edges.



Wrinkle:



Repinned and smoothed out:



At this point, the quilt is pinned and ready to be taken to the sewing machine to quilt as desired. I usually shake it out and get it ready to lay out on the machine. I take the folds out so that it will feed smoothly as I free motion quilt.

After a question, I'm adding this as a review.

7. After I sew the backing together to get the size needed, (if it needs it), I press the joining seam open, then starch that seam. I then turn the fabric over so that it is the right side of the fabric that I will now starch (the fabric that will slide through on the bed of the machine) and spray starch it as much as possible. The stiffer it is the better it glides.
8. Then I take it to the countertop and lay wrong side up and then add the precut batting. Smooth and press with hands.
9. Then add the top. This is where I use the iron again and starch the top as I press. If there is any batting that is "short" of the top--this is where I press the iron on tape to the extra batting to add length or width. (I really like to use full pieces, but I'm also a nut about not letting my scraps get away from me--especially when I'm doing donation quilts.)

10. Press (now with the iron) all wrinkles out from the top-- with the batting in the middle and the backing on the bottom). The sandwich and the batting will start to cling to the backing.
11. Start the pinning process. Fold as you go, smoothing again with your hands and checking the back for puckers along the way.

I just did another kid sized quilt and this whole process took about 20 minutes or less. I've got it on the machine now.

So, I guess you could say I spray them separately and then together too. I wash after quilting, and binding, so all the starch washes out.

Pin Basting Your Quilt

By: Blair Stocker from [Wise Craft](#)

Another popular way quilters put together their quilt sandwiches is pin basting. It keeps the fabric clean and is easy to take apart if you make a mistake.



MATERIALS:



- Your quilt top, backing, and batting (make sure the backing and batting is at least 4" larger than your quilt top on all 4 sides).
- A good supply of straight pins, I used at least 200 (I like the [Clover flower head pins](#) because they are long)
- 1 sheet of [6mm thick craft foam](#) (important to use the thicker craft foam sheet here, the thinner won't work unless you glue several sheets together). Pick a color that would contrast with most of your quilt tops.
- Scissors
- At least 12 or more of some sort of spring clamp set- I bought mine at Lowe's [in assorted sizes](#), to see what worked, and actually found the larger ones worked best. ([Jess](#), thank you for suggesting I look at the hardware store!). Make sure they fit around the edge worktable you'll be basting on.
- Painter's tape
- Spray Starch

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) Before you begin basting, press your quilt backing using spray starch. Press well, don't skimp on this step.
- 2) If your quilt is larger than the table you will be basting on (mine always is), start at one side/corner, letting the excess hang off of the opposite sides of the table. Place your quilt back on the table right side down, and smooth it well. As you smooth it, use the spring clamps to hold it in place, pulling it taut as it smooths out, and reclamping as needed. Clamp down all 4 sides of the table this way.



- 3) Next, add the batting. As with the quilt back, do this slowly and methodically, smoothing out small areas at a time, starting from the center section and working outward. As you smooth up to the edge where each clamp is, unclamp, pull the quilt batting and reclamp (Tip- Don't overpull the quilt batting. I use cotton batting, and I think overpulling it makes it shrink back together even more than I'd like when the quilt is washed. Your goal is smoothing it into place, not pulling.



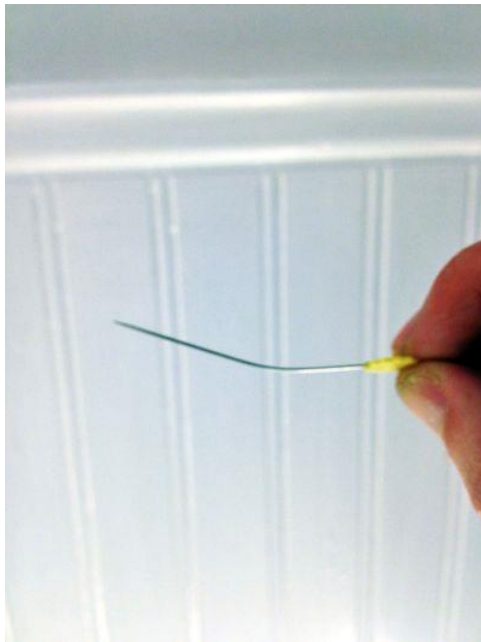
- 4) Now, press your quilt top similar to the way you did for your quilt back in step 1, with starch, but iron from the back instead of the front, to assure that all the seam allowances are facing the direction intended, and that everything is flat and smooth.
- 5) Place your quilt top right side up on top of your quilt layers, allowing the extra backing and batting to extend beyond the quilt top on all sides to allow for any shifting during the quilting process. Smooth it all out as before, and add this layer to the clamps all around the table. (Using the larger clamps allowed me to grab the edges of the quilt top that didn't go all the way up to the edge, as you can see below).



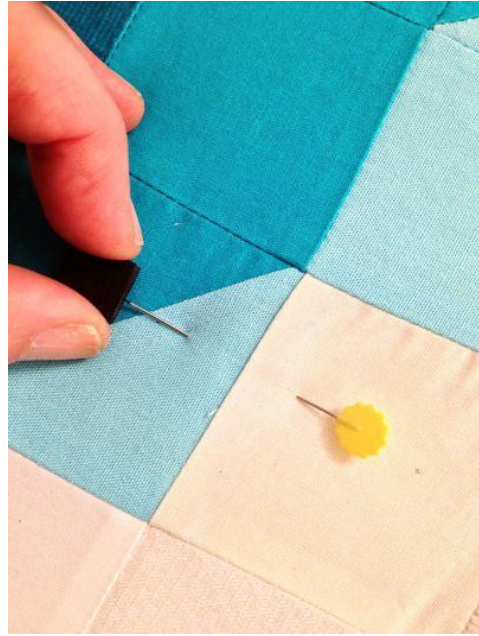
- 6) Cut squares from your craft foam about 1/2" x 1/2". Cut plenty so you won't have to stop and cut more.



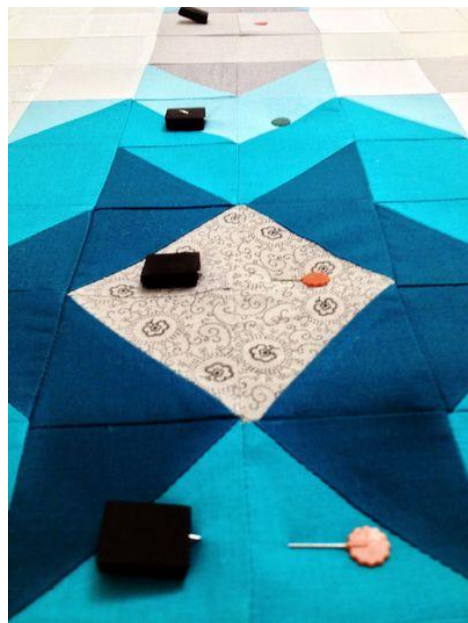
- 7) Make a slight bend in each straight pin before you insert it through the layers, like this-



Starting from the center area of the quilt top, put a pin through all 3 layers, and cap the top with a square of the craft foam. Pin your quilt top well, I put pins every 4" or so (and hand's width apart) but in tricky areas I put as many as I need.



- 8) Once you've thoroughly pinned the entire tabletop's work of quilt, unclamp, and shift the quilt so that you can do the opposite side and repeat the process.



Now you are ready to machine quilt! This process gives you secure, smooth layers and no pins to stick you (well, maybe a tiny stick here or there, but not many).

Binding a Quilt and Adding Borders

Single Fold Binding Tutorial

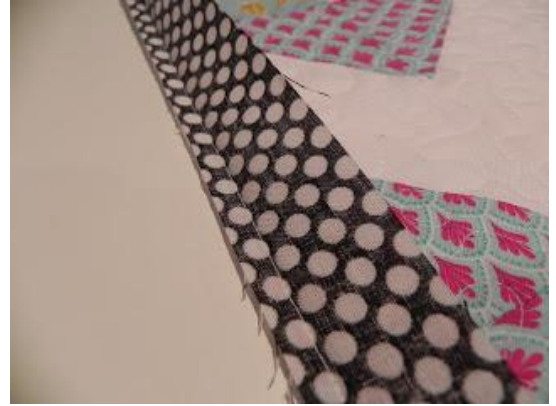
By: [Anorina Morris](#) from [Samelia's Mum](#)

If you want to finish with your quilt, particularly small patterns, with a basic edge, learning how to bind a quilt with a single fold is the way to go.



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. First, I cut my fabric strips for the binding at 1.25". If more length is required, attach however many strips you need for your project - just like you would when making your double fold binding.
2. Start about halfway along one side, leaving a tail for joining, sew the binding to the top with right sides together (1/4" seam). I use my 1/4" foot because it has a great little guide, but a walking foot is probably the better option for.



3. From the front of the quilt, turn out the binding and press it with a hot iron.



4. Flip it over now and begin to fold over your binding once and then twice so it covers your stitches... I think the next pictures explain what I want to say better.





5. Press and then use pins to hold it down as you work along the quilt edges. Miter the corners as you would normally do with your double fold binding.



6. Slip stitch it in place along the seam line.



And there you have it. Nice. Neat. And no unsightly bulk.

Ice Cream Cone Binding

By: Jennifer Overstreet from [Gable House & Co.](#)

If you're a more advanced quilter, try challenging yourself with this beautiful approach to binding. It'll really get people looking at the details within your quilt pattern.



MATERIALS AND WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- A walking foot
- 2 1/2" bias binding
- Best to have a bias binding due to a bias cut having more flexibility
- A thin pointer or something that can help push away the bulk of the binding for when you pivot on the turns.
- 1/4" seams on your binding (if you can) change them about every 8-10 hours of quilting.

Most quilts that have an ice cream cone border have rounded corners instead of pointed ones. I recommend to start your binding on one of those corners. It will not be an easy task if this is your first time working with a curved border but it is much easier to start there on the rounded

corner than on the tight curves of the ice cream cones.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Once you get to your first ice cream cone lift your walking foot



2. Pivot the quilt to your left, take your binding and pivot it to your right.

Push away any bulk under the walking foot with pointer.

Note: Not everything will push out of the way and it will not be an easy task, its okay!

3. Bring quilt slightly to your right to meet up with your binding. Lower your walking foot. Start stitching
4. Guide the binding and quilt at the same time while following the curve of the ice

cream cone.



5. On occasion, you may have to stop and pivot the quilt/binding during the curve.

This will help relieve tension and bulkiness. Plus giving your fingers a rest too.

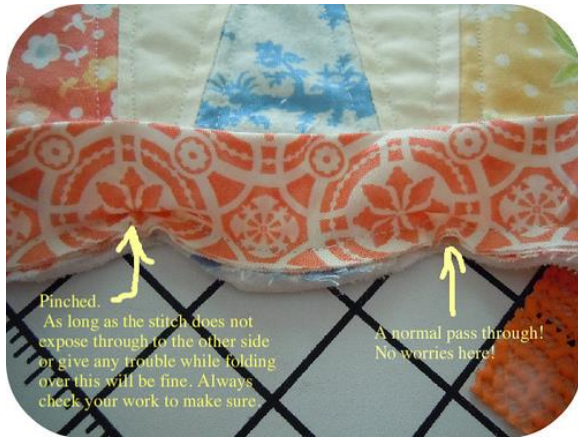


6. When you are done with the first ice cream cone your stopping point should be at the spacers in between each ice cream cone.
7. Lift your walking foot.
8. Pivot and repeat the process all over again!
9. As always check your work it see if everything passed though all right.

Pinching can accrue due to all the bulkiness in the corners.



The photo below shows that happens when you cannot get all the bulkiness out of the way of your walking foot



This is how your corners should turn out.



Once you have your binding turned over, I found it easier to handle and to shape the curves if you hand stitch the binding on to the back.

Making a Basic Quilt Border

By: [Melanie Rudy](#) from [Quilters...Enjoy Color!](#)

Finish your first beginner patterns with a basic quilt border that'll look good on any quilt.



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Begin by measuring for the side borders.
2. Measure in the middle of the quilt from top to bottom.

This will allow for the quilt to square up evenly once the borders are attached.



3. Cut your border fabric to the desired width and remove the selvage edge.



4. You can stack both border pieces for cutting, if desired.



5. Cut your side borders to the desired length.



6. When cutting, keep the edge of your fabric and your cutting line perpendicular, using your mat as a guide.



7. Pin the length of border fabric in half.



8. Now pin into quarters.



9. 3 pins and 4 even sections of border fabric.



10. Now pin the side edge of the quilt into quarters.



11. Match up pins on border and quilt edges.



12. Pin border to quilt edge.



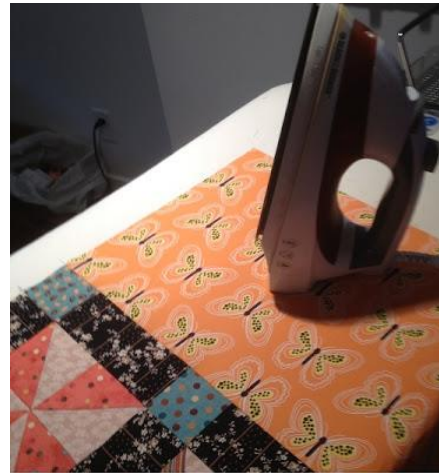
13. Sew border to quilt, easing as necessary, using a 1/4" seam allowance.



14. The first side border on.



15. Press towards the border.



16. Repeat the process for the other side. The two side borders are now on.



17. Now measure for your top and bottom borders. Measure at the middle of the quilt from side to side.



18. Cut your borders and divide into quarters as above. Pin top border in place and stitch, using a 1/4" seam. Repeat process for the bottom border.



20. Stay stitch all around the edge of the quilt borders. This will keep your quilt nice and square for the quilting process.



The borders are on. There is one more step.



21. Stay-stitching around the quilt edge.



19. Set your machine to a 4mm stitch length.



How to Sew Prairie Points

By: [Penny Layman](#) from [Sewtakeahike](#)

Dress up your quilt with continuous prairie points that look just like celebratory bunting!



super easy continuous prairie point tutorial

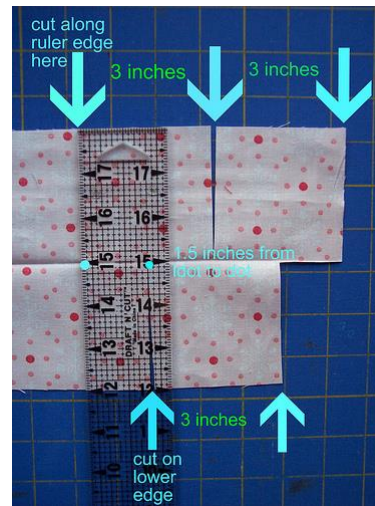


MATERIALS:

- 6"X Width of fabric strips (as many as you need to go around your project)
- 2" wide ruler
- rotary cutter
- fabric glue
- iron and ironing board
- spray starch

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Using one of the 6"X wof prairie point fabric strips, fold it in half longways and press.
2. Using a ruler and rotary cutter, cut a straight line from the edge of the fabric just to the center fold line every 1.5", alternating cuts from the top edge of the fabric to the lower edge.



I used a two inch wide ruler to do this, lining the previous cut edge up with the 1.5" mark on the clear ruler to make even cuts. (see photo)

3. Cut off the first 1.5" flap of fabric at the fold line



4. Cut off the last two flaps of fabric at the opposite end.



5. Fold each square in half to form triangles, making sure to fold each one in the same direction and press as you go.



6. Place a dot of fabric glue on the outside tip of each triangle and fold the triangles in half, bringing the raw edges even with the center of the fabric strip. Press as you go.



7. Fold the top triangles over on top of the lower triangles, pressing and using spray starch as you go.





8. Baste stitch 1/8" from the straight edge, and you're done!



Now just make as many strips of these as you need to go around your project, and you have instant, super easy prairie points!

How to Add a Flange to Quilts

By: Vicki from [Quilting Lodge](#)

Show off your favorite decorative fabrics with a unique edge that comes right out at you.



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. First, cut the flange pieces. The size will vary depending on what you're adding it to. For my demonstration, I added a flange in between the quilt top and the border.
2. I measured the width and length of my quilt top and cut 4 pieces that were 1.5" wide x the appropriate length. The 1.5" width is a personal preference; it will yield approximately a 1/2" flange. A wider cut will yield a wider flange. Bring quilt slightly to your right to meet up with your binding. Lower your walking foot. Start stitching
3. Next press the flange in half lengthwise, wrong sides together.



4. Lay the flange on top of the quilt top (or block) with raw edges lined up.
5. Sew or pin all 4 pieces of flange in place one piece at a time. I attached the top and bottom then the left and right. I chose to sew it in place because I didn't want to try to pin through multiple layers of fabric ~ the quilt top, the flange, and the border fabric.



(flange sewn to quilt top)

Note: Note ~ I used a very small seam allowance when attaching the flange because I didn't want the threads to show. This will ensure the 1/4" seam attaching the border will cover all my stitching when I attach the flange.



(This is my 1/4" foot. You can see I'm not following the edge of my foot because I want to make sure these stitches are buried in the seam allowance)

6. Once the 4 pieces of flange are added it's time for the final borders. Add the borders as you normally do. If you have trouble with skipping stitches you may need to try a larger needle. A flange does add some thickness to the seam.



(Adding the border...notice I am now following my 1/4" foot.)



(Last border going on now)



(Ta Da! The white flange is all done!)

I really like the way the flange adds just enough separation between the quilt top and the border. It also adds just the right amount of dimension!

Here's a quick look at an individual block with flange...



(I added the flange to this block to help it stand out. Without the flange, the block would get a little lost since it has a lot of black and it's surrounded by black.)

And a close up...



Next time you need to add a little flair
give flange a try. It's quick and easy and
adds a lot to your quilt.

Finishing Your Quilt

Dryer Sheet Appliqué

By: [Christina Cameli](#) from [A Few Scraps](#)

Here's a quick and cost-effective way to add cute appliqué designs to your quilt patterns.



MATERIALS:



- A piece of scrap paper
- A marker
- Scissors
- Dryer sheet

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Draw your design on the paper, at the size you want your finished

appliqué to be. Exception: long skinny things (like the beak, as seen below) should be drawn slightly longer and fatter than you intend them to end up.



2. Now lay the fabric sheet over the drawing. Trace the drawing onto the dryer sheet with the marker. This is the magic of the dryer sheet. It's kind of like fabric and kind of like tracing paper!



3. Find a piece of fabric big enough to accommodate your design plus 1/4" around. Lay the fabric right side up then put the dryer sheet over it, right side up. I know it seems wrong. Trust me.



4. Stitch along the pattern line, around the entire design. I prefer to do this step by machine but you can hand stitch just as well if you take small stitches.



5. Cut the piece out 1/4" from the stitching.



6. Clip the fabric away from any points. Snip the fabric along any concave curves (On the bird I clipped the crotch, the back of the neck, and under the beak). Skipping this step will cause heartache and gnashing of teeth! Do it!



7. Now use a sharp scissors to cut a slice just in the dryer sheet and not the fabric. Turn the piece right side out through this hole. No worries if you rip the slice farther, just try to keep the dryer sheet intact where it meets the fabric. The dryer sheet is going to end up sandwiched between your appliqué and your backing, so don't give it much mind.

See how all the raw edges are behind the fabric sheet? Now they can't shred when you're appliquéing!



8. Iron the appliqué from the fabric side to make it nice and flat. See how nicely it matches the original drawing!



9. Now you are ready to attach the appliqué to whatever backing you wish. If you already know how to appliqué, I hope you enjoyed the dryer sheet trick! If you don't know how to appliqué, read on... Put your appliqué where you want it and pin it down.



10. Thread a sharp needle. Knot the end of the thread. Bring the needle up from the wrong side of the backing, directly next to the appliqué. Reminder : enlarge these pictures by clicking on them if you need more detail.



11. Now put the point of the needle inside the folded edge of the appliqué, right next to where the thread is coming up from the backing.



12. Bring the needle back out of the folded edge of the appliqué, making a stitch about 1/4". Pull your thread through.



13. Now you are going to take a stitch below the backing WITHOUT turning your work over. Put the needle in the backing directly beneath where the thread is coming out of the appliqué.



14. Bring the needle back up, directly next to the appliqué, making a stitch about 1/4". Pull the needle through.



15. These are the only two stitches involved in appliqué. A stitch inside the folded edge of the appliqué...



16. Alternated with a stitch behind the backing... Whenever the thread comes up out of one fabric, it dives directly into the other fabric, so you end up seeing very little of the thread. It is always either traveling behind the folded edge of the appliqué or traveling beneath the backing.



17. Eventually you will realize that you can take a stitch in the appliqué, then go right into the stitch behind the backing, without pulling the thread through between stitches.



18. I like to make sure there is always a stitch right at any corner, to keep the appliqué well secured.



19. When you get back to where you started, take the needle beneath the backing, turn your work over and tie your thread off. You should see a dashed line of stitches in the outline of your appliqué.



And you're done. Hope that helped... Now, how about this rocking bird skirt!



Raw Edge Appliqué

By: [Carol Steely](#) from [FunThreads](#)

Use fusible web to make applying your appliqué quilt patterns even easier. You can also find some helpful tips to keep your appliqué looking its best.



MATERIALS:



For starters, here are my 3 favorite tools for quilting:

- Iron and Ironing Board

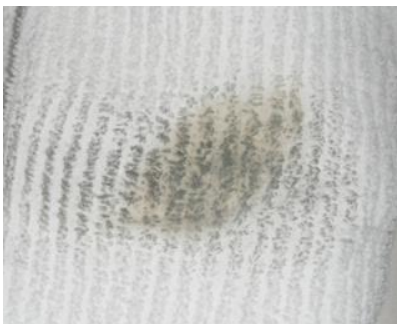
- [Iron Off Hot Iron Cleaner](#) - This is my favorite hot iron cleaner that I use frequently while doing appliqué projects. Your iron will gunk quickly while doing fusible appliqué projects (see below).
- [Appliqué Pressing Sheet](#) - This will protect your ironing board from gunk. The fuse web will not stick to it.
- [Steam A Seam Lite 2](#) - This is one of many fusible web products. It's a light fusible web that is easy to sew through and won't gunk your machine needle. This product comes in a variety of sizes. The packages of 9 x 12 inch sheets is great for giving it a try. It's also available by the yard and by the box.
- Pre-washed Fabrics - If you're using Steam A Seam it's recommended that you use pre-washed fabrics. The product will stick better if you do. Whichever fusible you decide to use be sure it's a light one that will be easy to sew through.
- 8 x 8 inch piece of background fabric
- scraps for 2 hearts
- fusible web
- paper and pencil

Information About Ironing Appliqués

Doing fusible applique will quickly gunk up your iron with fusible goo as well as pencil lead (see photo below). You will need to clean your iron frequently while working on your projects. My personal preference is Iron Off Hot Iron Cleaner.



You only need a small amount on a towel.



Amazing what comes off the iron.

1. Draw your design as an outline drawing. Think of it as a coloring book but instead of crayons you're going to use fabric to color between the lines. For this example we will use hearts so you can get the feel for sewing a straight edge as well as a curved edge.



2. Next you will trace your design in reverse onto the fusible web. For this step you can use a light box or window. I placed my drawing in reverse on the window. Then traced it onto my Steam A Seam Lite 2. The letter "c" is just there to show the reverse. We won't be using it in the design.



3. Rough cut around the appliques to remove them from the Steam A Seam sheet. Don't cut on the lines yet.



4. I trim around the inside of larger design pieces leaving about 3/8 of an inch. It's a personal preference but I like to remove the centers to keep the designs from getting too stiff when doing multiple layers. Keep the pieces you remove to trace smaller designs on (like the photo below). I store the little left over scraps in a Ziploc baggie.



5. Slowly peel the backing (side without the design on it) off.



This is what the fusible web looks like. Be careful to keep it with the design paper.



6. Iron all the wrinkles out of your fabric. Then place the appliqué onto the wrong side of the fabrics. I like to give them a little hit with the iron at this point to make them stick.



7. Now cut out the appliqué designs on the lines.



8. Carefully peel off the remaining paper. This time be sure to keep the fusible web with the fabric.



9. Place the appliqués onto the right side of your background fabric. The appliqués can be repositioned until they are pressed with the iron. When you are happy with their position on the background fabric press them with the iron to permanently fuse them in place (follow package directions for the product you are using). **As with all quilting, press straight up and down. Do not iron side to side or you may warp the block.**



10. Stitch around the appliqués (see stitching details below). Even though you are using a fusible web you will need to stitch the edges of your design in place to keep them from coming loose with multiple washings. After you finish stitching around the appliqué give it a good pressing to set the stitches.

Information About Stitches:



There are a number of ways that you can stitch the edges of your designs depending on your preference and how the quilt will be used.

(from left to right)

1. Satin Stitch - This is a zigzag stitch sewn with a length set close to 0. It's a solid looking outline. Great if you want a bold outline.
2. Zigzag stitch - A small zigzag stitch along the edge.
3. Straight Stitch - A straight stitch close to the edge. I would only use this on wall hangings or things that would not get washed. If sewn with matching thread it would almost "hide" from the eye.
4. Blanket Stitch - This stitch has 5 strikes (forward, reverse, forward, side, side). It's visually similar to using a zigzag stitch. It's my personal favorite. I think it has a handmade crafted look to it.

Important Stitching Technique:

When sewing around the appliqué do not pull the fabric and try to "steer" around curves. This will cause the fabric to pull in and pucker. Instead stitch until the fabric begins to head into a curve.



Stop with the needle down and pivot your fabric to bring it straight in front of the needle again. Do this as needed to get around a curve. This may need to be done every 2 or 3 stitches if you are on a small curve. But trust me, the results will be worth the effort.



Information About Thread:

The color thread you choose all depends on your design idea. Matching the thread color and contrasting the thread color give two very different looks (*see below*).



How to Clean Non-Washable Quilts

By: Pam from [Kitty and Me Designs](#)

Make sure you take care of your quilts even after they're finished and on display.



MATERIALS:

- Vacuum cleaner
- Piece of plastic canvas

Crazy quilts, art quilts, antique & vintage quilts....many are not washable or dry cleanable. So how do you clean them? It's easier than you think.

All you need is a vacuum cleaner and a piece of plastic canvas:



INSTRUCTIONS:

I lay my quilts out on a towel on the floor. For the most part, decorative quilts are just a bit

dusty. Using your vacuum cleaner hose and a piece of plastic canvas will remove any surface dust and hopefully, any dust mites that have made their home on your quilt:



The plastic canvas will hold your quilt & embellishments in place, allowing the dust and dirt particles to be vacuumed away through the holes. I do both the front and the back of the quilt this way.



Just vacuum through the plastic canvas. Vacuum with one hand and hold the plastic down with the other. Move your plastic as you need to until you've cleaned the entire quilt.

To remove any stubborn pet hair, a small piece of masking tape or blue painters tape will work nicely. Be careful not to pull on your stitches or embellishments. I use making tape sparingly but it does work to get the cat hair off.

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