

Equipment

Some of these items can be found in our notions section:

Rotary Cutter ~ A circular blade that enables you to cut many layers of fabric at one time. This is an excellent tool for cutting geometric fabric pieces quickly and accurately. Rotary cutters have replaceable blades, so they always remain sharp. The rotary cutter is usually used with a quilting ruler, and cutting mat.

Cutting Mat ~ A self-healing mat that is used with the rotary cutter. A cutting mat provides a smooth, straight surface while protecting your table from being cut by the rotary cutter. Measurements are printed in a grid format on the mats to make the cutting process even easier.

Ruler ~ The see through quilters' ruler is used with the rotary cutter to make straight cuts, either straight or on an angle as most rulers have a diagonal line to help with cutting 45° angles. Quilter's rulers are made from a sturdy plastic and have Imperial measurements printed on them making it easy to just line up the fabric and cut with your rotary cutter.

Templates ~ Templates usually made from clear plastic and are available in countless shapes or can be made from your own materials. They are used to cut fabric into the desired shapes to be pieced. It is vital that templates are accurate and include a ¼" seam allowances.

Scissors ~ It is a good idea to use one pair of scissors for fabric and a pair of craft scissors for template cutting. It is handy to also have a small pair of embroidery scissors for clipping thread.

Quilting Needles ~ A size 9-10 quilting needle is used for hand piecing and hand quilting.

Thimble ~ A thimble with a good fit is an essential when hand quilting to protect your fingers from the prick of your needle.

Pins ~ Ball-head pins are the standard for quilters as they are easier to see and handle. The pins are used matching points, basting, and piecing.

Thread ~ We recommend that you use 100% cotton for piecing and quilting. Remember to select a colour that will blend in with your work, we use a standard light beige colour for all our piecing except for when we work with white fabric. We use a coordinating thread, or invisible thread for quilting.

Iron & Ironing Board ~ Fabrics should be ironed before sewing, and you should press down seams as you work. A comfortable iron and ironing board are essential

Sewing Machine ~ If you are machine piecing and/or quilting (which most of us do). Walking foot is best with a straight stitch when machine quilting, to ensure all of your layers are stay where they are supposed to.

Cutting Fabrics

Always cut fabrics "with the grain" – this means up or down the weave of the fabric - this reduces warping of the fabric and an out of shape quilt top.

Rotary Cutting

Rotary cutting is used to cut shapes with straight sides such as squares, rectangles and triangles using both the ruler and cutting mat measurement markings to acquire the desired size fabric piece.

Template Cutting

Templates are best used for curved pieces of fabric and appliqué pieces.

Trace the pattern pieces onto clear plastic template material using a thin permanent marker remembering to add the ¼" seam allowance. It is a good idea to mark the name of your block, the total number of pieces you will need to cut out, and the letter of your pattern piece on your template.

Using the template you have made, trace this with a pencil onto the fabric. Cut out the fabric using your fabric scissors. If you are hand piecing, mark the sewing line around the back of the fabric with a pencil line at a ¼".

Piecing a Block

By Hand

The pieces are joined right sides (top/printed sides) together, so the marked seam lines on the wrong side of the fabric will be visible on both sides of the patch work when sewing. Sew the seam through the penciled lines with a short running stitch (we recommend two or three stitches forward and one back), using a single thread. Begin and end each seam at the seam line (not at the edge of fabric) with two or three backstitches to secure the seam.

Sew the blocks together in units, following your piecing diagram for the block you are working on. Most grid-based blocks are joined in horizontal, vertical or diagonal rows. For curved piecing place the convex (outward) curve on the bottom and the concave (inward) curve over it, pin in the centre and sew.

By Machine

Decide which shapes can be rotary cut and which will require a template, prepare and press all of your fabrics ready for piecing.

Make sure the machine is set up to sew an accurate ¼" seam. Always remember to sew right sides of the fabric together. Press all seam allowances to one side as you sew. If you have light and dark fabrics, press towards the darker fabric, so that the seams do not show through the other side.

Sew the blocks together in units, following your piecing diagram for the block you are working on. Most grid-based blocks are joined in horizontal, vertical or diagonal rows. For curved piecing place the convex (outward) curve on the bottom and the concave (inward) curve over it, pin in the centre and gently guide the fabric through the machine.

Piecing the Quilt Top

Once all the blocks are made, make sure they are pressed well. Arrange them in order as per your pattern, we use a piece of jogging fleece hung on the wall as our design board.

Once you are satisfied with your layout, join the blocks for the first row with $\frac{1}{4}$ " seams, join the blocks in the second row, and so on, until all rows are completed. Press the seam allowances in the odd numbered rows in one direction and the seam allowances in even numbered rows in the opposite direction. Pin two rows together so that appropriate seams match (if the seams are pressed in opposite directions, they will 'lock' together). Join these rows together and press these seam allowances in one direction for the whole quilt. The rows order that you sew the rows together may be vertical or horizontal depending on the quilt design.

Adding the Border

Straight Borders

Remember to add the $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance when cutting boarder strips. If the quilt is longer than the fabric, join strips together to create required length.

Add the strips to the sides of the quilt first. Trim excess border fabric even with the pieced top and bottom edges and then add the top and bottom borders. Trim excess fabric even with the side borders.

Mitred

A mitred border is where the corners are stitched at a 45° angle. If there are multiple borders it is easier to join these together first and then attach to the quilt top, mitering the boarders as a unit rather than as individuals.

Attach both side and bottom borders to the quilt leaving a large amount of overhang at each end. Fold the quilt top right sides together in half, diagonally, at one corner, place the straight edge of ruler along folded edge of quilt top follow this diagonal angle. With a pencil draw a line $\frac{1}{4}$ " in from the ruler line, pin to make sure it looks correct from front, then sew together on this line.

Basting the Quilt

The purpose of basting is to hold the three layers of your quilt together to prevent shifting while quilting. It is important that your quilt is adequately basted as a telltale signs of a poorly basted quilt is puckering and shrinking of the backing.

Sew the backing fabric, if required, into a piece large enough to accommodate the quilt top, the backing should be about 5" larger all the way around than the quilt top, the batting needs to be slightly smaller than the backing and a little larger than the quilt top.

Layer the backing fabric right side down onto a smooth flat surface and tape down the corners, centre the batting and then the quilt top, smoothing each layer as you go. Layer the quilt top, face up in the centre, with edges parallel to the backing, smooth the quilt to remove any wrinkles. Pin, or baste, the three layers together from the centre outwards. For smaller quilts and wall hangings, a fabric adhesive may be used.

If you choose to thread baste, work on a 6" grid pattern, using a large running stitch from one side of the quilt to the other holding the three layers securely. You do not need to knot these at the ends, just leave an overhang of about 6" each side as this "temporary" stitching will be removed after quilting. Remove the pins and masking tape.

Quilting

By Hand

Quilting gives a third dimension to the quilt and can really enhance the design – or if you choose it can be functional, holding the layers of your quilt together and minimized so the design of the quilt is your focus. Choose pictures and shapes on the panel or block you wish to enhance. A hoop or frame is essential; this maintains consistent tension, enabling you to work more quickly and evenly.

Using a short needle and quilting thread, thread the needle with approx 18" of thread, and tie a knot in the end. Insert needle through the quilt top and wadding, with a quick pull, pop the knot under the quilt top and bury the knot in the batting, you are now ready to begin quilting. The hand stitch is a running stitch through the three layers; keep the stitches small, and even. 'Rock' the needle up and down taking three or four stitches at a time trying to keep the size of the stitches even on the quilt top and on the back. To complete a line of quilting, make a small knot near the last stitch, backstitch, and then run the thread through the wadding.

By Machine

Machine quilting is done with a walking foot for straight lines and a darning foot for curved lines. Use cotton thread, in a choice of colour that will blend into the quilt top, or will stand out from the quilt top – depending on your desired effect. It is sometimes appropriate to use invisible thread on some project. It is a good idea that your bobbin thread matches your backing fabric. Start and end quilting lines with 1/4" of very short stitches.

For beginners the recommended style is "stitch in the ditch", sew right in the seam lines on your quilt top, sewing through all layers. Stitch all around your quilt blocks, wherever you see a seam. Do a little or a lot - the more quilting you do, the more dimensional your project will have. If you are stitching in the ditch, you can start and end your quilting with three or four back stitches.

Binding

Before binding, remove the basting stitches; trim the batting to the size of the quilt top and the backing fabric so it is 1" larger around than the quilt top.

Hand sew binding onto the quilt top using a slip stitch, then machine quilt around binding with a $\frac{1}{4}$ seam allowance.

Using the Backing

Fold over 1/4" of the quilt backing in toward the quilt top and iron in place. Fold over and iron the remaining extra backing so that the quilt back and the quilt top overlap by 1/4".

Using a Binding Strip

Measure the perimeter of your quilt and cut 2" strips to cover the length required. Join them together where necessary, fold in half, and press well. Sew the open edges toward the outside of the quilt top and slip stitch the folded edges to the backing fabric.

Please contact us if you have any questions that were not answered above – we would also really like to hear any suggestions for things that you think should be added!