

General Quilting Instructions and Hints from Lake Beauty Ministries

The purpose of these instructions is to assist beginners and veteran quilters with general quilting information. Whether you need to learn the basics or just want a refresher, hopefully there is something for everyone.

Shopping for Fabric

Finding the right fabric store:

The bigger chain outlets

- may be a little more overwhelming
- have fewer employees per customer, so they aren't as available to guide you through fabric selection
- have a wide range in the quality of the fabrics (choose carefully)
- prices may be cheaper, coupon availability and larger selection



A smaller, independently-owned fabric store

- will increase your chances of finding employees who can answer questions, contribute opinions or explain techniques
- will also carry higher-quality fabric options in most cases and therefore have higher prices

How to choose the right fabric:

All fabric is not created equal. The thread count, the designer, the dyes that are used, the way the fabric is produced, all affect the quality of the finished product. Frankly, you get what you pay for, so consider how your project will be used, and how much time and effort you will be putting into it.

Favorite prints

- Find fabric that speaks to you. The shop employee will appreciate a place to start when helping you choose coordinating fabrics.

Color palette – Looking for a specific color theme

- Carefully evaluate all of the different colors featured within the individual print, and pay close attention to those.
- Use a color wheel. Locate your desired color on the wheel and discover what other colors are its neighbors and those complementary colors located across the way.

Scale

- If the pattern calls for small pieces, smaller printed fabrics work perfectly.
- Large scale fabrics and designs should be saved for those quilt patterns that have big pieces where they can be seen fully.

Designer Collections

- Pre-coordinated, high-quality fabric that is gathered for you. Will usually be in bolt next to one another or come as precut bundles.
- These are released only once, so if it's something you love, get it when you see it.



Precuts

- A coordinated collection of fabrics that have been previously cut by machine, stacked into piles or rolled up and tied together.
- Many, many patterns are available that specifically use precuts.

Fat quarters = 18" x 22" (do not confuse with a 1/4 yard cut = 9" x 44")

Fat eighths = 9" x 22"

Jelly rolls = 2.5" strips by the width of the fabric (WOF)

Charm packs = 5" squares

Honeybuns = 1.5" strips by WOF

Layer Cakes = 10" squares

Thread & Needles

Thread

Cotton thread can stand an incredible amount of heat from an iron, which is key when pressing fabrics. Polyesters can melt.



- For Piecing: The gold standard for piecing quilt tops is a 50-weight 100% cotton thread. Since there are many brands of various quality, one excellent choice for piecing is Aurifil 50-weight cotton. It is smooth and fine, taking up less space in your 1/4" seam. It is spun tightly to be strong and durable and produces less lint and buildup in your machine. It is more expensive, but goes a long way and is definitely worth the investment.
- For Binding by hand or machine: Use the same thread weight as you use for piecing. Also be sure to match closely the color of your binding thread to the binding fabric.
- For Machine Quilting: For most quilting on a home machine, a 40-weight thread is an excellent choice. Because the 40 weight cotton thread is heavier than the finer 50-weight cotton thread, quilting stitches will show up more easily on the quilt. While the 40-weight cotton thread is heavier than the thread you'll want to use for piecing, it is still thin enough to easily be used in home sewing machines. It is okay to use 50-weight thread when machine quilting, it just won't show up as well.
- For Hand Quilting: Use a heavy thread such as a 28-weight cotton thread. The thread used for hand quilting needs to be able to withstand the stress of pulling and stretching.
- For Applique: Lightweight (50-to 800-weight) cotton thread in a matching color is an excellent choice. Silk is another great choice since it's a strong natural fiber and comes in a variety of weights and colors. Silk thread practically "melts" into the fabrics, making them nearly invisible and the perfect choice for hand and machine applique. If you want really invisible stitches, opt for monofilament thread. Please note however monofilament thread is not recommended for baby quilt.

Needles

- Universal needle sizes for piecing: Batik 9 or 10 Cotton 10 or 12 Denim 14 or 16
- Microtex Sharp sewing machine needles: have a thin accurate point that is ideal for sewing batiks and are perfect for piecing. 8 size is for really fine fabrics, 10 size is for fine to medium fabrics and are also ideal for piecing, and 12 size is for medium fabrics and is ideal for piecing and general sewing.

- Machine Quilting: These needles are for decorative stitching, as seen on the tops of quilts - do not use for piecing. Quilting Needles have a slightly rounded point and are designed specifically for machine quilting. One of the most common sizes of machine needles is size 14. Its sturdy shaft holds up well when quilting through the layers. Universal needles (14) will also work for machine quilting. Size 16 can also be a good choice. Learn to trust your own eye; it's as good as anyone else. You will know when you like how the quilting looks.

Fabric Preparation

Pre-washing your fabric is up to the individual quilter. We recommend:

- Wash cheaper fabric cuts from bigger-chain stores, they are more likely to bleed and shrink
- It is not necessary to wash quilt shop quality fabrics
- Do NOT wash flannels or pre-cut fabrics (strips, fat quarters, etc)

Color Test dark colors (especially reds)

- Cut off a small piece
- Place in a cup of hot water
- If the color runs, wash the fabric
- Test again (If it runs more than once, the recommendation is to not use it)

Shout Color Catchers: Use for the first washing of every quilt, just to be safe.



Iron your Fabric:

- After washing (or before cutting) iron the wrinkles out of your fabric. Try not to push back and forth so as not to stretch the fabric.
- Consider a spray starch or Mary Ellen's Best Press. Best Press is excellent in that it doesn't leave a residue on your fabric or your iron. Prepping your fabric with one of these products keeps your fabric from stretching while cutting and piecing.
- NOTE: This is the last time you will IRON your fabric. Ironing involves sliding your iron back and forth across your fabric. Going forward you will PRESS the fabric.... More about that later.

A Few Key Terms Regarding Fabric:

- Selvage - tightly woven edge of fabric (designer info is often found here). Do not include in the pieces for the quilt.
- Straight grain or Lengthwise grain of fabric - threads run parallel to the salvages. (fabric holds its shape, taut when pulled)
- crosswise grain - threads run perpendicular to the salvages (also holds its shape, taut when pulled)
- bias - a diagonal line across the fabric (the bias is stretchy)

