

Color in Quilts... Some Suggestions

Now here's an intimidating subject! But it shouldn't be. Above all else, remember color is very personal. What colors do you like? I like green... bright green, moss green, acid green... Green! So a lot of my quilts have green. Some people like blue... or pink... Use your favorite color and you are sure to like your end result.

Now, that said... here are some tips for choosing a color scheme for your quilts.

A. **Look at other quilts and artwork.** If you see something with a color scheme you like... Remember it! Use those colors in your next quilt. You don't have to copy the whole work... that might even be a violation of copyright law... but you can use the colors.

B. **Look at your home.** The colors in your home are a good starting point for a quilt. It will coordinate and be useful as well!

C. **Find a fabric you love.** This is the easiest way to coordinate a quilt. Choose a print fabric with two or more colors. Then pick fabrics to coordinate. Again this is sure-fire success. You like this fabric and its colors and it was designed by a professional!

D. **Use a traditional color scheme.** Do you like blue and yellow? Red and white? Thirties fabrics? Amish? Red and Green? Americana? Take that theme and run with it!

E. **Use the color wheel.** This is the most challenging way to plan a quilt. Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple. That's the color wheel. In-between these colors are their combination colors... red-orange, orange-yellow, yellow green, etc. Analogous colors are next to each other on the color wheel. Complimentary colors are across from each other. Both of these combinations make pleasing schemes.

Have I lost you yet? Bottom line... Create something you love!

Thread

For Piecing

I like to use a good quality thread. 100% cotton or cotton wrapped poly. I like the Mettler machine embroidery thread for work that “doesn’t show.” It is a lightweight and doesn’t cause any bulk. I also like this for hand applique and for machine quilting.

Using this for machine quilting gives a light look, which is good for me because machine quilting is not my thing. When my skills improve (maybe never!) I would use a heavier, quilting thread.

For Applique

For Machine applique (work that “shows”) I use Sulky Rayon thread. This is for decorative stitching such as zigzag or satin stitch embroidery. The thread has a sheen that is quite lovely.

Note: Please stay away from 4 for a dollar (cheap!) thread. It is inexpensive for a reason. It has a high lint element, snags easy and is a pain in the neck... Not a bargain!

Thread Color

Grey is a good color to have on hand for piecing. It blends well with many colors (light and dark) and thus is good for multi-color quilts. For lighter quilts, you might try a natural color.

Bobbin Thread

I love Bottom Line thread from Superior. It is made especially for the bobbin and is lightweight and strong. Lots more of this thread fits on your bobbin than regular thread... so you don’t run out as often. Look for Bottom Line at Quilt Shops and Shows

Needles

Machine needles get bigger as their numbers increase... so a 70/10 is smaller than an 80/12. For piecing, an 80/12 is a nice thin yet strong needle. I usually use a Schmetz Meta-Fil or Metallica needle because they have a larger eye and are easier to thread!

Change your needle often! About every six to eight hours of machine time. If your machine is skipping stitches... first check that everything is threaded correctly... then change your needle! Just a little burr will cause your thread to catch and skip.

Fabric Anatomy 101

Fabric Anatomy

Selvedge

Fold

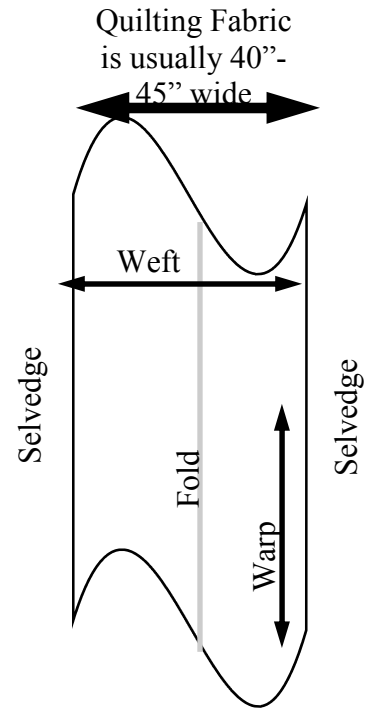
Width of Fabric

Warp

Weft

Bias

Bias goes diagonally
across fabric...
Has a lot of
Stretch!



Quilt Top Anatomy

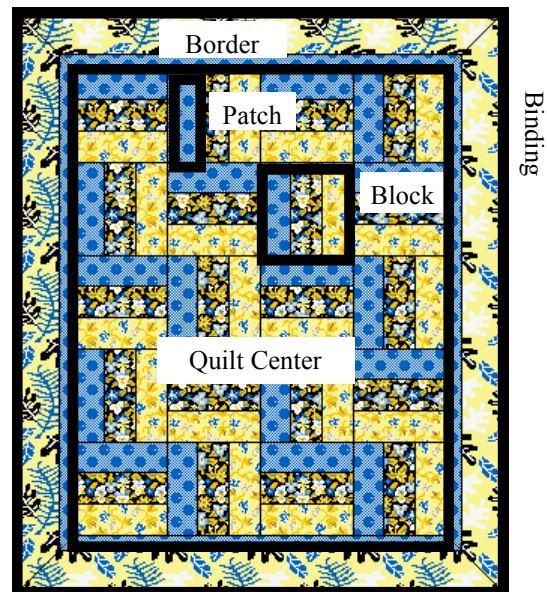
Patch

Block

Center

Borders

Binding

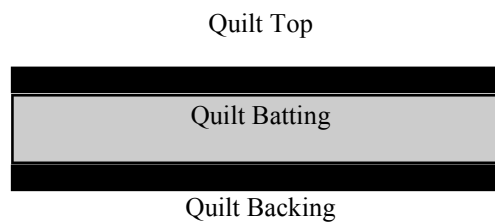


Quilt Sandwich Anatomy

Quilt Top

Batting

Backing



Rotary Cutting Tips

After being cut or torn at the store and then (washed and ironed (Optional)) at home, fabric is almost never straight and ready for rotary cutting. It is imperative that you start with a straight edge across the width of the fabric. Use the cutting mat lines as straight edges only... They are notoriously inaccurate!

Getting the Fabric Right is Most of the Battle!

Lay the fabric on the rotary mat with the right side down and one selvage away from you. Fold the fabric, wrong sides together, so the selvages meet. Keeping selvages even, scoot fabric along with your fingers until the *fold falls perfectly flat and straight*. The raw edges where fabric is cut or torn will probably not match up. Place the raw edges approximately in the middle of your cutting mat.

Get Selvages and Folds Parallel!

Fold the fabric in half again, lining up the fold with the selvage edges. Keeping the fold and the selvages **parallel** is the key! I usually worry only about the first 20'-30" of fabric at this point. I can adjust again later if I am cutting a lot of strips. Lightly hand-crease all of the folds.

Place Your Ruler...

Trim the raw edge of the fabric. To ensure straight cuts, align a line on the ruler with the fold of the fabric. Using your eyes and your ruler lines, check that your folds and your selvages are parallel.

Cut!

Leave a small amount of fabric along the ruler edge for trimming. Hold the ruler firmly in place. To keep the ruler from slipping, you may wish to put two fingers off the edge of the ruler (on the opposite side from where you are cutting!), while pressing down with the other three.

Careful!!

Hold the rotary cutter so the blade lays against the ruler. The cutter handle should be at a comfortable angle (30 or 45 or 60 degrees) to the table. Cut by pushing the rotary cutter away from you along the ruler's edge. Cut in a firm, smooth motion. *Do not see-saw!*

SAFETY FIRST!!

*For safety's sake always cut away from you and ALWAYS close the cutter after each cut.
ALWAYS!*

Now you have one straight cut edge.

Next Cut Your Strips...

Turn cutting board around so that newly straightened edge is facing left (right). To cut strips, find line on rule to match width of strip desired. Place this line exactly on cut edge of fabric and cut strip using the same procedure and the same safety precautions! Cut your strips, realigning the fabric as necessary.

You are now an experienced Rotary Cutter!

Quarter Inch Seams

Accuracy Is Important!

In quilt piecing, having a **consistent and accurate 1/4" seam allowance** is very important. It ensures your patches will go together and that your blocks will fit together as well. There is a technique to sew straight and true.

First of all, this is not a race. You'll enjoy quilting more if you take your time, **relax and sew slow**. In the long run, it will save time... Unsewing is frustrating and time-consuming!

Secondly, don't watch the fabric go under the needle, watch it as it goes under the presser foot. This gives you time to make adjustments.

Also, have your quarter inch guide (see below) "stretched along the **"runway"** leading to your needle

To get an accurate 1/4" on your machine, try these tricks...

Use a 1/4" presser foot if you have or can get one.

Use the 1/4" guide on your throat plate if you have one.

Make your own guide. Place your ruler under your presser foot with the needle directly over the 1/4" line. Be sure the ruler is parallel to the edge of the foot. Mark along the edge of the ruler with...

A permanent marker if you don't mind marking on your machine.

OR

A piece of masking tape along the edge of the ruler

OR

A piece of Moleskin (think Dr. Scholl's)

OR

A magnetic seam Guide (not for computerized machines!)

Seam Allowance Test

Cut two pieces of fabric that are 2" X 6". Stitch them together along the long edge. Open and press seam to one side. Your joined pieces should measure 3 1/2" across.

Work until you know just how to make this happen on your machine.

Now you can sew accurate 1/4" seams every time!

ABOUT PRESSING

In quilting, almost every seam needs to be pressed before the piece is sewn to another, so keep your iron and ironing board near your sewing area. It's important to remember to press with an up-and-down motion. Moving the iron around on the fabric can distort seams, especially those sewn on the bias. Project instructions in most books, patterns and magazines generally tell you in what direction to press each seam.

I usually "Finger Press" smaller seams using the fingernail of my index finger. This time saver is perfectly acceptable. For seams longer than 6" or 8", I try to press with an iron. Having the iron near makes it easy to use.

First, press your seams first as sewn, just to set the seam. This makes it much easier when you open your pieces to press the seam open.

Usually, you'll press both seam allowances toward the darker fabric. So lay your pieces on your ironing surface with the dark side up. Then when you open the pieces, the seams will be pressed to the dark side,

Joining Blocks

For flat corners when joining rows of blocks, alternate the direction the block seam allowances are pressed. My rule is I press the seams in even rows to the left and the block seams in the odd rows to the right.

Proper pressing is a prerequisite for accurate piecing. Press with a light touch, using iron tip and an "up and down" movement. Save continuous motion "ironing" for wrinkled fabric. Use either steam or dry heat, whichever works best, and assembly-type pressing to save time.

Choose a pressing plan before beginning a project and stay consistent, if possible. Seams are "set" by first being pressed flat and then pressed either to one side, usually toward the darker fabric, or open. Sometimes, both are used in the same project, depending on the design.

To prevent distortion, press long, sewn strips widthwise and avoid raw bias edges.

Other pressing hints:

Keep a spritzer bottle filled with water near your iron

Use distilled water

Avoid a too-hot iron which will cause fabric shininess

Pre-treat wrinkled or limp fabric with a liberal amount of spray fabric starch or sizing.

Press your block well when finished.

Press your quilt top well before layering with batting and backing.

I guarantee your work will improve greatly
when you take the time to press at every step.