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# Begin To Quilt With Us!

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## Welcome!

The world of fabric is bright, exciting and always changing! You'll find lots of choices and ways of doing things—thinking outside the box is pretty much the norm in the quilting world. There are certainly processes that help make pieces fit together well, but after that — you can take the “basics” and run.

Quilting and other fabric arts are creative hobbies that do double duty: they serve as stress reduction

therapy and produce results that can be worn or used or given as gifts. And, on top of everything else, it's *fun!*

We often hear people say, “I'm going to quilt when I retire...or the kids grow up... or ...” While everyone has limitations in their lives and responsibilities that come first, we encourage you to find time in your life *now* for some of the things you want to do. Even done a little at a time, quilting and other fabric arts can

help you to relax, to find patience and to make you happy—which in turn can improve the way you meet the rest of life's obligations. As one of our customers noted, “My husband says I'm a nicer person when I get in my quilting time.”

Quilting is a journey that can be enjoyed throughout your life. We'd love to share it with you!

## Getting Off To A Great Start

The very best way to get started is to take a class! We offer a **three session beginning piecing class** throughout the year which is limited to 6 students, so you get lots of

individual attention. If this doesn't work with your schedule, you can take set up individual classes, one-on-one with an instructor. Either way, you'll learn to ro-

tary cut, machine piece, press and assemble a quilt top. From that point, you can move on to quilting.

Ask us for more information on classes!

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### Quilt—Speak

**Fat Quarter:** A quarter yard of fabric that measures 18” x 21”.

**Piecing:** The process of making a quilt top by hand or machine.

**Quilting:** The process, by hand or machine, of stitching together a quilt top, batting in the middle and a backing fabric.

**Batik:** The technique of hand-dyeing fabric by using wax as a dye repellent to cover parts of a design, dyeing the uncovered fabric with a color or colors and then dissolving the wax in boiling water. The resulting fabrics are called batiks.

**UFO:** Unfinished Objects are the guilt trip of all quilters!

## The World Of Applique

Applique is the process of stitching one piece of fabric, usually cut in a specific shape—like a flower or leaf or animal shape—onto a base or background fabric. Historically, applique was done by wealthy women who had time for beautiful handwork. Applique quilts, like the Baltimore Applique Quilts, were not meant for everyday use.

Today you will find both hand and machine applique throughout the quilting world. Intricate hand applique is still very popular and much revered, but machine applique is fun and makes durable quilts for greater use. Fusible applique refers to using a double-sided sheet of glue that is pressed on to fabric that is then cut into shapes and then pressed a second

time on to a background. Stitching around the edges secures the appliques before quilting.

There are several applique methods and many products that are helpful with each method. We'd be happy to recommend books and/or help you get started with class time.

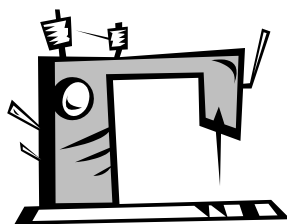


## Machine Quilting Glossary

As you get into quilting, you'll hear terms associated with machine quilting that may be new to you.

When you look at a sewing machine, you see an open area of approximately 9" in length and 7" in depth between the top (think "arm") which comes down to hold the needle of the machine and the bottom or "bed" where the bobbin is located and where you run your fabric through the machine.

On a **Long Arm Quilting Machine** the "arm" that extends out from the machine may be as long as 30", giving a quilting space of 24". The machine sets on a rolling mechanism on a **large frame**, often approximately 14' wide. The quilt top, batting and backing are



rolled individually onto long poles and brought together to form the quilt sandwich.

The machine is moved from left to right and back again across the quilt in quilting patterns by the quilter. The **long arm** of the machine allows the quilter to cover larger areas of the quilt at a time. The backing is held taut by the frame, avoiding bunching or ripples. No basting is needed!

Since the quilt is on the frame, the edges are secure, eliminating the problem of "wavy" borders that can come from pulling and pushing quilts through the narrow arm of a regular home sewing machine.

**Mid-Arm machines** are now also available, offering a somewhat

more compact size and lower cost with many of the same benefits of the long arm.

A **machine quilting frame** can be used with many different types of machines. For anyone who makes a lot of large quilts, such a frame can be a wise investment. The quality of one's quilting is improved, strain on the back and shoulders is greatly reduced and, with practice, the quilter can achieve more complex stencil and free motion designs and patterns.

**Learning to machine quilt** on your home sewing machine requires some instruction and then **lots of practice**—there is nothing we can sell you to replace it! A good reference book is Maurine Noble's *Machine Quilting Made Easy* from Martingale.

## Q & A

### ***What type of sewing machine do I need?***

You do not need a special, complex or expensive sewing machine for machine piecing or quilting. You DO need a machine that is in good working order. In order to machine quilt, you need a *walking foot* for straight line quilting\* and a *darning* or *open toe foot* for free motion quilting. (\*If you have a machine with built-in even feed, then you do not need an external walking foot.) There are certain “extra features” that may make your work easier, such as a 1/4” foot, needle-down capability and multiple speeds, but these are not necessary for good piecing or quilting. A lot of excellent piecing is done on very old sewing machines!

### ***I have fabrics and thread that were given to me. Can I use them?***

You want to piece with good quality 100% cotton fabric and thread that are worthy of your time and effort. You’ll want to be sure that fabrics and thread given to you meet that criteria. Thread ages and loses strength. If you have thread on wooden spools, it is too old to use now—throw it away and save the spools as antiques!

Sometimes customers bring in old

quilt blocks that have been given to them, or that they bought at an estate sale. If they are in good condition, the blocks can be made into quilts or wall hangings.

### ***I’m worried about choosing fabrics for my project! How do I do that?***

You will become more comfortable with choosing fabrics as you progress in your quilting. At the beginning, you can certainly ask for help, or you can choose to begin with a kit of a model so you know what it will look like when you are done. Many fabrics come in coordinated “lines” that make it easier to put a group of fabrics together for a project.

It is true that choosing a group of fabrics for a quilt is different from assembling a clothing wardrobe.

You will grow to be more open to mixing patterns and colors. Don’t worry about this at the beginning—it will make more sense as you move ahead.

### ***There are so many fabrics! Just what am I looking at in a quilt shop?***

Independent quilt shops like ours stock top quality, 100% cotton quilting fabrics. You will not find these fabrics in chain or discount stores. On occasion, you may see the same manufacturer names on

bolts at those stores, but the product is not the same quality.

Fabrics are manufactured and marketed by a variety of companies. Many of those companies have “name” designer lines, such as Thimbleberries by RJR Fabrics, or Art To Heart by Benartex. A fabric line is usually kept together in a shop so you’ll see it in its entirety. Other fabrics are grouped by type, such as batiks or neutrals or categories, such as baby prints or reproductions. The remainder are usually grouped by color and often include “basics” that also called “blenders” and “backgrounds.” A few “basics” lines are reordered but most fabric lines are available for a limited time.

### ***What’s a good project for a beginning quilter?***

We suggest starting with a smaller project that you can complete, thus tackling each part of the process: piecing, quilting and binding.

Many first-time quilters begin with a table runner, topper, small wall hanging or baby quilt. Don’t confuse “smaller” with a “miniature” project that has tiny pieces—those require a greater skill and experience level. Begin with squares and rectangles and then add triangles to the mix. Once you have the basics, you can go where you like.

## Tool Time

There are *necessary tools* and there are *gadgets*. Here's a list of items you will need to do good work:

- **Rotary Cutter:** The 45 mm is your best choice. There are various styles.
- **Rotary Blades:** You need to change your blade regularly. Always have a spare on hand.
- **Straight Pins:** Don't scrimp and go cheap— you will hate them! Buy pins with a head you can see. Don't purchase the long "quilting" pins.
- **6 x24 (or 6 1/2" x 24") Ruler:** We sell and recommend the Creative Grids rulers. They have built-in grids for holding your ruler in place and are easy to read. They also have a "turn around feature" with an extra 1/2" on one side of the ruler. As us to show you.
- **6" or 6 1/2" square:** You will eventually want squares of various sizes, but this is the essential one.
- **Self-Healing Rotary Mat:** You can only use your rotary cutter with a mat. Sizes vary.
- **Sewing Machine:** see page 2.

## Book And Pattern Ideas

- Looking for a good beginning quilting book? We recommend **Start Quilting With Alex Anderson.**
- Keep a list of your quilting books handy. It helps eliminate duplicate purchases.
- You'll get great patterns from some books; others have wonderful ideas for decorating and using quilts in your home. All quilting books offer inspiration and ideas that keep your work flowing!
- If you are particularly interested in baby quilts or table runners, look for books focusing on that area. Some books focus on using a particular cut of fabric, such as fat quarters, or on a particular method. You'll find books that gather "the best" of a particular designer or publisher, too.
- Look for individual patterns for purses and bags, runners and specialty projects.

## How Our Attic Can Work For You

Every shop has a section with fabrics that have been marked down in price. Ours is called the Attic and it's right inside our back door.

All of the fabrics in our Attic are first quality cottons from



our sales floor. Because we purchase "lines" of fabrics and make a lot of models, there are often pieces in the lines that aren't used as much as others. Fabrics like these tend to be "orphaned" but they

make wonderful quilt backings and pillowcases, just to name a few uses. Never underestimate the potential in our Attic!

Use Attic fabrics to test new blocks or, as a beginner, to practice your cutting and piecing. Let the Attic be a great resource!

## Batting Choices Make A Difference

After you've made your quilt, wall hanging or runner top, you're going to "sandwich" it with batting and backing fabric. Your choice of batting is important, and you need to think about it *before* you make your top.

Ask yourself these questions before you do anything to your fabric:

- How will this item be used?
- Will it be washed?
- How will it be quilted?
- How will I mark quilting lines, if needed?

Based on the answers to these questions, you can decide if you

need to pre-wash your fabric (in case you weren't going to do so). Then you can think about your batting. If you are going to **machine quilt**, you can use cotton batting with or without scrim, cotton blend or polyester battings. **Scrim** is a binder of natural fibers you can't see that holds the cotton fibers together more densely. It makes the batting easier to handle.

If you are going to **hand quilt**, you want to use cotton batting **without** scrim, or polyester or cotton blend battings. In both hand and machine quilting, cotton batting needs to be quilted more closely than does polyester.



There are also **washable wool**

and **silk** battings available for quilts. We recommend **Thermore batting**, a very thin polyester batt, for use in table runners, placemats, many apparel items and wall hangings.

Remember that your batting and backing need to be cut larger than your quilt top! In most cases, you'll want to allow approximately 3-4" extra on each side. If you are sending your piece out to be quilted, ask your quilter for his or her preference/requirements.

## There's More To Quilting Than....Quilts!

You will find tremendous diversity in the quilt shop these days—quilts are just part of the fun! You'll want to watch for:

**-Embellished & Quilted Clothing:** You'll find jackets and vests using sweatshirts, needle felting used as embellishment, pieced and quilted jackets and much more.

**-Bags, Purses & Totes:** Cut down on plastic and let your creativity roll at the same time! From grocery totes to evening bags, you can

make a bag that fits every occasion.

**-Nursery Accessories:**

You can outfit a crib, make flannel receiving blankets and terry cover-ups. Bibs are always popular!

**-Needle Felting, Punch Needle, Wool Felt & Embroidery:** Enjoy hand and machine needle art in



whatever form you choose! Work pieces into quilts, wall hangings, clothing and bags. The options are endless!

**-Home Decorating Accessories:** You'll find lots of options for everything from pillowcases and dust ruffles to tea cozies, placemats and table runners. Personalize your gift giving! Stitch fabric borders on to tea towels; make beautiful pillow covers; brighten your kitchen or sunroom!

Needles & Pins  
Everedy Square/Shab Row  
310 E Church Street  
Frederick MD 21701  
301-695-7199  
1-877-695-7199

cindy@scottpowell.com

www.needles-n-pins.com

Online store:

ebay.com/needles-n-pins-Frederick

Hours:

M,T,W,TH: 10-5

F,S: 10-6

Sun: 12-5

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**<http://cindy-needlesandpins.blogspot.com>**

**Please Do Not Make Or Receive Cell Phone  
Calls In Our Shop**

## Tidbits & Notes

- When determining yardage, calculate using 40" as the width of your fabric. This allows for variances from one manufacturer to another. (Ex: you will get 6, 6" squares out of a 6" wide strip.)
- Always have extra rotary cutter blades and sewing machine needles on hand. These need to be replaced on a regular basis.
- You'll hear and read a lot about using your scraps when you start to quilt. If you like the "scrappy" look, you'll find lots of ways to use your leftovers, so figure out a storage system that works for you.
- Keep in mind that the best assortment of holiday fabrics are in quilt shops in the summer. Shop early for the best selection and get an early start on gifts!

## 6 Important Lessons For New Quilters

New quilters often worry that they'll never be able to master their chosen craft. "There's so much to learn!" they wail. "I'll never get it right!" Teachers and experienced colleagues know better – it's really relentless dedication to several simple lessons:

**Lesson #1: It takes time.** No matter how "fat quarter friendly" a pattern is or if it uses "quick strip piecing," the fact remains that the process takes time. You cannot rush your work and have a good product.

**Lesson # 2: Nothing makes up for accuracy in cutting and stitching.** Remember George Peppard's famous quote: "I love it when a plan comes together." Quilt blocks that sew together perfectly give us a wonderful sense of achievement. It all starts with cut-

ting and requires a consistent ¼" seam in the piecing. Practice makes perfect!

**Lesson # 3: Stop ironing and start pressing!** Quilt strips, pieces and blocks are not shirts. Ironing creates distortion, so you want to be very careful in your pressing, lifting your iron and not pushing it. **Part 2: An iron IS an integral quilting tool.** We're often amazed to find that younger new quilters don't own an iron! Pressing-as-you-go is an important part of your piecing.

**Lesson # 4: Measure Twice, Cut Once.** We're taking a page from the woodworkers on this one. In fact, we'll add a corollary: **Read your pattern and understand it before starting.** These two lessons will help you make the most of your fabric and avoid many cut-

ting errors. Be clear on "initial cuts" and "sub-cuts" or you'll find yourself running out of fabric!

**Lesson # 5: Know your sewing machine.** One of the greatest headaches faced by teachers is the student who comes to a quilting class and doesn't know how to operate her sewing machine, wasting valuable time. Take time to learn how to use your machine properly.

**Lesson # 6: Invest in quality materials for a lasting product.** You will invest many hours in the entire production of your quilt, wall hanging or other project, so honor that investment with materials that create value in the finished work. High quality fabrics, thread and batting are your tools for creating a product that will make you happy and proud.