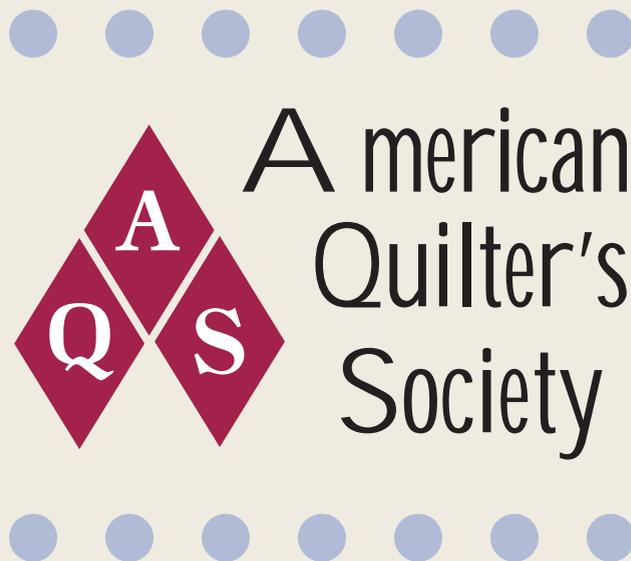




This booklet provides general quilting instructions and details about *American Quilter* patterns. Both new quilters and those wanting a quick refresher course will find it a handy reference.



Quilting Essentials & Tested Tips

by Sherri Bain Driver

presented by



*The Undisputed Leader
in Home Machine Quilting Systems*

Suggested Quilt Dimensions				
	Bed Size	Comforter	Coverlet	Bedsread
Crib	27" x 52"	37" x 62"	37" x 62"	n/a
Youth	33" x 66"	57" x 78"	65" x 92"	74" x 94"
Twin	39" x 75"	63" x 87"	71" x 101"	79" x 105"
Double	54" x 75"	78" x 87"	86" x 101"	94" x 105"
Queen	60" x 80"	84" x 92"	92" x 106"	101" x 110"
King	76" x 80"	100" x 92"	108" x 106"	116" x 110"
California King	72" x 84"	96" x 96"	104" x 110"	113" x 115"

American Quilter magazine recommends that you cut and sew a test block before cutting all the patches for your quilt.

Supplies & Equipment

Sewing machine: For many basic quilting techniques, only a straight stitch is required. A 1/4" patchwork foot is handy for sewing accurate seams. A walking foot or even-feed foot is helpful for quilting straight or very gently curved lines. Free-motion quilting requires a darning foot or free-motion foot.

Tip: Sewing with cotton thread and fabric leaves lots of lint in the bobbin area, so clean and lubricate your machine often.

Rotary cutter, ruler, and mat: Purchase equipment made especially for rotary cutting fabric. A 6" x 24" ruler is a good basic size. You may also want a large square ruler for trimming blocks and squaring quilt edges.

Scissors: You'll need one pair for cutting fabric and another for cutting paper and template plastic.

Ironing board and iron: Choose an iron with both steam and dry settings.

Basic sewing supplies: These include needles for hand and machine sewing, pins, and a sharp seam ripper.

Thread: For piecing, use 50-wt. cotton or polyester-wrapped cotton in a neutral color, such as tan or gray, to blend with many fabric colors. For appliqué, use threads that match the appliqué patches. Choose appropriate quilting thread for hand or machine quilting, as explained in the section on quilting.

Fabric

To assure that you have enough fabric for AQ patterns and projects, we calculate yardages based on 42"-wide fabric that has

been preshrunk, yielding 40" of useable fabric between the selvages (the tightly woven sides). Unless stated otherwise, we recommend 100% cotton quilting-weight fabrics. If you decide to wash your fabric before starting a quilt, use lukewarm water and a mild detergent. Rinse until the water runs clear.

Tip: Quilting involves a significant investment of sewing time, so always buy the best quality fabric you can afford.

Rotary Cutting

We give dimensions for rotary cutting of patches whenever possible and practical. These dimensions include seam allowances.

Begin by holding your fabric in front of you with the selvages together. Keeping the selvages parallel, slowly slide one selvage until the fabric hangs straight and any wrinkles or folds disappear. Place the folded fabric on your cutting board and smooth so it lies flat. Using a ruler and rolling the rotary cutter blade away from your body, trim the uneven edges of the fabric to make a straight edge that is perpendicular to the fold (fig. 1).

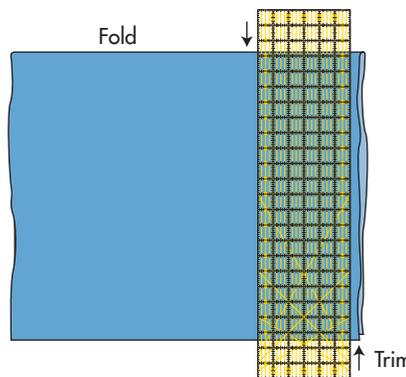


Fig. 1

If you are right handed, place this freshly trimmed edge to the left and cut

the strips needed. For smaller patches, cut a strip the width of one of the patch dimensions (usually the smaller dimension), turn the fabric strip 90°, trim off any selvages, and then cut to the required patch size (fig. 2).

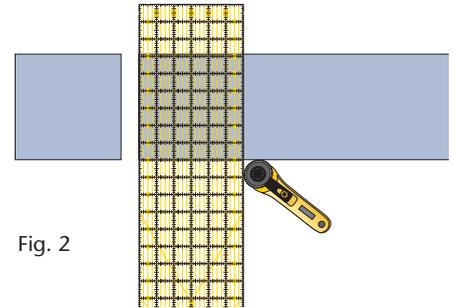


Fig. 2

To use fabric efficiently, first cut border strips and then any other strips. Finally, cut patches, cutting the largest patches first.

A guide is provided for trimming rotary-cut patches that have 45° angles (fig. 3), like many of the triangles commonly used in making quilts.

Trimmed triangles are easy to align with their corresponding patches. Trace the trimming guide onto

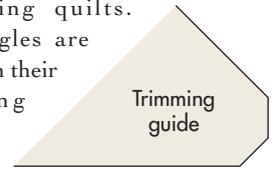


Fig. 3

template plastic and cut it out. Align the long straight edges of the guide with the rotary-cut fabric patch and trim the point (fig. 4). Usually only one trimmed angle will match the corresponding patch.

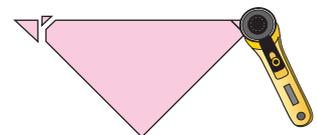


Fig. 4

Borders longer than 40" are usually cut along the lengthwise grain of the fabric (parallel to the selvages). Narrow borders that finish 1 1/2" or less may be cut from selvage to selvage and then pieced to the required lengths. Read the directions for each pattern for specifics. AQ patterns are calculated with enough fabric to join narrow strips with diagonal seams to camouflage the seams and reduce bulk. Place ends of two strips right sides together and at right angles. Sew diagonally (fig. 5). Trim the seam allowances to 1/4" and press them open.

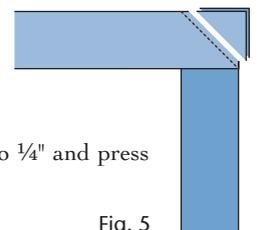


Fig. 5

Making Templates

Templates are given for patches that cannot be cut accurately or easily with rotary cutting tools. Piecing patterns indicate both the solid cutting line and the dashed sewing line. To make templates, carefully trace the pattern shape onto transparent template plastic and transfer any markings. The arrow indicates the straight of the grain, and should be aligned with either the lengthwise (parallel to the selvages) or crosswise (perpendicular to the selvages) grain of the fabric. The straight of the grain is relatively stable, so use it for the outside edges of blocks to prevent distortion.

Tip: After cutting out the traced templates, place them over the patterns printed in the magazine to check for accuracy.

To cut patches with a template, place the template right side down on the wrong side of the fabric and trace around it with a sharp pencil. Cut just inside the drawn line. A small letter "r" indicates a reverse patch, which should be traced face up on the wrong side of the fabric.

Bias Strips

Bias strips are cut at a 45° angle to the selvages. To cut bias strips, align the 45° line on your ruler with one of the selvages and make a first cut. From this freshly trimmed edge, cut strips the required width (fig. 6).

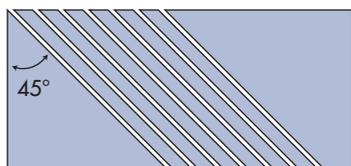


Fig. 6

Tip: Bias strips curve beautifully and are ideal for appliquéd stems or for binding a quilt with rounded or scalloped edges.

Machine Piecing

When making quilts, sew with a scant 1/4" seam allowance. If the edge of your presser foot is 1/4" from the needle, use it as a seam allowance guide. If not, place a piece of tape on the bed of your sewing machine 1/4" to the right of the needle to use as a guide.

Tip: Check with your sewing machine manufacturer to see if a 1/4" patchwork foot is available for your model.

Place patches right sides together with raw edges aligned. For most seams, sew from raw edge to raw edge with a stitch length of about 12 stitches per inch (2.0mm).

For an efficient and timesaving way to sew, try chain piecing. When you reach the end of the seam, stop sewing but don't take the patches out of the machine and don't cut the thread. Instead, align the next patches and feed them under the presser foot (fig. 7). Continue in this way without cutting the thread. When all the patches have been sewn, remove the "chain" from the sewing machine and clip the thread between pairs of patches.

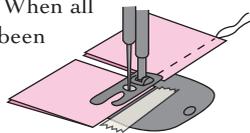


Fig. 7

Use this trick to ease in slight variations when pieces are supposed to be the same size but are just a bit off. Pin intersections where the pieces should match. Pin the center of the larger piece, distributing its extra fullness on both sides of the pin. Sew with the larger piece on the bottom against the sewing machine's feed dogs, which will help ease in the larger piece (fig. 8).

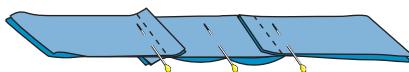


Fig. 8

Setting in Seams

Some patterns require set-in seams, sewing a patch into an angle formed by two other patches. To do this, you'll sew only on the sewing lines and not into seam allowances. Mark the patches with dots to indicate the beginning and end of each set-in seam. Place two patches right sides together and sew from dot to dot, backstitching at the beginning and end, and taking care not to stitch into the seam allowance (fig. 9). Add the next patch, sewing one seam from dot to dot and backstitching at each end (fig. 10). Pivot the patch, aligning the remaining edges, and sew the final seam in the same manner (fig. 11).

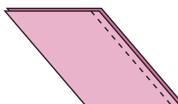


Fig. 9

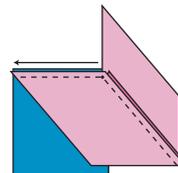


Fig. 10

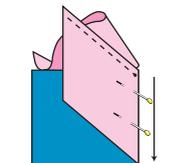


Fig. 11

Hand Piecing

To make templates for hand piecing, trace the dashed sewing line and cut out plastic templates without adding seam allowances. Place templates right side down on the wrong side of the fabric, leaving a

least 1/2" between patches. Mark around the templates and cut them out, adding 1/4" seam allowances by eye. Place patches right sides together, aligning corresponding seam lines. With a single strand of thread and a running stitch, sew through the marked seam lines on both patches, leaving the seam allowances free (fig. 12). Begin and end each seam with a few backstitches.

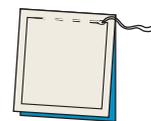


Fig. 12

Pressing

To keep your work neat and flat, press after you sew each seam. Press lightly with an up and down motion to avoid distorting pieces. AQ patterns often include illustrations with arrows that indicate which direction to press seam allowances.

Tip: In general, press seam allowances to one side, usually toward the darker fabric. Whenever possible, press opposing seams in opposite directions.

Foundation Piecing

Foundation piecing is a very accurate piecing method that's ideal for making blocks and units with tiny pieces or odd angles. You'll sew on the lines of a foundation (paper or stabilizer), with the fabric pieces underneath. At first you may feel like you're sewing upside down and backwards, but with practice, this technique will become clear.

The foundation pattern is a mirror (reverse) image of the finished block or unit. This is important to remember when working with an asymmetrical design, especially when adding numerical labels to traced foundation copies.

Make a foundation that includes seam allowances on the outer edge for each block or unit in your project. Numerous paper products on the market are made especially for this technique. Trace or print onto see-through paper or typing paper, or make copies on an accurate photocopy machine. Be sure to add all the identifying numbers and labels to each traced copy. Some quilters use a lightweight fabric stabilizer as a non-removable foundation.

Tip: A quick way to make multiple copies is to place a traced copy on a stack of 8 to 12 blank sheets of paper and needle punch all the lines, using an unthreaded sewing machine.

To foundation piece, begin by placing the fabric for patch #1 with the wrong side of the fabric against the unprinted side of

the foundation. The patch needs to cover the #1 area, plus at least 1/4" all around for seam allowances. Pin the patch in place from the paper side (fig. 13).

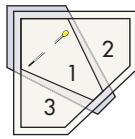


Fig. 13

Place the fabric for area #2 on the #1 patch, right sides together, with at least a 1/4" seam allowance extending into the #2 area. Patch #2 needs to be large enough to cover the #2 area, plus seam allowances all around (fig. 14).

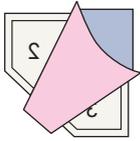


Fig. 14

Tip: Check before you sew by pinning through the paper and fabric along the seam line and opening the patch to see if it is large enough. Use over-sized strips or chunks of fabric to make it easy to align pieces.

From the paper side, secure the #2 patch with pins (fig. 15) and sew along the line between #1 and #2, sewing 1/4" beyond both ends of the printed line. To help perforate foundation paper for easy removal, sew with a small stitch length (1.5mm or 18–20 stitches per inch).

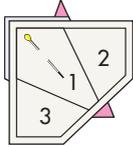


Fig. 15

Turn the foundation fabric-side up and trim the seam allowances of the just-sewn seam to 1/4". Open the newly added patch, and press with a dry iron (fig. 16). Repeat to add the remaining patches, following numerical order. When the block or unit is complete, press well and trim all around the outside line. After the quilt top is assembled, carefully remove any foundation paper.

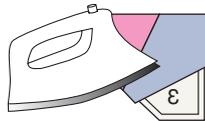


Fig. 16

Appliqué

For appliqué projects that require exact placement of patches or identically repeated blocks or units, begin by making a placement guide. Place tracing paper over the design and trace the pieces and any guidelines. With a light source underneath, center the background fabric right side up on top of the guide and lightly trace the design.

Make pattern templates without any turn-under allowance. Place templates face up on the right side of the fabric and trace with a sharp pencil.

Tip: Bias edges turn under more smoothly than straight-grain edges, so position templates on the fabric with as many bias edges as possible.

Cut out the patches, adding about 3/16" all around (fig. 17). Along any inside curves, clip the turn-under allowance up to the marked line.

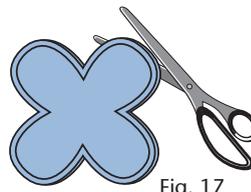


Fig. 17

There are many ways for preparing patches for traditional turned-edge appliqué. A simple method is to fold the turn-under allowance along the marked line and baste, or you can use the point of your needle to turn allowances under as you appliqué. For either of these methods, turn the patch edges under far enough to hide any marked lines.

Pin or baste appliqué patches on the background. For layered designs, add patches in the alphabetical or numerical order given in the pattern. For hand appliqué, blindstitch (fig. 18) using thread to match the appliqué patches, not the background.

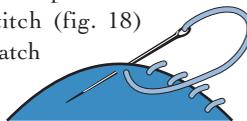


Fig. 18

To appliqué by machine, use monofilament (invisible) thread or thread that matches or blends with the patches. Use a narrow blind hem stitch or zigzag (fig. 19).



Fig. 19

Because the appliqué process may cause the background fabric to pull up or shrink, AQ patterns often call for cutting oversized backgrounds and trimming to size after the appliqué is finished.

Fusible Appliqué

Patches for fusible appliqué are traced on the paper side of the web material and then flipped over when applied to the background. Therefore, the finished image will be the reverse of the traced pattern. Check the specifics of pattern directions to see if appliqué patterns have already been reversed.

Trace appliqué patches onto the paper side of the fusible web product. Roughly cut out the shape, with about 1/4" extra all around. Following the manufacturer's instructions, fuse the shapes to the wrong sides of your chosen fabrics. Cut out the patches on the drawn lines. Peel away the paper lining and position patches on the background, following alphabetical or numerical order for layered designs. Fuse patches in place according to the

manufacturer's directions. Finish raw edges with satin stitch, blanket stitch, zigzag, or blind hem stitch.

Adding Borders

Whether you're making squared (butted) borders or mitered borders, assure proper fit by measuring your finished quilt top and customizing border lengths accordingly. To help quilts retain their shape, we recommend cutting outer borders from the lengthwise grain of fabric. This is especially important for wall quilts, to prevent sagging from the stress caused by hanging.

To conserve fabric, we often give instructions for piecing narrow inner borders. Border dimensions given in the cutting charts include seam allowances. Wherever possible, a little extra length, usually 2", has been added to border lengths to allow for slight differences in cutting and sewing. You'll need to measure your quilt top and custom cut borders for exact fit. First press your quilt top well.

Squared Borders

For squared borders (fig. 20), sometimes called butted borders, the side borders are usually added first.

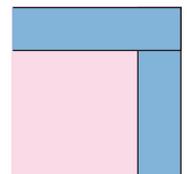


Fig. 20

Measure the length of the quilt top through the vertical center, from raw edge to raw edge. Cut the side border strips this measurement. Fold the border strips in half and mark the centers with pins. Mark the center of each side of the quilt top with pins. With right sides together, pin the side border strips to the sides of the quilt top, matching the center pins and the ends. Use more pins as needed and sew the border strips to the quilt, easing to fit if necessary. Press the seam allowances, usually away from the quilt center.

Now measure the width of the quilt through the horizontal center, from raw edge to raw edge, including the side borders you just added. Cut the top and bottom border strips this length. Fold the border strips and quilt top as you did before, and mark their centers with pins. Matching centers and ends, sew the top and bottom border strips to the quilt.

Mitered Borders

To make mitered borders (fig. 21), you'll sew the borders to all four sides of the quilt top, allowing additional fabric at the ends to sew the miters.

Mark the center of each border strip with a pin. On the quilt top, mark the center of each edge with a pin. Measure the length and width of the quilt top

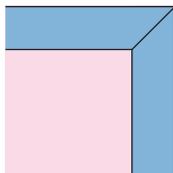


Fig. 21

through the centers, from raw edge to raw edge. Using pins, mark these measurements on the corresponding border strips. Pin the border strips to the quilt top, matching center pins and aligning the pins at the ends of the border strips with the quilt edges. Add additional pins as necessary. Sew the border strips to the quilt, beginning and ending each seam $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the corner of the quilt top and backstitching. Press the seam allowances away from the quilt center.

At one corner, fold the quilt top in half, right sides together and at a 45° angle. Align any corresponding border seams and secure them with pins. Align a ruler with the fold, extending it across the border (fig. 22). Using the ruler as a guide, draw a sewing line on the border strip from the final stitch in the border to the raw edge (fig. 23). Sew along the line, backstitching at each end. Press the seam allowances open and check the accuracy of the miter. Then trim the seam allowances to $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Repeat to miter all four corners.

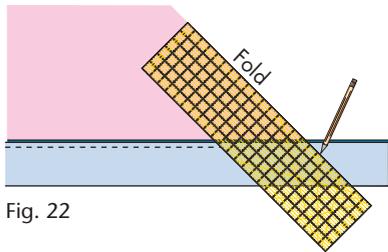


Fig. 22



Fig. 23

Making a Backing

The quilt backing needs to be larger than the quilt top, so more than one length of fabric may be required. For quilts up to 40", we suggest making a backing 4" wider and longer than the finished quilt top. For larger quilts, add an extra 8" to both dimensions. Use a good quality fabric and always remove the selvages.

Tip: If you are having your project professionally quilted on a longarm machine, consult the quilter about backing size.

The grain of the backing fabric can affect the look of a finished piece. For wall quilts we recommend using lengthwise grain for the vertical dimension to help

quilts retain their shape when hanging. For bed quilts, we calculate the least amount of fabric needed, which means the backing seams may be horizontal or vertical. Press any seam allowances open.

Layering & Basting

To layer your quilt, slightly stretch the backing and pin or tape it to a flat surface, wrong side up. Center the batting and then the quilt top over the backing, smoothing all the layers. For machine quilting, secure the layers with rustproof safety pins about 4" apart. For hand quilting, thread-baste the layers in a 4" grid pattern.

Tip: To keep the batting edges from snagging as you quilt, roll the edges of the backing to the front and secure with basting.

Home Machine Quilting

For machine quilting, use a walking foot for straight lines or very gentle curves, and a darning foot or free-motion foot for tighter curves. For free-motion quilting, lower or cover the machine's feed dogs and attach a darning or free-motion foot. The needle will go up and down, but you will move the quilt with your hands. The size and direction of the stitches are determined by the speed of the machine and the movement of your hands.

Tip: Free-motion quilting allows you to quilt in any direction—curlicues, loop-de-loops, or feathers. You can even write your name!

To make smaller stitches, speed up the machine or slow your hands. Conversely, to make larger stitches, slow the machine or speed up your hand movements. With practice, you'll become comfortable with this technique.

Use high quality thread in colors that blend with or complement your quilt top, or use monofilament thread for an invisible look. To begin a line of stitching, take one stitch and gently tug on the top thread to pull the bobbin thread to the surface. Hold the thread tails away from the stitching path. Quilt about $\frac{1}{4}$ ", using very short stitches. Then increase your stitch length to the size you prefer. To end a line of quilting, sew about $\frac{1}{4}$ " of very short stitches. Clip thread tails close to the surface of the quilt, or thread them into a large-eyed needle and bury them in the quilt's batting layer.

Hand Quilting

Thread a short quilting or "between" needle with a single 18" strand of hand

quilting thread. Make a small knot at the end. About 1" away from the place where you'll begin quilting, insert the needle through the top and batting layers only and bring it out where you want the quilting to start. Gently tug the thread to "pop" the knot through the fabric and into the batting layer. Position your other hand underneath the quilt to guide the stitching (fig. 24). With a rocking motion, make short, even running stitches that penetrate all three layers.



Fig. 24

Tip: Many hand quilters wear a thimble on the middle finger of their sewing hand.

To end a line of quilting, knot the thread close to the surface of the quilt. Insert the needle through just the top and batting and bring it up about 2" away. Gently tug the thread to pop the knot into the batting layer. Clip the thread close to the surface.

Finishing & Binding

Baste all around the quilt $\frac{1}{8}$ " from the edges. Trim the backing and batting $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the outer edge of the quilt top, squaring the corners.

AQ patterns usually call for $2\frac{1}{4}$ " binding strips to make straight grain, double-fold binding. Join all the binding strips with diagonal seams, as described earlier and shown in Figure 5. Cut one end at a 45° angle. Fold the strip in half lengthwise, wrong sides together, and press. Starting with the angled end, place the binding on the right side of the quilt, aligning the binding's raw edges with the edge of the quilt top. Beginning in the middle of a side and leaving about a 6" binding tail loose, sew the binding to the quilt using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance (fig. 25). Stop $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the corner and backstitch. Clip the threads. Turn the quilt a quarter turn. Fold the binding up, making a 45° angle (fig. 26). Then fold the binding down along the next edge, making a fold that aligns with the edge of the quilt top. Beginning $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the fold, backstitch and then sew the next side (fig. 27). Sew the binding all around the quilt, turning each corner in the same way.

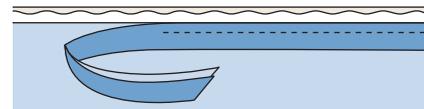


Fig. 25

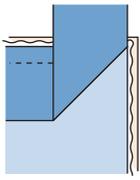


Fig. 26

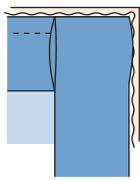


Fig. 27

When you get back to the side where you started, leave at least 12" of the quilt unbound. Clip the threads and remove the quilt from the machine. Open the ending tail of the binding, align its raw edge with the quilt edge, and pin in place. Open the beginning binding tail and smooth it over the ending tail, aligning raw edges. With a pencil or other marking tool, draw a line on the ending tail, using the beginning tail as a guide (fig. 28). Check that this line is an accurate 45° angle, and then draw another line 1/2" (for seam allowance) from the first line and closer to the binding end (fig. 29). Cut on the second line (fig. 30). Place the angled ends right sides together, offsetting them slightly, and sew a 1/4" seam (fig. 31). Press the seam allowances open, fold the remaining binding in half and press. Finish sewing the final portion of the binding to the quilt.

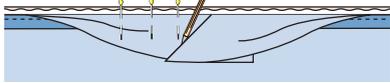


Fig. 28

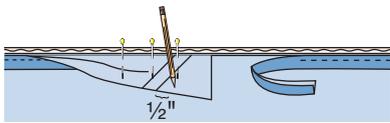


Fig. 29

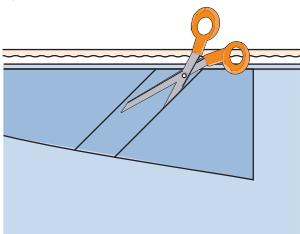


Fig. 30

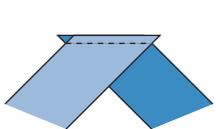


Fig. 31

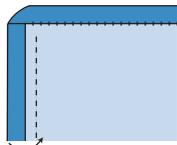


Fig. 32

Fold the binding to the back of the quilt, covering the line of stitching, and blindstitch it in place. If the batting on the edge and corners is too bulky to fit in the binding, trim away some of the batting. Fold the corners as shown (fig. 32) and stitch the miters closed.

Tip: For long term wearability, the binding should be full to the edge with batting.

Sleeve & Label

To make a sleeve for displaying your quilt on a wall, cut a strip 9" wide by the width of your quilt. Fold the short ends in 1/2" and press. Fold and press again. Topstitch the folded edges to hold them in place. Fold the sleeve in half, wrong sides together and sew a 1/2" seam to form a tube. Roll the seam to the center of the tube, and press the tube flat with the seam allowances open (fig. 33). With the seam against the backing, center the sleeve and pin its upper crease about 1" below the binding and 1" from the quilt edges. By hand, blindstitch the sleeve to the back of the quilt.

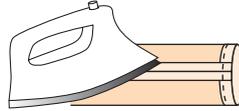


Fig. 33

Make a label for your quilt by writing on a piece of muslin with a permanent marker, or design a label on your computer and print it on fabric. Include the name of the maker, city and state, date and any other pertinent information. Sew this to the back of your quilt.

Tip: Some fabric manufacturers sell pre-made labels by the yard.

For more detailed information on quilting techniques, *American Quilter* recommends these books:

Any Body Can Learn to Quilt and Borders and Finishing Touches 2
by Bonnie Browning

Happy Endings
by Mimi Dietrich

Quilt Savvy: Gaudynski's Machine Quilting Guide Book
by Diane Gaudynski

Quilt Savvy: Hand Quilting
by Rusty Hedrick

Appliqué: A Sampler of Techniques
by Sue Nickels

The Quilter's Edge, Borders, Bindings, and Finishing Touches
by Darlene Zimmerman

To order these and other books, call toll-free 800-626-5420 or visit www.AmericanQuilter.com.

Midarm/Longarm Machine Quilting Essentials and Tested Tips from Handi Quilter

Machine Care

Before loading a quilt on the frame, prepare the midarm or longarm machine by using a brush to clean the buildup of lint and loose threads out of the bobbin casing area.

Keep the tracks clean and free from thread and lint. Wipe the tracks at least once a week with a cloth to keep the machine wheels flowing freely.

Tip: A 1" paint brush works great for cleaning the machine and tracks.

Use a straight pin inserted into the eye of the needle to guide the needle, left and right, for correct position (fig. 34).

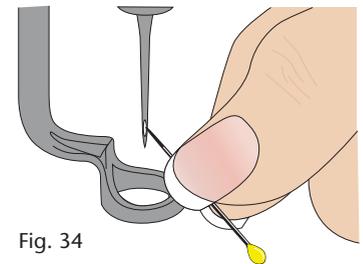


Fig. 34

Make sure the needle is pushed all the way up into the end of the needle shaft. An improperly placed needle will cause poor stitch quality, affect machine timing, and possibly damage the bobbin area. Choose appropriate thread and needle sizes to maintain balance.

Tip: Every quilt deserves a new needle.

Apply oil to the raceway of the bobbin case support two to three times per day, based on eight hours of machine time (fig. 35).



Fig. 35

Tip: After bobbin lubrication, quilt randomly on scrap material before resuming sewing of the quilt. Failure to do so may result in oil stains on the quilt.

Loading the Quilt

Square up the quilt back. The backing and the batting should be 4 to 6 inches larger on each side than the quilt top. The extra fabric ensures you will not run out of backing, as the fabric is drawn up while you quilt. This also provides a space on the sides of your quilt to check thread tension.

Tip: Each time you change the bobbin, recheck thread tension and inspect for lint buildup.

Find the center of the quilt backing. Align it with the center of the bottom roller and the center of the leader. The wrong side of the quilt backing will be facing up, and the right side will be facing the floor. Drape the quilt backing over the take-up roller (the roller under the sewing machine arm) and straighten it. Pin the backing to the leader from the center outward to the edges. Place pins point to head, leaving no spaces (fig. 36). Large gaps in pinning create unwanted wavy edges when the quilt is finished.

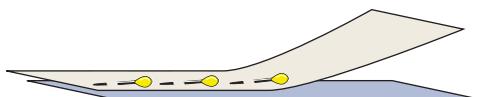


Fig. 36

Tip: The quilt backing should offset the leader by 1/8". Some quilt fabrics are so loosely woven that the pins will pull through if pinned too close to the raw edge. Allowing the quilt's raw edge to show a few threads above the leader ensures that the quilt has been sufficiently caught by the pins.

After pinning is complete, roll the quilt backing evenly on its roller, checking for any twisting, uneven rolling, and loose threads.

Tip: Only one person should roll the quilt on the poles. We all have different hand tension and when two people roll the fabric, the tension is not consistent.

Before loading the quilt top, analyze the overall theme and design elements to choose appropriate quilting designs. Place preview paper or clear cellophane on the quilt to find a complementary quilting pattern. Use a dry erase marker or water erase marker on the preview paper to draw the designs. Be careful not to write on the quilt.

Check the wrong side of the quilt top for any stray threads or debris that might shadow through to the front after quilting is finished. Drape the quilt top over the take-up roller with the right side facing up. Find the center of the quilt top and center of leader. Pin them together beginning at the center of the roller the same way you pinned the quilt backing. When rolling the quilt top on the roller, smooth out any wrinkles. Use seams in the quilt top as visual cues to ensure the quilt is rolling straight.

Pull the quilt backing to the take-up roller, making sure it is smooth and has no wrinkles. Find the position where the quilt backing lines up naturally with the leader. Begin pinning from the center out to the edges.

Cut the required amount of batting and place it between the quilt top and quilt backing.

Run a straight horizontal line of stitching across the back and batting using a clamp on the wheels or channel lock. This gives a plumb line to then position the top of the quilt. This way you know the quilt is square before you begin quilting.

Pull the quilt top evenly across the batting and backing. Position it along the previously sewn plumb line and machine baste the edge of the quilt top.

Tip: When basting the edges of the top, try to stay within 1/8"-1/4" of the edge. The basting will then fall within the binding area of the quilt.

Baste down the left side of the quilt top 1/8" from the cut edge (fig. 37).

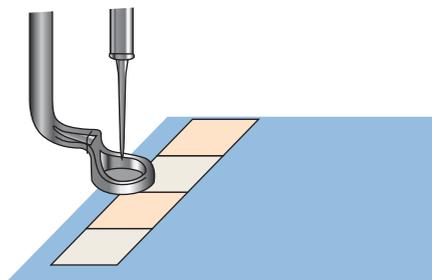


Fig. 37

Poles that are overly tightened will create a trampoline effect, causing the fabric to bounce and affecting stitch quality.

Marking

Use 1/4" thick straight rulers for perfectly straight lines and diagonal grids (fig. 38). Other shapes such as circles, scallops, and stars are available in thick plastic to guide the machine for perfect outlines.

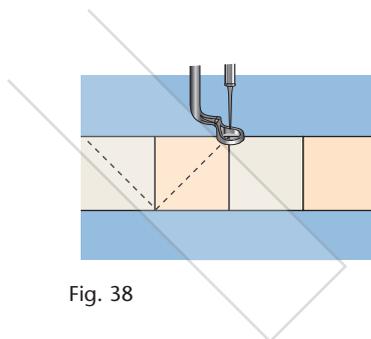


Fig. 38

A variety of tracing papers is available to mark quilting patterns. Water erase markers may be used to trace designs on GLAD® Press 'n Seal™ food wrap. Position Press 'n Seal designs on the quilt top and stitch through the traced design. After the stitching has been completed, pull the tracing paper or plastic wrap off the quilt top. Tweezers will help you remove small bits of paper from the stitches.

Tip: Shorten your stitch length to help perforate the marked plastic wrap.

Hundreds of commercial quilting stencils are widely available. You can use a pounce pad with chalk to transfer stencil designs.

Tip: Always check that lines from chalk or any marking tool are easily removable from all fabrics in the quilt top.

Quilting

Take a few small stitches to anchor the thread when starting or stopping stitch lines and then cut the tails off.

Tip: Correct posture increases your comfort level when you quilt for many hours. Place your feet hip distance apart, anchor your elbows firmly to your sides, and use your ankles to rotate and stabilize your body.

Quilting should be evenly distributed across the entire quilt. When using polyester batting, lines of quilting can be spaced 10" to 12" apart. Dense quilting with lofty polyester batting (1" to 2" or less) may give the quilt a stiff, board-like appearance. Cotton or cotton blend batting should be quilted no more than 4" to 5" apart. Cotton batting is perfect for tight quilting.

Drawing on paper is the best way to perfect designs that are to be quilted freehand or freeform (unmarked quilt). Load an inexpensive piece of fabric on your machine and practice, practice, practice. Freeform loops, stars, hearts, meandering, leaves, and flowers are successful basic designs for many quilt styles.

Take advantage of all the information available on the Internet. Consider joining a longarm quilting guild, and take classes at local quilt shops and national conferences.

Tip: Remember to blink and breathe as you quilt. Enjoy the ride!

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