

# How to Quilt

By Andrea Whicker

Quilting is a rewarding hobby for some and an art form for others. When you decide to make your first quilt, you can choose from traditional designs in books and magazines or create a freeform design using appliqués or fabric scraps. If you've never quilted before, you may want to start small with a tote bag or placemat first, then progress to larger projects such as quilts.

- Choose a design. Look through quilting books and magazines, or select a pattern at a sewing store. Create your own design by drawing an outline on paper and transferring it to tissue paper or cardboard that you will use as a template. Templates can be especially handy if you are cutting multiple shapes such as diamonds, hearts, butterflies, etc.
- Select fabric to use as a front background, border, and backing. You will also need to buy a filler layer for the middle. Make sure you buy enough fabric to complete your project. Ask a salesperson to help you determine the right amount of fabric if you aren't sure how much you will need. While you are there, check out the bins of fabric remnants for interesting scraps you may want to use in your quilt.
- Put together a collection of fabric scraps for your project. In addition to remnants you may find at fabric stores, you may want to cut up old clothes, tablecloths, curtains, etc. that you will no longer be using and recycle them as pieces in your quilt. Flea markets and garage sales are also good places to find fabric scraps.
- After you have chosen a design, use tailor's chalk to transfer the pattern to the background fabric.
- If you will be using multiple squares, diamonds or other shapes, cut them carefully using your template and assemble them in a box that is easily accessible. They can be sorted by colors, fabric or size to make placement easier when you are ready for them.
- Hand-baste the layers of your quilt together. Use large running stitches that begin from the center of the project and continue outward to the edges.
- Place your project in a quilting frame or on a table so that its weight is fully supported. Quilting frames work great because they allow you to work from the top and from underneath the fabric more easily. Portable frames only allow you to work on one area at a time but offer you more mobility.

- Start quilting by threading a 15-inch length of thread and knotting the end. Insert the needle through all the fabric layers from the top down. Carefully pull the knot through the top layer so that it stays in the filler fabric and trim the top thread.
- Continue by hand quilting along the drawn design. Use running stitches that are closely spaced to achieve an unbroken thread line. End the thread by knotting at the top of the fabric surface and making another stitch through the top layer, but only to the filler layer and up again. Pull so that the knot stays in the filler and trim any excess thread.
- If you are using appliqués, it is usually easier to pin them in place on the quilt and sew them in place first. Then you can quilt around them without disturbing the placement of the overall design.
- When you have completed stitching and quilting your project you will need to bind the raw edges by using bias or straight-edge binding or finish it pillow-style. The nature of your project and its size will help determine which finishing technique to use. Traditional bias binding and double-fold binding use strips of fabric cut on the bias to enclose the raw edges of a quilt. Self-binding is the easiest method for small projects. Also, known as fold-over binding, it allows you to take the excess backing fabric, trim it to size, and fold it to the front side of the quilt to finish the raw edges. With pillow-style finishing, the raw edges are enclosed in the quilt and the quilting is done after the binding has been completed. Pillow style binding is suitable mostly for very small projects such as placemats.