

# Fabrics & Batting

Closely woven fabrics made of 100 percent cotton, including calico, muslin, and broadcloth, are the best choice for quilt tops and backings. Cotton fabric is easy to work with and is available in a wide range of colors and prints. Cotton/polyester blends may be used, but they tend to pucker when stitched.

Hand-dyed cotton fabrics in solid graduating colors are available in packets of six or eight "fat quarters," which measure about 18" (46 cm) square. These packets of fabric contain either gradations of a single color or gradations that form a bridge from one color to another. Hand-dyed fabrics are especially suitable for making quilts with subtle blends of colors or for creating a tone-on-tone effect. These hand-dyed

packets are available from quilting stores and mail-order suppliers.

Selection of the quilt backing fabric depends on the end use of the quilt. For wall hangings, where the backing fabric is not visible, an inexpensive fabric such as muslin can be used. For a lap quilt, you may want to select a solid-colored or printed fabric to coordinate with the quilt top. A solid-colored fabric accentuates the quilting stitches, while a printed fabric tends to hide them. To create added interest on the back of a quilt, the backing can be pieced, using leftover lengths of fabric from the quilt top. When seaming the backing fabric, trim away the selvages before stitching.



Rinse washable fabrics in warm water to preshrink them and remove any sizing. Check the rinse water of dark or vivid fabrics to be sure they are colorfast; if dye transfers to the water, continue rinsing the fabric until the water is clear. Machine dry the fabric until it is only slightly damp, and then press it.

Batting is available in a variety of types and is usually made of polyester, cotton, or cotton/polyester. When batting is selected for a specific project, the amount of loft in the batting, its drapability, and the distance between quilting stitches are major considerations. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for the minimum distance between quilting stitches. This distance usually ranges from 4" to 6" (10 to 15 cm).

For quilts or quilted garments that receive heavy use, also look for a batting that resists *bearding*, the migration of fibers through the surface of the quilt. If using a batting that may beard, you can minimize the effects of bearding by selecting a tightly woven light-colored fabric for the quilt top.

Low-loft battings are recommended for machine quilting; but even low-loft battings vary in thickness. For most wall hangings or lap quilts, select a low-loft batting that is sturdy, but has some drapability. For clothing, it is usually desirable to use a thin batting that is soft and drapable, although sometimes a thick batting can give a puffy look to a garment such as a jacket. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for pretreating the batting. Some battings must be rinsed or washed with soap before they are used.



**Batting** is available in several types (left to right): needlepunched cotton, polyester, thin polyester designed for quilted garments, and cotton/polyester.



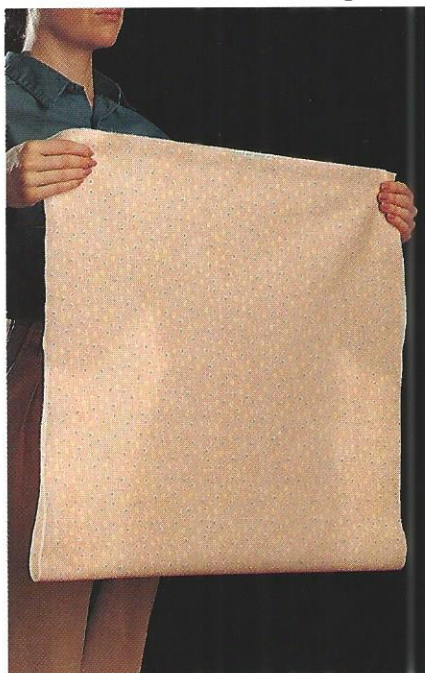
## Timesaving Cutting Techniques

The projects in this book are made easily with the use of quick cutting techniques. Most pieces can be cut quickly and accurately using a rotary cutter, a cutting mat, and a clear plastic ruler. It is not necessary to straighten quilting fabrics that are off-grain or to find the grainline by pulling threads or tearing the fabric.

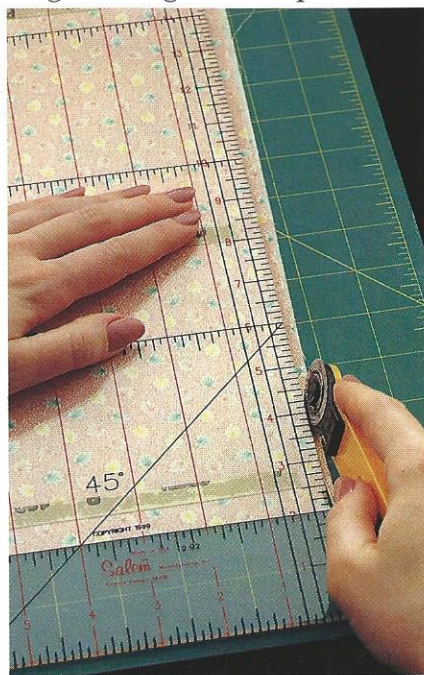
All pieces, including borders, sashing, and binding, are cut on the crosswise grain unless otherwise specified. Strips are cut across the width of the fabric; then the strips are cut into the required pieces. Most of the pieces can be cut using a wide, see-through quilting ruler. Tape thin strips of fine sandpaper across the bottom of see-through rulers, using double-stick tape, to prevent the ruler from slipping when you are cutting the fabric. To ensure accurate measurements for the sashing, borders, and binding, these strips are usually cut after the quilt top is completed.

Some projects in this book use a quilter's tool or template as a guide for cutting the pieces. Template patterns and instructions for making templates are included with the specific projects.

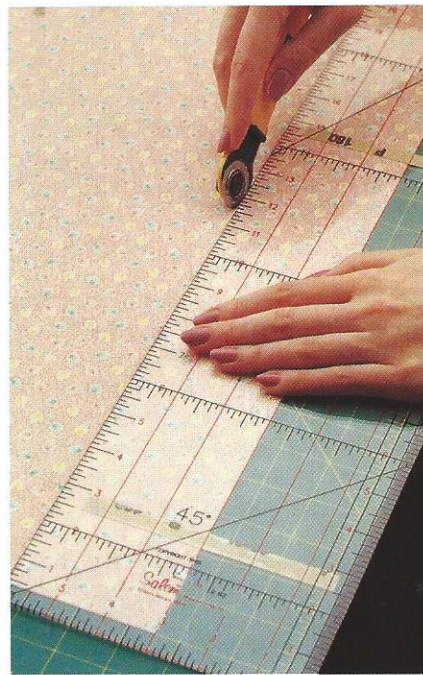
## How to Cut Fabric Using Timesaving Cutting Techniques



**1) Fold the fabric in half, selvages together. Hold the selvage edges, letting the fold hang free. Shift one side of the fabric until fold hangs straight. Foldline is on the straight of grain.**



**2) Lay fabric on cutting mat, with fold along a grid line. Place ruler on fabric close to raw edge at 90° angle to fold. Trim along edge of the ruler, taking care not to move the fabric.**



**3) Place ruler on fabric, aligning trimmed edge with measurement on ruler; cut along edge of ruler. After cutting several strips, check fabric to be sure cut edge is still at 90° angle to fold, as in step 2.**



**4) Cut squares and rectangles from strips; three or four strips may be stacked with the edges matching exactly. Place the ruler on fabric near selvages at 90° angle to long edges of strips. Trim off selvages. Place ruler on fabric, aligning short edge of fabric with the measurement on ruler. Cut, holding ruler firmly.**



**5) Cut the squares into triangles by cutting diagonally through each square; cut once or twice diagonally, following the cutting directions for the specific project. Three or four squares may be stacked, matching the edges exactly.**

# Basic Piecing Techniques

The projects in this book are made using quick and easy piecing techniques and allow for  $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm) seam allowances unless otherwise specified. Accurate stitching is critical to successful piecing. It is important to stitch seams exactly, with matching corners and points. A small error can multiply itself many times, resulting in a block or quilt that does not fit together properly. It is especially important to have accurate seam allowances on the sampler quilt (page 86) so the pieced center of the quilt fits the pieced border.

If you have a seam guide on your sewing machine, check the placement of the  $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm) mark by stitching on a scrap of fabric. If your machine does not have a seam guide, mark one on the bed of the machine with tape. To check your stitching, measure a completed block to be sure it is the proper size. The measurement of the block should equal the desired finished size plus  $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.3 cm) for  $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm) seam allowances on the sides. To achieve the correct finished block size, it may be necessary to stitch scant  $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6 mm) seams to allow for the turn of the cloth or shrinkage due to multiple seams.

To save time, use chainstitching whenever possible, stitching pieces together without backstitching or stopping between the pieces. Then remove the chain

of units and clip the connecting threads. For secure stitching without any backstitching, stitch the pieces together using a stitch length of about 15 stitches per inch (2.5 cm). Quilt blocks composed of several units, or squares, can also be assembled using chainstitching. This method is helpful in keeping the units of a block in the proper arrangement.

When you are stitching, take care to keep the thread tensions even, and check to see that the fabric does not pucker when stitched. Match the thread color to the darker fabric, or use a neutral thread color, such as ivory, black, or gray, that will blend with all of the fabrics in the quilt.

When piecing a quilt, press the seams to one side. It is best to press them to the darker fabric to prevent show-through. Because pressing with an iron can distort bias seams, the seams are finger-pressed until a quilt block or unit has straight of grain on all four sides.

To prevent seam imprints on the right side of the quilt, press the quilt blocks or units lightly, using a steam iron. Press them first from the wrong side; then press them again from the right side. The quilt should not be pressed after it is completed, because pressing would flatten the batting.

**Chainstitching** is used to stitch pieced units end to end without stopping between the units.



## Tips for Piecing



**Stitch** intersecting seams with the seam allowances finger-pressed in opposite directions, to distribute the bulk evenly.



**Trim** off any points that extend beyond the edges of a block or unit. This eliminates unnecessary bulk and allows for smooth stitching during quilting.

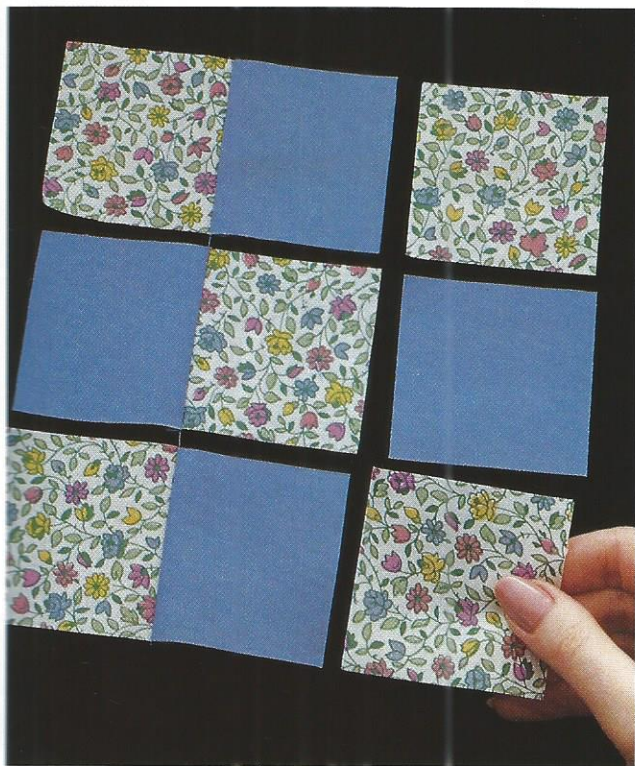


**Pin** pieces of slightly different lengths together, matching ends. Stitch with longer piece on bottom, easing in excess fullness.



**Match** seamlines by inserting a pin through the points where the seamlines should meet; remove the pin as you come to it.

## How to Assemble a Quilt Block Using Chainstitching



1) **Arrange** quilt block units into desired arrangement. Stitch first two units from top row together; do not clip thread. Repeat for next row; then continue for any remaining rows. Remove chainstitched units from machine; do not clip units apart.



2) **Stitch** the next unit of each row to stitched units, starting with top row. Remove chainstitched units from machine; do not clip units apart. Repeat to join any remaining units.



3) **Stitch** the rows together, finger-pressing the seam allowances in opposite directions.



4) **Press** long seam allowances to one side; then press the block from the right side.

# Basting a Quilt

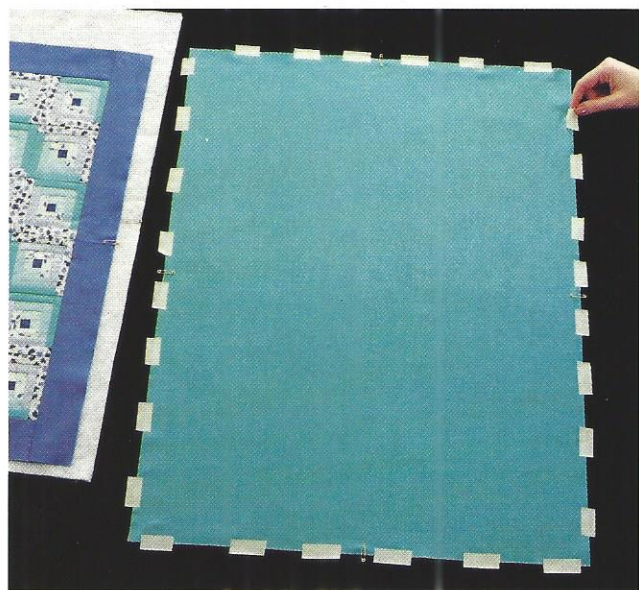
Basting is used to hold the quilt top, batting, and backing together while quilting. For ease in handling, the backing and batting should extend 2" to 4" (5 to 10 cm) beyond the edges of the quilt top on all sides.

Before layering and basting, press the quilt top and backing fabric and mark any quilting design lines. If you are using template quilting with plastic stencils, mark the quilting design lines as on page 20; it is not necessary to mark the design lines when quilting with tear-away stencils.

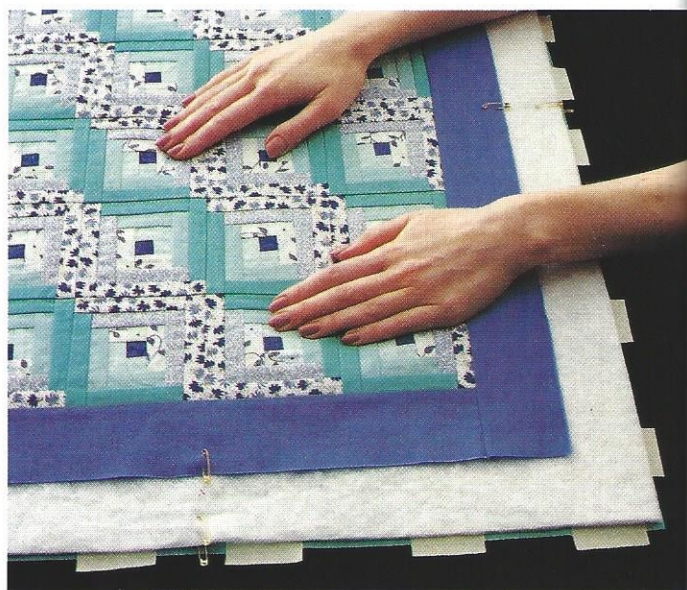
Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for pretreating the batting. Some battings require rinsing or washing with soap before using them. If you are using polyester batting, unroll the batting and lay it flat for several hours to allow the wrinkles to smooth out.

Traditionally, quilts were basted using a needle and thread; however, for a faster method, safety-pin basting may be used instead. Lay the quilt flat on a hard surface, such as the floor or a large table, and baste the entire quilt about every 6" (15 cm). If basting with thread, use white cotton thread and a large milliners or darning needle. Use a running stitch about 1" (2.5 cm) long. If basting with safety pins, use rustproof pins.

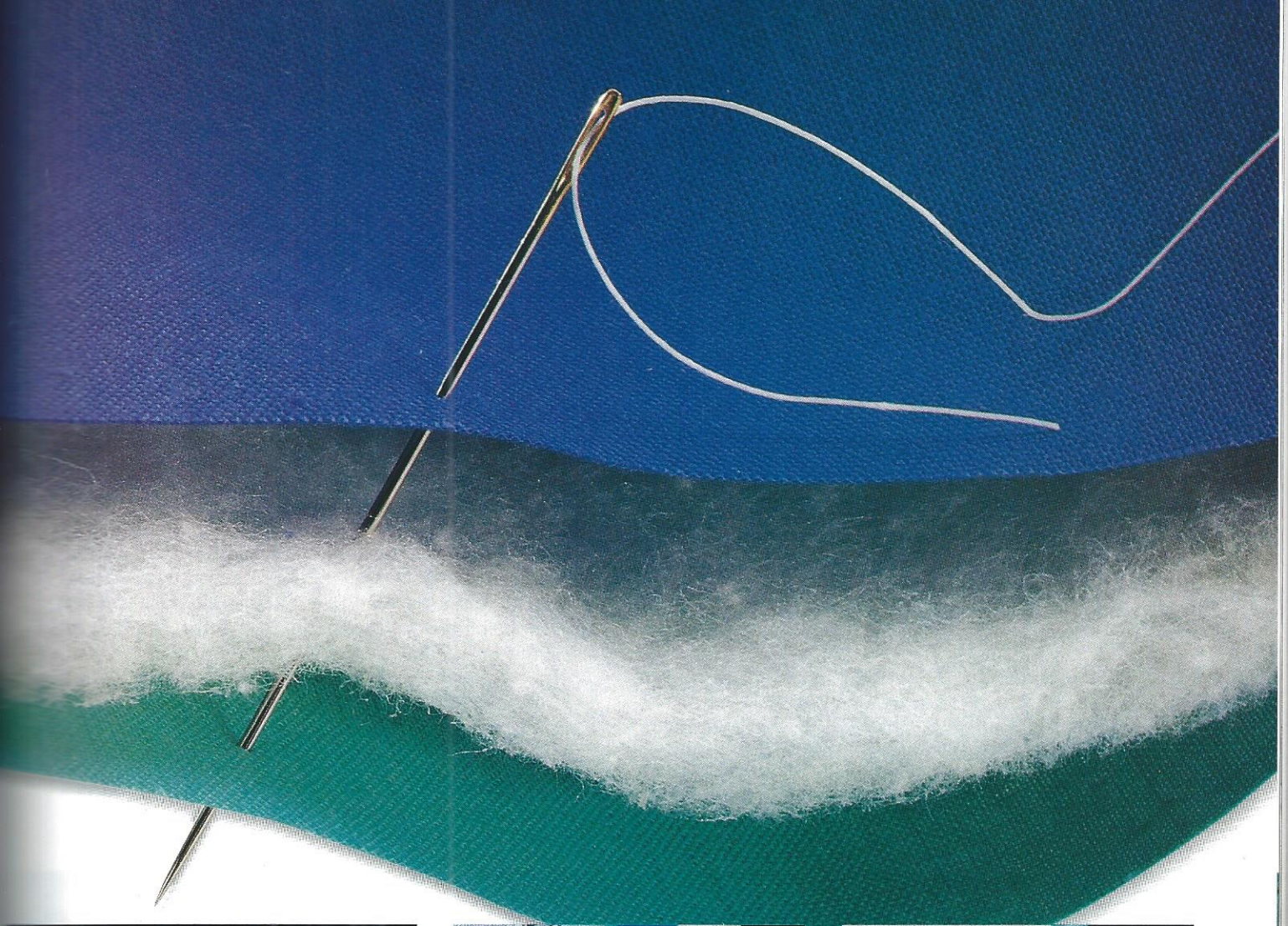
## How to Layer and Baste a Quilt



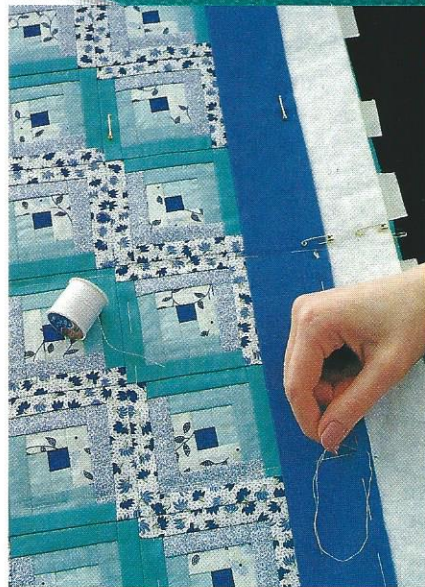
**1) Mark** center of each side of quilt top at raw edges with safety pins; repeat for batting and backing. Tape the backing, wrong side up, on work surface; begin at the center of each side and work toward the corners, stretching fabric slightly. Backing should be taut, but not stretched.



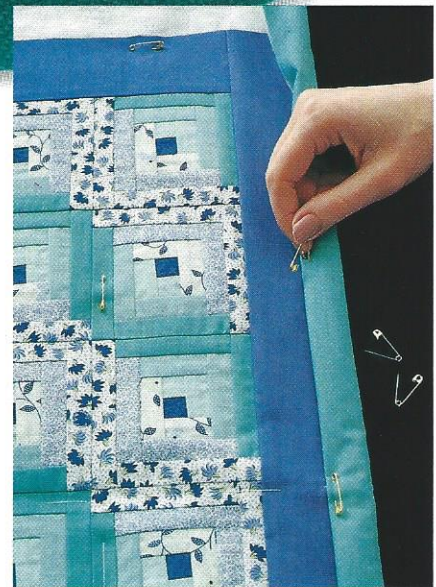
**2) Place** batting over backing, matching the pins on each side. Smooth, but do not stretch, working from center of quilt out to sides. Place quilt top right side up over the batting, matching the pins; smooth, but do not stretch.



**3) Baste** with safety pins or thread, from the center of quilt to pins on sides; if thread-basting, pull stitches snug so the layers will not shift, and backstitch at ends. Avoid basting on marked quilting lines or through seams. (Both basting methods are shown.)



**4) Baste** one quarter-section with safety pins or thread, in parallel rows about 6" (15 cm) apart, working toward the raw edges. If thread-basting, also baste quarter-section in parallel rows in opposite direction. Repeat for remaining quarter-sections.



**5) Remove** tape from backing. Fold edges of backing over the batting and edges of quilt top to prevent raw edges of fabric from raveling and to prevent the batting from catching on needle and feed dogs during quilting. Pin-baste.



# Quilting Basics

Machine quilting is used to hold the layers of the quilt together, but it also adds surface texture and depth to the quilt. A large variety of quilting designs can be created using either machine-guided or free-motion quilting or a combination of both. Plan quilting designs to cover the quilt uniformly, because heavily quilted areas tend to shrink the fabric more than lightly quilted areas.

## Machine-guided Quilting

In machine-guided quilting, the feed dogs and the presser foot guide the fabric. This method of quilting is used for stitching long, straight lines or slight curves, and includes stitch-in-the-ditch quilting and channel quilting.

Stitch-in-the-ditch quilting is used to give definition to the blocks, borders, and sashing. It is the easiest method of quilting, and is often the only type of quilting needed to complete a project.

Channel quilting is the stitching of parallel lines. The quilting lines may be either diagonal, vertical, or horizontal and are usually evenly spaced. Mark the quilting lines with a straightedge.

## Free-motion Quilting

In free-motion quilting, the quilt top is guided by hand, allowing you to stitch in any direction without repositioning the quilt. The feed dogs are covered or dropped for this method of quilting. Free-motion



Channel Quilting

Stipple Quilting

Motif Quilting

quilting is used to quilt designs with sharp turns and intricate curves, and includes template quilting, motif quilting, and stipple quilting.

Template quilting is used to add designs, such as motifs and continuous border designs, to a quilt. Template quilting can be done using plastic stencils or tear-away stencils. For plastic stencils, designs are transferred to the quilt top (page 20). Tear-away stencils allow you to stitch the motifs without marking the quilt top. A design, printed on translucent paper, is pinned to the basted quilt top and torn away after quilting. Free-motion stitching is generally used for template quilting; however, some designs, such as cables with gentle curves, may be quilted using machine-guided stitching.

Motif quilting is used to emphasize the printed design of a fabric and is accomplished by outlining the desired motifs. Continue stitching from one motif to the next without stopping. Although free-motion is frequently used for this type of quilting, machine-guided quilting can be used if the motifs consist of subtle curves or if the quilted project is small and can be manipulated easily under the presser foot.

Stipple quilting is used to fill in the background. It can be used to create areas of textured fabric. For uniformity throughout a project, it is best to use loose stipple quilting when combining this method with other types of quilting.



Template Quilting

Stitch-in-the-ditch Quilting