



## Quilting Secrets

### Secret To Beating The 7 Most Common Quilting Mistakes

#### 1. Inaccurate Sewing of a 1/4 Inch Seam Allowance

**Accuracy is probably THE most important aspect of making a quilt** - accuracy in cutting and accuracy in sewing the pieces together. The slightest bit over or under the 1/4 inch seam allowance measurement does not seem like a lot. However, with each patch that is sewn without precision, the error multiplies and finally you just cannot match your seam intersections. Try to sew each unit with accuracy before proceeding to the next step. If you need to, use that seam ripper and then re-sew the seam. A little time spent now avoids many minutes (or even hours) trying to fix these errors later.

#### 2. Ironing & Not Pressing – Distorting Fabric

Most people are used to rubbing their iron "to and fro" when ironing their clothing. This is fine for that purpose but not for the quilt making process! Pressing is what is used in quilting. **The iron is placed on the patch for a second or two and then lifted before placing in the new location and so on.** This avoids distorting the fabrics. **Distortion of fabric patches makes it very difficult for matching in the next step of the project.**

#### 3. Improper Use of a Rotary Cutter

A rotary cutter is quite simply a razor and therefore very sharp. Three things can happen by mistake. You can cut yourself, you can cut your fabric and you can cut your furniture, likely damaging the blade at the same time. Rotary cutters all have safety guards. Some are automatically on as soon as you finish the cut. Others must be put on using the thumb. Get in the habit of always putting the safety on whenever the cutter leaves your hand, even for just a few seconds.

When cutting strips of a folded piece of fabric, make sure one of the crosswise lines on your ruler is lined up exactly on the fold of the fabric, before making the cut. This way, your strip will be perfectly straight. If the ruler shifts from the fold, you will get a strip that contains a slight "wow" in the middle.

#### 4. Mixing Fabric Types

Most quilters prefer to use 100% cotton fabrics in their quilts. Beginner quilters often use what they have around the house and frequently those fabrics are polyester or polyester-cotton blends. Sewing a piece of cotton to a piece of polyester-cotton often results in uneven seams and puckers as the two fabrics advance through the sewing machine at different rates. If you must use polyester in your quilt, try to make sure that you are stitching it to other polyester pieces.

#### 5. Not Enough Contrast

Have you ever looked at a quilt and thought, "well it is pretty, but kind of blah"? The likely cause of that feeling is that there was not enough contrast in the quilt. **Contrast is the degree of difference between the light or dark in the various fabrics.** (Whether a fabric is light, medium or dark is called the "value"). Oddly enough, most fabrics available are of medium value. To make your quilt really "zing", make sure you add both light and dark fabrics to your project as well as medium ones. You don't need many, but you do need some.

**A good way to check what category each fabric belongs to, is to lay out your fabrics on a photocopier and make a black and white copy. When you remove the color from the fabrics it is much easier to see their value.** This way you will see right away to which category your chosen fabrics belong. 3 Quick Ways to Choose Colors for Your Quilts will help you get started.

#### 6. Buying Cheap Quality Fabric

**100% cotton fabric is the preferred choice for most quilters! Keep in mind that not all 100% cotton fabrics are of the same quality.** It is fairly common that a beginner quilter will purchase fabric of a lesser quality simply because it is cheaper. The rationale seems to be that "Well I don't want to invest a lot of money until I see if I really like it".

Quilting is not a craft that is done quickly unless the project is quite small. It is a process that you will invest a lot of time into. **Make your time as valuable as the quilt!** Perhaps one day this first quilt will become a much loved family heirloom. Using quality fabrics will ensure that this quilt will stand the test of time and numerous launderings.

#### 7. Buying Cheap Thread

100% cotton thread is the preferred choice, mainly to match the fiber content of the quilt top fabric. **Cheap thread may seem like a bargain when you are buying it, but it tends to create uneven stitches due to the varying thickness.** Sometimes tiny clumps form on the continuous thread due to fraying as it passes through the sewing needle. These tiny clumps catch on the needle causing the thread to snap.

The cotton thread will fade in time along with the quilt top, so both will always match. Polyester thread will retain its original color and with time will stand out on the quilt.