

Block keepers!



Block keepers are a great way to store "block of the month" projects, applique blocks in progress and even cross-stitch awaiting finishing/framing.



I thought I would share with you not only our sit and sew day but how to make a block keeper.

This is what you need to get started:

- a mailing tube (about 25" long and approx. 2" in diameter) available at office supply stores
- 1 yard of cotton fabric (for main part of block keeper)
- 1/4 yard of contrasting fabric for binding
- a scrap piece of fabric for embellishing (optional)
- 36" x 42" piece of cotton batting (Dolly used the new bamboo batting and loved it!)
- 1 yard of grosgrain ribbon
- 1 button (optional)
- cotton thread
- sewing machine

The first step in making the block keeper is to cut the fabric 1" wider than your tube (so about 26" long for the one shown)....leave the length at 36" long. Cut the batting the same size.

Place the batting on the wrong side of the fabric and press the fabric and batting. Press on the fabric side with a hot iron set on cotton. Don't press directly on the batting, you may damage the batting.

Pressing will help the batting and fabric stick together slightly and make it ready for quilting. If you feel that the batting and fabric are not stable enough for quilting then use your favorite method for quilt basting.

You will only quilt the fabric and batting there is no backing. The inside of the block keeper is batting only. The fabric projects stored in your block keeper will "stick" nicely to the batting and keep shifting to a minimum.

Now you are ready to quilt the fabric; this can be done by machine or by hand. We quilted by machine today. Dolly meander quilted (free motion quilting) Audrey, Deb and I used our walking foot for some straight line quilting.



Once the fabric is quilted, press it again lightly on the fabric side. Once pressed you will need to trim your quilted fabric to size. Measure the width of the mailing tube and cut your quilted fabric this width. Leave the length as close as you can to 36" as you cut all sides so everything is nice and straight. Two ends of the quilted fabric will be rounded. We did this simply by using a small plate and cutting around the plate edge with a rotary cutter.





Remember to only cut 2 ends round and leave the other 2 square.

Now it's time to make and sew the binding.

From the binding fabric cut 3 strips 2-1/4" x width of the fabric. Even though two ends of the quilted fabric are rounded, bias binding is not needed. There is enough "give" in the straight grain binding to curve nicely around the rounded edges.

Sew the binding strips together with a diagonal seam, then fold and press wrong sides together to form one long strip. Sew the binding to the quilted fabric with a walking foot and a 1/4" seam allowance. The binding is applied to the fabric side then flipped over to the batting side and hand-sewn or it can be machine sewn if your prefer.



Once the binding is completely sewn along all the edges and on both sides, it's time to make the "casing" for the mailing tube.

Fold down the square end of the quilted fabric and place the mailing tube inside for measurement.....hold the edge down with pins. Remove the tube. Measure from the fold to the edge of the binding and make certain this measurement is the same all along the "casing"; re-pin if necessary. Sew closely along the edge of the binding through all thicknesses and be certain to secure the stitching on each end of the casing.



Now you can slip the tube into the casing.

OK, take a deep breath, the block keeper is almost done... :D

Take the length of ribbon and find the center of the length (about 18"). Match the center of the ribbon to center of the block keeper edge.....use the picture below as a guide.



Cover the stitching on the ribbon with a button or a yo-yo and button or whatever you would like. Hand stitch in place.



Roll up the block keeper and then wrap and tie closed with the ribbon, trim ribbon ends diagonally to keep them from fraying.

TA DA! Your block keeper is ready for use, not only to store your works in progress but you can also remove an end cap of the tube and store sewing notions inside. :D

