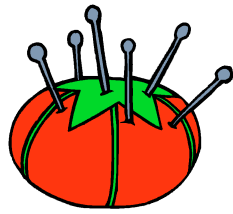


Tips from a seasoned quilter. . .



Just a few tips from someone who has been quilting for years:

1. No matter how new you are to quilting, your work is a piece of ART. Enjoy it.
2. Always, always square your blocks before putting the top together even when you are going to use sashing (the strips between the blocks).
3. Press and then measure twice before cutting. You will save a lot of seam ripping!
4. Quilting is more about the process than the giving. Enjoy the process and think of the giving as an added bonus.
5. When putting together pieces smaller than 4 inches across and matching seams, match the seam on both sides for more accurate piecing.
6. When possible, waste a little fabric to save a LOT of stress. Add a ¼ inch to blocks that can be squared to size before finishing the block. If it's a 4 square block, add a ¼ inch to the pattern piece cut size and square after piecing. If it's a 9 patch, square a pair before adding the 3rd row and square again before putting the blocks together. It's easier to have a little more fabric to work with when squaring than to be off by 1/8 of an inch and try to work with it.
7. The flaws we see in our own work are rarely ever noticed by those who admire our work. It's best not to show off the flaws but just think of them as your own twist on the Art Work. (see bullet #1)
8. And my personal favorite! There NEVER needs to be a reason to purchase or acquire more fabric any more than there needs to be a reason to eat chocolate.
9. Starch is your friend... your very best friend when it comes to quilting!
10. I find a large part of the joy of quilting is in the 'journey'! Just relax and enjoy what you are doing while you are doing it. It is a great feeling to finish a quilt, but have fun in the making of it.
11. Starch often during the construction process. Don't worry about starch flakes on dark fabric – wash the quilt after it is completed, and that will solve the problem.
12. Don't be in a hurry to get perfect-looking quilts. Realize that each aspect of quilting takes practice. Even those 1/4 inch seams don't come easy. Quilting is like playing the harp: it takes a lot of practice, and you have to stay at home to do it.
13. The most important thing I've learned is that if you encounter a problem, it's much easier and less stressful to fix it now than to try to fix it later. Examples: If a partial block is not correct, fix the partial block before you add more patches to it. If a block does not have the correct shape and size, fix the block before you sew it to another block.
14. NOTHING, NOTHING, NOTHING is perfect and my quilt won't be either. So do the best I can at the moment and (try to) quit stressing over seams that don't match!!!!
15. Don't be afraid to ask questions!!! Especially from the wonderful quilters here.. at the QuiltingBoard!
16. I use a sizing spray.... I also think having a very very pointed scissors on hand to clip threads is important.
17. Starch, sizing, Mary Ellen's Best Press - all are used on the fabric before it is cut to add body. This makes the fabric behave better while cutting and sewing. It lies flatter, doesn't distort as easily, and the corners stay more corner-like. Starch can also be used on a backing to keep it flatter during quilting. You can also starch a block while squaring it to make it hold its shape better. The starch washes out when you wash the quilt.
18. I find sometimes that giving the finished art piece is a tad anticlimactic. I find I feel like a new mother showing off her new born baby. Hearing people say oh wow isn't she beautiful. When you know they are really saying wow I could have made that better. No one will ever appreciate your art piece as much as you do. You are the one that was there at it's conception, you created it piece by piece. Fretting over every little detail. If you wait and expect others to give you that pat on the back, with the same enthusiasm in which you created the art piece in the first place? you will be somewhat disappointed. I create art for me first: If someone finds some pleasure over my art piece, that is a bonus.
19. Cats, contrary to their belief, do not actually help you sew better BUT they are good for destressing.
20. Buy a good stitch ripper. That, too, can be your friend.
21. A backup machine or two (or more) can be your friend when your main machine dies, or won't work, unexpectedly.
22. One of the things I have found to eliminate the flakes is to rub the starch into the fabric. Just run your hands over the fabric and it pushes the starch into the fabric it's almost like bonding the threads together. When the starch just sits on top and you iron that's when it flakes.
23. Don't quilt when you are tired. I prefer sewing in the morning.
24. I used starch for a while but find I like to use light body Magic Sizing better. I puts body into my blocks without any of the stiffness or shine that can occur with starch.
25. GO with your instinct and use the fabric that makes YOU happy, no matter how much the old nag in the Quilt Store tells you how wrong you are.
26. When the pattern is very involved and you have never done it before MAKE A TRIAL BLOCK. You can test the instructions, the measurements, and the manner of assembly.
27. For all involved patterns, make a detailed plan that you can check off each step. It helps me keep the work going and everything in line.
28. The mole skin is great stuff. I use it on my machine. I can't sew a straight line to save my soul and I have trouble sewing 1/4" seams so I measured from my needle and then marked it with a black marker and I cut strips of the mole skin and place it on the lines and now I have straight seams that are 1/4" and when it gets bad looking I just replace it with new. Since I'm a new quilter this has really helped me.
29. Starch builds up, clean your iron regularly.
30. Know when to stop taking requests and 'do it for you'.

