

## AAQGO – Quilt Finishing Part One

You can use some of these methods as a starting point and then find your own way to finish your quilt. There are a lot of quilting options, books, on-line videos (U-tube, etc.), and other quilters that can teach you how to finish your quilt.

Once your quilt top is complete, there are questions that you need to answer:

- What batting do I use?
- How do I prepare the back?
- Machine Quilting by me or send to a professional?
- Do I tie or tack?
- Do I want to hand quilt?
- How do I prepare my quilt to send to a long arm quilter?
- And more...

### FINISHING YOUR QUILT TOP

- Check all seams on your quilt top to ensure they are finished at the edges
- Double check to make sure no pins are left behind
- It is a good idea to sew a 1/8 of an inch regular stitch all around the edge your quilt top to secure all outer stitches
- Cut all threads
- Press well, but DO NOT iron otherwise you will stretch the quilt. A neatly pressed quilt top will ensure smooth quilting.

### SEWING THE BACKING

- Most patterns provide the measurements for your quilt back and layout instructions. You can also find examples online.
- **TIPS FOR PIECING YOUR BACK**
  - Cut the *selvage* off before sewing, as this allows the seams to be smooth and reduce puckering
  - Sew a **½ inch** seam allowance
  - Press all seam allowances open
  - Add at least 4 to 6 inches on each side (if you are quilting yourself, you may only need 3-4 inches on each side)
    - This can vary by quilter but to be safe start with 4 inches
    - I usually make my back 4" larger on each side and 4" to 6" on the top and bottom, because I use the left over for my sleeve. This way the sleeve matches my back.
    - The reason the back must be larger is because the quilting will shrink the back.
    - Use your judgement for smaller quilts ... you may only need 1, 2 or 3 inches extra
  - Check all seams for pins and remove them

### CHOOSING THE BATTING

- Batting is the soft layer between the quilt top and backing that offers warmth and gives a quilt dimension and definition. Because batting comes in various thicknesses and fibers, it can make a quilt flat or puffy. It is available to buy by the yard or packaged to fit standard bed sizes. The batting you choose should complement the nature and use of your finished quilt. Check package labels, talk to other quilters, and test samples to find a batting with the qualities that you want for your project.

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- Batting options include cotton, polyester, wool, blends, and bamboo to name a few; people have been known to use old polyester blankets, flannel or Dollar Store blankets as their batting. There are also fusible options.
- See the attached batting guide *from American Patchwork Quilting* to help you decide. The guide will also help you to determine loft, and which are best for hand quilting, etc.
- Check with your quilter for a recommendation or if you see a quilt that you like how it feels, the weight of the quilt, the way it hangs ask that person what type of batting was used.
  - I personally use 80/20 blend or 100% cotton batting for most of my quilts when sending to a professional quilter. Otherwise, I use fusible batting when quilting myself.
  - NOTE: if using a long arm quilter tell them know what type of batting you are providing because they might have issues with that type of batting.
- Read the manufacturer's instructions. It will tell you how much quilting needs to be done per inch. What this means is if you use a batting that requires a large number of stitches per inch and you decide to quilt with farther apart stitches you may encounter problems when you wash as batting may tear apart in loosely quilted spaces.
- FINALLY, your choice of batting will also depend on how the quilt will be used (wall hanging that may never be washed, baby quilt that will be washed frequently or adult quilt that will be washed less frequently, etc.)

### PREPARING THE QUILT SANDWICH FOR SELF QUILTING

- Make sure your quilt and backing are pressed well to prevent bulk
- Place the quilt backing wrong side up on a large, flat surface. Tape, clip, or otherwise secure the quilt backing to the work surface.
- Center and smooth the batting in place atop the quilt backing. If desired, baste the batting and backing together with a single, large cross-stitch in the center to prevent the layers from shifting.
- Center the quilt top right side up on top of the batting. To be sure that it is centered, fold it in half with right sides together. Align the center fold of the quilt with the center of the batting, then unfold the quilt top and smooth out any wrinkles.

### BASTING YOUR QUILT

#### Pin basting

- Machine quilters generally pin-baste because it is easier to remove pins than basting threads.
- Pin the three layers together with rustproof safety pins, making horizontal and vertical lines through the center of the quilt sandwich to form quadrants on the quilt top. Add pins over the entire surface of the quilt top at 3 to 4" intervals.

#### Spray basting

- You must spray between each layer and in a vented area
- Basting sprays are best for small quilt projects such as table runners or wall hangings.
- Follow the manufacturer's directions to adhere the layers to one another.
- Take care not to overspray, which can lead to a ***gummy buildup over your work surface and quilting needle***

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### Thread-Basting

- With stitches about 2" long, baste the three layers together by stitching horizontally, then stitch vertical lines through the center of the quilt sandwich to form quadrants on the quilt top.
- Next, baste diagonally in both directions. Add basting stitches 3 to 4" apart over the entire surface of the quilt top

### QUILTING OPTIONS:

#### TYING

- Tying is a very basic and beginner-friendly way to hold together a quilt.
- Can be done on flat surface
- Use Embroidery thread or yarn
- Once your quilt is basted determine where you want to tie it
  - Use a grid of some sort
  - Start at the center of each block
- Take the needle down through all three layers.
- With the opposite hand on the back of the quilt, feel for the needle (and guide it through the layers and back up through all the layers, approx. 1/4" apart. Pull the yarn through all the layers, gently tugging. Leave approx. a 3" tail of yarn on the end that doesn't have the needle.
- Don't tie the knot yet! Repeat the needle going through all three layers, keeping the needle very close to your first stitch, but not quite in the same hole.
- Clip the yarn to approx. 3" so it's easier to tie on your knot.
- Now you can tie a square knot. Remember – “right over left and left over right makes a knot tidy and tight”. Trim the finished tails down to about 1 1/2" long, if you like.
- This process can be fatiguing on your hands so do it incrementally.

#### TACKING

- Tacking – same as tying except you use a sewing machine
- Once your quilt is basted determine where you want to tack the quilt
- Use a grid of some sort
- Start at the center of each block
- Using your sewing machine, pick a decorative stitch or a *zigzag stitch*

If using the zig zag stitch, use the widest width. Take the stitch length down to zero or .5. Take several stitches in place to secure the stitch, the same is true for a decorative stitch you need to stitch an ¼ to ½ of the stitch a couple of times (enough to secure the stitch).

#### MACHINE QUILTING

- Once your quilt is basted determine how you want to quilt it
- Prepare for the quilting:
  - Insert a NEW needle. Depending on the thickness of the quilt sandwich, you may decide on a size 11, 12 or 14 quilting needle)
  - Install or engage your walking foot
  - Thread the machine and insert bobbin
  - TEST on a sample using the same sandwich elements to ensure everything is working correctly and you are ready to GO!
- Start in the center of your quilt and work outwards so that if your quilt slips you can straighten it back out.

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- Create a grid using chalk, quilt marker, blue painters tape (preferred) or masking tape AND stitch on the line or at the edge of the tape
- STITCH IN THE DITCH - find a seam line and stitch just inside the seam (away from the bulk side).
- Other options: echo quilting, or you can stitch 1/4" outside of the seams. Research online for more ideas.
- FREE MOTION QUILTING
  - Drop your feed dogs for free motion quilting
  - There are stencils that you can use to mark your quilt top
  - NOTE: *always precheck any marking pencils or pens on a similar piece of fabric* and check what happens if you iron or wet it to ensure marks will come out
  - Once it is marked follow the stencil line.
  - Practice! Practice! Practice! Every so often check your back to make sure your stitching looks as good on the back as well as the front.

### HAND QUILTING

- You will need cotton quilting thread (because it is stronger than sewing thread)
- Stencil to create your design
- Use an Embroidery or quilting hoop
- Start in the center and work outward
- Hoop the area where you are going to quilt
- Stitch through all layers

### SENDING YOUR QUILT TO A LONG ARM QUILTER

- Your backing should **ALWAYS be 4 to 6** inches larger around than your quilt top
- Check with your quilter for their requirements
  - The reason for this is the quilt has to be attached to the long arm frame which is done by using pins, or zippers.
  - It has to be tight on the machine to avoid slipping
- Press Quilt Top and Backing
- Fold or place on a hanger
- **DO NOT SANDWICH YOUR** quilt for your quilter. They must set up the backing, batting and top separately on the long arm machine.
- Some quilters will require you to bring your own batting – please discuss if they have any recommendations
- When you take your quilt to the quilter
  - Discuss how you would like it to look and how it will be used
  - Ask for suggestions (quilters have a great eye for how to quilt your quilt)
  - Discuss thread color
  - Discuss how much quilting you want – be aware that a custom quilt will cost more per square inch than an all over pattern