

Quilting



A quilt is a cloth “sandwich.” It is a multi-layered textile with a top, which is usually the decorated part, a middle layer of filling like batting or wadding, and a layer of fabric for the back. These three layers are sewn together - and those stitches are called quilting.



What do you think was the original purpose of quilts?

The quilt had originally a strictly utilitarian purpose. People have been making quilts for a long time. It can be traced back as far as ancient Egypt. A carved ivory figure of an Egyptian pharaoh dated from 3400 B.C. displays the earliest known quilted clothing. Medieval knights wore quilted garments under their armor for comfort, warmth, and further protection. In early days in America, quilts were made to provide warmth at night and to cover doors and windows to help reduce cold.

Traditional quilting is a communal activity; made in quilting circles or “bees.” For centuries, American women have quilted in formal and informal groups. Quilters came together for mutual support and education, to work on quilts together and to enjoy socializing. It could be a rather lengthy process, as before the development of the sewing machine, quilting was done by hand.

Quilts carry memories, moments, and lives. Quilts were often made to celebrate events in a woman’s life like a wedding, or the birth of a child. Quilts also offered women an outlet for astonishing creativity and

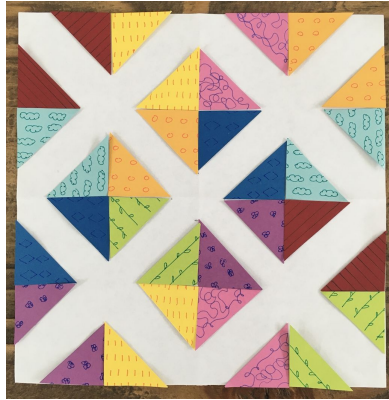


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invention. The finest quilts are works of great beauty; striking design, extraordinary handwork, spectacular piecing. Quilts can be appreciated simply for their aesthetic value.

Assembling a quilt requires systematic organization. First, a quilter selects a pattern and then cuts pieces of fabric. Usually, smaller pieces of material are sewn together into larger blocks or design units, such as a square, diamond, or hexagon. Then those blocks are stitched together to form an overall design of the top layer of the quilt. Once the top layer is ready, it's joined together with the padding and the bottom layer.



Experiment with a paper quilt, using different colors, arrangements, and sizes of the paper pieces. Get inspired by quilts from our [permanent](#) collection or create your own design!

- [Printable instructions](#)

