

## Strolling the Block: Basting, Quilting and Binding



By [Dori Hawks](#)

in preparation of piecing and finishing the quilt top, Jan has provided these sashing, backing and border measurements and insights:

- Shop for five yards of backing fabric and one yard of sashing fabric--45-inch width bolts.
- Double the length of sashing fabric, then double it again and cut it into 11, 2-1/2" x 45" long strips. Cut each strip at 12-1/2 inch intervals until you have 45, 2-1/2" x 12-1/2" strips.
- Cut 20, 2-1/2-inch square cornerstone pieces from scraps of leftover fabrics used in the blocks, cutting just one from each fabric.

The quilt will feature a scrappy border that doesn't repeat. To make it, cut 76, 3-1/2" x 6-1/2" blocks from all the fabrics used in the quilt, cutting just one block from each piece of fabric. Piece the 6-1/2-inch sides of the blocks together into four separate sections using a 1/4-inch seam allowance. Make two sections by sewing together 23 of the scrappy blocks and two sections by sewing together 15 scrappy blocks. Two of these sections will be slightly larger than needed but you'll cut them down when attaching the border.

### Materials:

five yards of backing fabric - Select yardage with a busy print in order to hide quilting thread color variations. This is a generous cut of fabric and you'll probably have leftovers.  
table - a 6' x 30" fold-away table works well  
one-inch, non-rusting safety pins - 12 per square foot of quilt top  
12 large binder clips from the office supply store  
standard sewing machine with walking foot and a free-motion or darning foot  
multiple colors of embroidery thread including a variegated red, white and blue; heavyweight variegated thread in yellow, green and lavender; monofilament thread  
twin-size roll batting  
backing fabric

Steps:

## **Basting**

### *Preparation*

1. Measure the finished quilt top.
2. Cut batting and backing fabric six to eight inches larger than the quilt top (both lengthwise and crosswise).
3. If backing fabric doesn't measure larger than the width of the quilt top, piece two sections together to accommodate the width. It's best if the seams go lengthwise.
4. Iron both the quilt top and the backing fabric.
5. Fold the batting, backing and quilt top (separately) in quarters.

### *Layering the quilt*

1. Place the quilt backing fabric on top of the table, right side down, matching the center of the backing on the center of the table with the length of the backing going the length of the table.
2. Unfold the backing and smooth it out on top of the table, keeping the side and end centers of the backing fabric matching the side and end centers of the table.
3. Use binder clips to hold the backing to the table, clipping the two sides in the middle, and the two ends in the middle. Smooth the backing out toward the end of the table and toward the sides, adding more clips to secure as you smooth. Flip the clips ends in toward the table. If your backing fabric is shorter than the table, use a 3/4-inch wide masking tape to temporarily secure the short end to the table.
4. Position the center of the batting on the center of the table with the length of the batting going the length of the table. Unfold the batting and smooth it out on top of the backing fabric with the excess hanging over the sides and ends of the table. Do not move the clips. Only the backing gets clipped to the table, not the batting or quilt top.

Position the center of the quilt top on top of the table and the other two layers with the length going the length of the table. Make sure that the right side of the top is facing up so you can see it. Unfold it and let the edges hang over the table. Smooth it out so there are no lumps, bumps or wrinkles.

### *Pinning*

1. The quilt "sandwich" is ready to be pinned (basted) so that everything holds in place during quilting.
2. Sit down at a center side of the table and place the first pin. From here, place pins three to four inches apart, working your way out to each end of the quilt. This may seem like a lot of pins (and it is) but the secret to good quilting is good basting. When pinning, make sure you are going through all three layers—quilt top, batting and backing. The table may get a couple little nicks in it, so don't use your dining room table. For those who've never pin basted a quilt before, slide the pin into the quilt layers, hold down the pointed side of the pin onto the table, then with the other hand, use the fleshy part of your index finger to push the big end of the pin past the point—pushing back and down, then closing the pin. It's a little tricky in the beginning, but keep trying and you will get the hang of it. It helps to have a chair with wheels so you can start at the center and roll to each end as you pin.
3. After basting the part of the quilt that is on the top of the table, reach under the layers and remove the binder clips that are holding the backing down. Just flip out the under clip end and placing your thumb on the binder clip, pull it out. Do this with all of the binder clips.
4. Slide the quilt to one side to get a section up onto the table that has not been pin basted. Use the binder clips on three sides to anchor the quilt backing only down. The fourth side already has pins in it and will be hanging down onto the floor. The weight of the quilt will hold enough tension on the quilt that it won't need to be clipped.
5. Smooth the batting out and then smooth the quilt top out. Run your hand over the top to feel if there are any folds that you can feel through the layers. If you can feel any lumps, lift-up the quilt top and smooth out the batting one more time. Now add pins to that area on top of the table starting in the center again and working to each end. Begin pinning at the place where you ended off.
6. Move the quilt as before, adding pins until the top is completely basted.

### **Trimming**

Lay the pin-basted quilt sandwich on the table then carefully trim the batting and backing to two inches *BEYOND* the edge of the quilt. Read that sentence again, please. The batting and backing need to be sticking out beyond the edges of the quilt top during the quilting. You don't want to leave too much hanging beyond or it will get flipped back and caught within the quilting. If this occurs, you'd have to do some ripping...oops..."reverse" sewing. The quilt is now ready for machine- or hand-quilting.

## Tips:

- The table I use for basting is the type of office table that you often see at churches, community centers and quilt shops. You could inquire about making arrangements to use the table for an hour or so to baste your quilt at any of these places. I own one and it folds up to fit underneath a bed or slide behind a couch. Then it comes out for basting quilts or parties.
- You may ask, "Why not use a kitchen counter top or an old door to baste on?" The large binder clips that secure the backing don't open wide enough to fit over the edge of these, but do fit perfectly over the office table edges.

I prefer sitting down to baste rather than to stand and bend over the project. Sitting is easier on your body, especially if you have foot, ankle or hip problems, and it's easier on your back, too. For those who prefer to stand, you can raise the table higher by purchasing a piece of PVC pipe that is a little larger in diameter than your table legs. Cut the pipe into four, six-inch long pieces and place them on the table legs. The legs bend, so the PVC will stop at the bend and raise the table up. You can vary the height of the table by cutting shorter or longer lengths of PVC.

## Quilting

While you hide the stitches in quilt top assembly by stitching on the back side of the fabric, the opposite is true for quilting. You want the quilting stitches to be seen on the quilt top. I give block-by-block details below but here are some general notes that apply to much of the work I did to this quilt. First, I used a fine monofilament thread to "stitch in the ditch" (in the seam lines) between border and sashing, and between sashing and individual blocks, using a walking foot on the sewing machine. This stabilized the quilt for the free-motion stitching I did later.

I also stitched around each of the main applique pieces in every block—the houses, doors, shutters, path, trees, chimneys, etc. I used a free-motion foot and dropped the machine's feed dogs to do this.

Next I had fun using free-motion quilting (again, free-motion foot and dropped the feed dogs—a darning presser foot would also work) to do all the little details in each block (see descriptions below), the cactus, fish, bats, sun rays bricks, siding on the houses, leaves, flowers, etc. None of these details were marked. I did them by "drawing" with my sewing machine needle. If the idea of this intimidates you, you can mark your quilt first, or just practice the no-mark method on basted scrap fabric until you feel comfortable enough to proceed.

In the sashing I quilted in "cobblestones." It was quilt designer Jan Schmidt's idea to do some sort of stones in this area...like a path created between the houses. I did this with a slightly darker tan than the sashing fabric was so it stood out but not a high contrast. I varied the size and shape of the stones a little to create more interest in this area. Again, the design was done freehand.

In the border I quilted large flowers and leaves in a variegated thread in yellows, greens and lavenders. This was inspired by Kathy Sandbach's *Show Me How To Machine Quilt* book published by C & T Publishing. I have been doing flowers and leaves for a long time the no-mark way, but thought the design from this book fit the theme of the quilt. Again, I didn't mark the quilt. I just quilted by eye using the machine's needle and thread to "draw" the design.

The variegated thread design seen in the border was inspired by Kathy Sandbach's *Show Me How to Machine Quilt*. See "Resources" below.

When I mention a color in the months' quilting descriptions below, I'm referring to thread color. I used machine embroidery thread for all of the colored designs, except for the border thread. It was a little heavier weight than the lighter weight embroidery thread. I like to use embroidery thread to machine quilt because I think it gives a lighter touch for the design of the quilting.

## Blazing Bindings

1. Measure the distance around the quilt top and add at least 24 to 30 inches to that length.
2. Cut the binding on the straight of grain of your fabric
3. Cut 2-1/2 inches wide strips to the total measurement from the first step.
4. Join strips together with bias seams. Lay two strips right sides together perpendicular to each other and sew diagonally across. Trim off the extra fabric. Do this with all of the strips to make one long strip.
5. Press the seams to one side. Then press the strip in half long ways.
6. Begin sewing the strip onto the middle of one long side of the quilt leaving about 12 inches dangling. Make sure the cut edges of the binding match up with the cut edges of the quilt sandwich.
7. Sew with a 1/4-inch seam using a walking foot. The walking foot is very important to avoid get tucks or drag marks.
8. Sew folded mitered corners. Here's how (refer to illustration for figures 1 - 6):

- Stop sewing a scant 1/4-inch away from corner (**figure 1**).
- Rotate the quilt 1/4-inch turn and backstitch off the end of the quilt. Do Not cut the threads (**figure 2**).
- Fold binding straight up and away from the corner (**figure 3**).
- Fold it straight down with the fold along the top edge of the quilt (**figure 4**).
- Begin sewing again at that fold and continue along the second side of the quilt. Sew all four corners that same way (**figure 5**).
- Finishing:

- On the last side, stop sewing about 10 to 12-inches away from where you began sewing.
- Fold beginning edge diagonally and cut the first end making a bias cut.
- Lay ending excess flat along the edge of the quilt and fold the extra out of the way (**figure 6**).
- Lay the beginning cut edged strip on top (**figure 6**).
- Mark two spots on under strip matching ending points of upper strip bias cut edge. Cut lower binding strip 1/2-inch beyond those points. Another diagonal cut.
- Lay those two edges right sides together and sew a 1/4-inch seam. Press to one side. Press in half long ways.
- Finish stitching to binding to quilt.
- Press binding toward the outside away from the quilt.
- Fold to other side and either finish by stitching on top of the binding or stitching by hand.

### Tips:

If you are doing this quilt and it is going to be in a show that will be judged, finish the binding by hand with small stitches that cannot be seen. Sew the binding to the front of the quilt and bring the binding around to the back for finishing.

If this quilt will be laundered many times, or you don't want to do hand stitching, finish by machine topstitching. If finishing it this way, you may want to sew the binding on to the back of the quilt and then bring the binding around to the front of the quilt and top stitch on the front. Match your threads in the top to the binding and in the bobbin to the backing fabric.