

How to build a Quilt

MATERIALS:

White Handkerchief Squares
Permanent Colored Markers (Sharpies)
Batting to make the quilt thick
Backing to make the quilt like a sandwich
Thread – white for the top and thread to match the backing
Yarn for ties
Pins
Needle with an eye big enough for the yarn
Sewing Machine with basic straight stitching

PROCEDURE:

Unleash your imagination, creativity, passions, artistic talents, tracing skills, philosophies, poetic abilities, and favorite sayings – whatever makes you feel like barking! The square is the limit – fill it, make it YOU, let it howl (speak) for you! It's best to create on paper squares first and then transfer to the hanky with pencil and then finally use the PERMANENT (mistakes lasts forever) markers. Leave a half inch clean border around the square otherwise part of you will be sewn inside the quilt never to be seen or appreciated by others.

QUILTCOVER:

With squares completed, lay them out to create the cover. Now maybe you have twenty squares, which would make a nice 4 square by 5 square top. Consider including a few extra squares in case a new student moves in or an event or accomplishment needs to be included. The blank squares can create a pattern within the top. Caution: quilt tops in this stage are magnets for playful cats and dogs – leave the room for 2 seconds and all the squares are in a heap, scattered, hidden, etc. So once you get it looking the way you like it, sew the rows of blocks together with a 3/8 seam as soon as you possibly can! After you have the rows together, then sew rows to rows for the finished cover.

BACKING:

The backing can be as plain or as nifty as you'd like – after all, who looks at the back. Sheets are cheap but the fabric on the dollar table is even cheaper. If using yard goods, purchase 2 ½ times the length of the quilt. The backing needs to be cut a minimum of 3 inches longer and wider than the top. This excess is folded over the top to finish the edges and create a colorful boarder.

BATTING:

Most class quilts won't actually be used for sleeping or warmth except by those same cats and dogs that messed up the squares earlier so batting doesn't need to be thick or anything extra special. Try to go with polyester that's bonded. It's durable stuff so it will survive the animals and all the handling from the students. The batting should be cut to the same size as the quilt cover.

ASSEMBLY:

If you're lucky the cats and dogs are asleep at this time. Lay out the backing with the right side down. Place the batting on top of the backing. The edge of the backing should extend beyond the batting equally (1 ½ inches) on all sides. Lay the cover on top of the batting, matching the edges with the batting. You don't have much time before the animals wake up and will want to help, so work quickly! Pin the corners of each square to the batting and backing. If things are correct, the batting is like the bologna between 2 slices of bread. The good side should be out on both pieces of bread. Thread the needle with about 6 feet of yarn – double with NO knot at the end. Start from the top, go through the bottom and then back up through the top. Tie a square knot leaving 1 ½ tails. Now that the quilt is together it's safe for the animals to rise and shine.

FINISHING:

Fold half of the excess edge toward the quilt then fold the double fabric edge over the quilt cover and pin. This is where the cats likes to help most – as you pin the edge, the cat pulls the pins back out. Sew the edge of the folded border through the quilt with a straight stitch. Now you have a nice finished edge around the quilt, which also serves as a border for the cover. . If you're brave and have access to a quilting frame, the quilt could be quilted with a running stitch. Invite a grandma from the community to teach the students how to do the quilting stitch. Grandma might even lend you the quilting frame.

Quilts can be a very powerful project. Diane Johnson TOTT™ 2000 tells of a boy from her class who was moving and feeling really bad about leaving and being forgotten and having somebody else take his place. Diane's class had made a class quilt which was hanging on the wall. Diane took the boy over to the quilt and used it to assure him that he would always have a place in the class. Any new student would use one of the blank squares in the cover, but his square was in the quilt to stay. This proved to be a great comfort to this child.

Special and regular education students in the Family & Consumer Education classes at North High pieced together a log cabin quilt and presented it to the local hospital's Palliative Care program. The quilt would be placed upon a person who had just passed away to soften the scene in the hospital room while family members said their goodbyes. Through this project the students learned a great deal about quilt making from a grandma in our community and a great deal about caring and empathy for those in emotional need.

The quilt you make is a special quilt – a labor of love. Accomplished quilters would add more steps to the project and would pre-shrink the hankies and the backing before assembling the quilt. For a quick quilt though, this is a durable, nice looking blanket that creates a bond between all involved, including the cats and dogs.

Happy Trials,
Terrie Hanke
TOTT™ 2006

