

Quilting
FOR
DUMMIES®
2ND EDITION

by Cheryl Fall



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Wiley Publishing, Inc.

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About the Author

Cheryl Fall, a professional designer since 1986, is the author of 12 how-to books and over 2,500 how-to articles in various publications. Magazines featuring her work over the last 19 years have included *The Quilter*, *Quilt World*, *Quick and Easy Quilting*, *Family Circle*, *Woman's Day*, *Country Living*, *Craftworks*, and *Sewing Savvy*.

Cheryl is also the host of *The Creative Life with Cheryl Fall*, a nationally distributed PBS 'Plus' program that features lifestyle-enhancing projects, ideas, and useful information for women. She has also spent years creating quilting and sewing projects and teaching for various manufacturers, including Coats & Clark and Singer. As an accomplished fine artist, Cheryl has created and licensed designs for use in the textile, giftware, table top, and home furnishings markets.

Quilting can be an all-consuming occupation, but Cheryl still finds the time to goof around. Residing near Portland, Oregon, she's been happily married for more than 20 years to husband Tony and has two college-age daughters and one spoiled-rotten cocker spaniel named Buster, who thinks he rules the roost.

Dedication

I dedicate this book to would-be quilters the world over and to those who are learning this art. May all your quilts be terrific!

Author's Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Everybody loves quilts. They're soft, cozy, and comforting, and they've been around since man decided layers were the way to go. What more and more people have been realizing over the years, though, is that making quilts is fun and a wonderful way to express one's creativity with a practical bent.

Quilt making provides a wonderful opportunity to experiment with color, design, texture, and shape even if you're convinced you don't have an artistic bone in your body. Let your imagination guide you in choosing your fabrics and projects. Making quilts today is easier than you may have ever imagined; what's more, quilt making doesn't require any special skills, just a general knowledge of sewing and the desire to try! If you can sew a button or mend a hem, you can make a quilt. With just a few basic tools, a small amount of fabric, and a little time, you can create your own piece of comfort. This book shows you how. (And don't worry about mistakes — they add to the charm of your finished project.)

And speaking of projects! The range of quilted objects you can create is limitless! Think beyond the traditional bed quilt, and consider making quilted place mats, hot pads, or a table runner for your kitchen or to give as a host or hostess gift. You can even create quilted wall hangings as art for your home.

About This Book

This book guides even the beginningest-beginner through all the steps necessary for creating a first quilt. Although most people interested in quilting have sewn a bit, you can use this book even if your sewing experience is limited to threading a needle. If you're in the shallow end of the experience pool, you can simply start small, build experience and confidence, and eventually move on to tackling your grand design.

I show you how to select fabrics and materials, create a design, and then cut, piece, quilt, and finish your creation — all within the covers of this book. And to kick-start you in putting the skills covered in the book to actual use, I include 17 projects to fit any skill level. All are easy to create when you follow the illustrated and detailed step-by-step instructions.

Conventions Used in This Book

I used a few conventions when writing this book. Here they are:

- ✓ Each time I introduce a new quilting term, I *italicize* it.
- ✓ Step instructions and keywords that you should pay attention to in lists appear in **boldface**.
- ✓ Web sites and e-mail addresses appear in monofont to make them stand out.

What You're Not to Read

Of course, I'd love for you to read this book from cover to cover. After all, I've worked pretty hard on it, and it includes some great tips and tricks I've learned over the years! However, I do live in the real world, and I realize that you may be pressed for time and just want the bare-bones facts. If that's you, you can safely skip the sidebars, which appear in gray boxes, and any paragraphs that have the Technical Stuff icon attached. Reading these tidbits will enhance your quilting knowledge, but you can get by just fine without them.

Foolish Assumptions

I hate to assume anything about anyone I've never met, but when writing this book, I did have to make a few assumptions about who may be reading it. If you fit into any of the following categories, this book is for you:

- ✓ You're someone who has admired the art of quilt making from afar, but until now, you've been too skittish to try it.
- ✓ You're already in the process of learning to quilt and want a good, basic guide to help you build your skills.
- ✓ You've discovered that you're a fabric junkie and want to figure out what to do with all the great fabrics you've accumulated.
- ✓ Your favorite auntie is insisting you learn to quilt so that when you inherit her fabric stash, you can actually do something with it.

How This Book Is Organized

For logic and ease of use, this book is organized into six parts, the chapters of which progress from the most basic definition of a quilt and its parts

through various skills and techniques that will help you create your quilt. This section gives you a brief description of each of these parts.

Part I: Gathering Your Tools and Getting Ready

A quilt may be made up of fabric, batting, and thread, but those aren't the only things you need to produce the final product. In this part, I go over all the basics of a quilt's components and talk a lot about the necessary supplies and tools you need to get started. I also share my hints about fabric selection and choosing the right batting for your project.

Part II: Planning Your Masterpiece

Quilts break down into a variety of elements, from blocks and strips to borders and appliqués. In this part, I introduce you to all these design elements and guide you through the general processes of creating quilt blocks and using templates. Here, you find out how to make templates, transfer markings to your fabrics, and design your own quilts either from your doodles or using your computer.

Part III: Sharpening Your Sewing Skills

Quilting gives you lots of creative flexibility, but it's important to remember that creativity doesn't trump precision. Careful measuring, cutting, and pressing are crucial if you want your quilt to lay crisp and flat. This part tells you what you need to know to stay on the straight and narrow with your quilting skills. I also give you a primer on appliqué, a potentially challenging technique that really pays off by giving you even more decorative and creative options.

Part IV: Ahead to the Finish: Quilting the Pieces in Place

Ultimately, your quilt is a creatively stitched-together sandwich of fabric (the bread) and batting (the filling). This part helps you build the coziest of quilt sandwiches, getting all your creative juices flowing. When you've read through these chapters, you should know enough to get started on a project of your own (if you haven't already). Basting, stitching, and binding are all covered here, so you're sure to finish your masterpiece in style.

Part V: Completing the Circle: Projects to Try

If you're anxious to start quilting but don't have any of your own projects or designs in mind, this part provides 17 projects to get you started. These projects are all suitable for rank beginners and cover a wide range of styles and techniques, so you're sure to find something that gets your quilting fingers twitching.

I provide patterns for the appliqué projects, but for some you need to run to your trusty copy center and enlarge them to full-size. (They're reproduced here at 50 percent; my ideas are clearly bigger than this book.)

Part VI: The Part of Tens

In the grand *For Dummies* tradition, the Part of Tens is a patchwork part — a little of this, a little of that, and lots of information and inspiration as you become absorbed into the quilting world. Practice timesaving techniques that give you time for more quilts, try out some suggestions for displaying your works of fabric art, and find out what judges look for in a prizewinning quilt show entry. I also created an Appendix to the book, which is full of ways you can meet fellow quilters and shop for quilting supplies and such in cyberspace.

Icons Used in This Book

Sprinkled throughout this book are cute little pictures called *icons* that highlight important information. Here's the decoder key:



This icon highlights important quilting basics. Whenever you quilt, whether by hand or machine, you need to remember and apply this information — these are the eternal truths of the craft.



This icon indicates information that you don't absolutely have to know in order to work on a quilting project — but it can be helpful.



This icon points out time-tested great ways to do things regardless of how you're quilting or how long you've been doing it.



Whatever you do, don't skip information that has this icon attached to it. It points out things that could wreck your project and maybe even put your love affair with quilting on the rocks.

Where to Go from Here

Use this book in the way that makes the most sense for your situation: You can read it cover to cover or just skip around to specific chapters that interest you. If you already wield some sewing abilities, you'll probably progress through this book somewhat faster than true novices, adding new skills and developing new techniques. Think of this book as your own little quilting bee, with me as your friendly, down-to-earth mentor who presents the information you need in a way that's easy to understand and inspiring to try.

As soon as you piece your first block, I have no doubt you'll be hooked on quilting, as thousands of people all around the world are. You'll suddenly find yourself unconsciously setting aside time from your own busy schedule to collect fabric (most quilters are true fabri-holics), cut, and stitch. Pieces of fabric will unexpectedly appear in your hands each time you sit down, whether you're watching television, riding the bus, or taking some time for yourself. You'll find that quilting somehow helps you relax after a hard day. Oh, to shut yourself off in your own wonderful, colorful world of fabric and thread!

Although I've attempted to include everything a beginner could want in a quilt book, keep in mind that there are as many ways of making a quilt as there are quilters and far more additional techniques, hints, and tidbits than this book's space allows. So in addition to gathering a nice stash of fabric, I encourage you to start building a library of quilting reference materials; I include some of my favorite reference works and supply sources in the Appendix to nudge you along. Happy quilting!

Part I

Gathering Your Tools and Getting Ready

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"You always want to make sure the fabric you're using is colorfast, shrinkfast, and catfast."

In this part . . .

This part explains what makes a quilt a quilt and tempts you with the wonders of fabric. Every quilt is made from the same basic ingredients: fabric, thread, and a filler. In this part, I tell you everything you need to have on hand to make a quilt from beginning to end. I also share with you the must-have gadgets and tools and offer advice on how to select materials — including batting — appropriate for your project. By the time you get through this part, you'll be on your way to becoming a true fabric-holic, greedily stuffing fabrics into every spare nook and cranny in your home in anticipation of the next project

Chapter 1

The Art of Quilting

In This Chapter

- ▶ Deconstructing the quilt
 - ▶ Exploring the history of quilt making
 - ▶ Appreciating quilting today
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For centuries, quilts have played an important role in people's lives, providing their makers and recipients not only with warmth and comfort but also with colorful, attractive works of art. Traditionally, quilts also have been showcases for the talents and skills of their creators.

Throughout history, most households, regardless of income level, had certain quilts used only for special occasions or when honored guests visited. Quilt makers put their greatest efforts into these quilts, using the best quality fabric they could afford and covering them with miles and miles of beautiful quilting stitches. Many of these rarely used “best quilts” survive today as a testament to the history of quilting and the talents of their makers and are highly coveted by quilt collectors.

In this chapter, I explain what a quilt is and document the quilt's rich role in the texture of human life. I also share some of the newest developments in quilting and talk a bit about how quilting has become a modern form of artistic expression.

Following the Recipe for a Fabric Sandwich

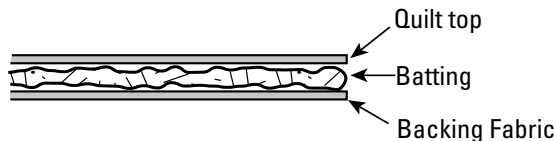
A quilt — that soft, cozy, comforting hunk of fabric and filling — in its simplest sense is a textile *sandwich*; in fact, that's how the quilt layers are traditionally described. This simple sandwich is what distinguishes a quilt from any other sewn object.

All quilts — whether intended for use on a bed or as a simple potholder — consist of three layers:

- ✓ Pieced or appliquéd quilt top
- ✓ Filling (called *batting* or *wadding*)
- ✓ Fabric backing

The top, batting, and backing layers are held together, or *quilted*, using a series of basic running stitches. You can also tie the layers together by stitching yarn, narrow ribbon, or pearl cotton through the layers at regular intervals and tying off the ends. However you do it, your goal is to prevent the layers from shifting during regular use and washing. You can see a cross section of a quilt in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1:
The layers
are what
make a quilt.



Some folks call various types of bedcoverings “quilts,” but if it doesn’t consist of three layers (top, filling, and backing), it isn’t really a quilt but rather a coverlet, bedspread, or throw. Also, although the word “quilt” is casually used to refer to a quilted bedcovering, many other objects — such as place mats, vests, wall hangings, and diaper bags — can be quilted.

The quilt top

The topmost layer of the quilt sandwich is the *quilt top*, which is typically made of fabric blocks that are pieced, appliquéd, or crafted using a mixture of both techniques. Quilt tops can also be devoid of individual blocks, made instead of whole cloth.

Piecing things together

A *pieced* (also called *patchwork*) quilt top can be made up of tens to hundreds of small pieces of fabric joined together by hand or machine to create a pattern or repeating design. Modern cutting and stitching techniques make the work of piecing both fun and easy to do. I discuss these techniques in Chapters 8 and 9.

Patchwork is the most recognized form of quilt making and was devised as a way to turn a bunch of fabric odds and ends into one cohesive unit, eliminating waste by using any fabric available. Over the centuries it evolved into the art form we know today. Patchwork uses basic shapes such as squares, triangles, rectangles, and hexagons to form patterns ranging from simple to complex. To create a patchwork top, you piece various patterns together into one block and then piece each block to another to create the overall quilt design. I talk more about patchwork in Chapter 4.

Layering up with appliqué

Appliqué is another method of creating quilt tops. To create an appliquéd top, you stitch various fabric shapes onto a base fabric. In the past, appliqué was used mainly for “best quilts” — the quilts used when company was expected — because of the money and time involved in making them. Stitching a piece of fabric on top of another piece wasn’t a very frugal use of precious fabric, making the quilts more expensive to create than patchwork ones. Appliqué also takes a bit longer to stitch than piecing, but the appliqué method allows you to create interesting patterns that can’t be pieced, such as dainty flowers with gracefully curving stems.

You can do appliqué work either by hand or by machine. Machine appliqué provides a variety of creative possibilities and is easy enough for even the rank beginner to master yet can be done intricately enough to produce a masterpiece worthy of a blue ribbon at the state fair. Chapter 10 covers appliqué in more detail.

Working with the whole top

Whole cloth quilts are one more branch of the quilt tree that bears mentioning. These were the fanciest of quilts, often created by wealthy women for only the most distinguished guests. In whole-cloth quilting, the quilt top consists of one large piece of fabric without seams (wide fabric widths were uncommon and very costly before the invention of modern fabric looms in the 18th century). This single piece is intricately quilted with delicate, closely-spaced stitching designs. One of the unique features of a whole cloth quilt is that it’s reversible, with the front being identical to the back. In France, these types of quilts are known as *boutis*. Today, whole cloth quilts are often referred to as *white work* or *bridal quilts*, and due to their intricacy, they’re still reserved for the best occasions.

The batting

The middle layer, or filling, of a quilt consists of cotton, wool, silk, or polyester *batting* (also referred to as “wadding” in some parts of the world).

Batting is a very important component of a quilt; in fact, it's the batting that makes a quilt truly a quilt. Without that wonderful, soft inner layer, you have a coverlet rather than a quilt. Batting adds depth and dimension to the quilt in that it buffers the quilt top and bottom, and it gives quilts the loft and coziness that make them so special.

Before the invention of commercial quilt batting, quilt makers used whatever they could find as filler. Wool was usually the filler of choice because it could be fluffed, laid out, and felted by dampening, pounding, and rolling the fibers until they meshed together. Quilt making got a whole lot easier when the first commercial quilt batting was produced from cotton in 1846. Cotton is still one of the favorite choices for quilt batting today.

I talk more about batting options and selection in Chapter 3.

The backing

The bottom layer of the sandwich, the *backing*, is a large piece of plain or printed cotton that may or may not be pieced together from smaller pieces to create the proper size. I talk more about the backing in Chapter 3.

After you assemble the three layers that make up a quilt, you have a sandwich of sorts: the quilt top and backing fabric enclose a layer of batting. The next step is to *quilt* the sandwich, meaning that you secure the three layers together by hand or machine stitching them into one cohesive and cozy unit.

“Quilt-thropology:” A Brief History of Quilt Making

Quilt making isn't just an American pastime; it has roots in Europe, South America, and Asia as well. Quilts were essential articles in households of the past, but they weren't used only as bedcoverings. You may be surprised to find out that quilts were used as curtains to keep out drafts, draped on supports and used as tents, used to cover doorways when no door was there, and used as petticoats and waistcoats to keep the body warm. Really thick quilts were even used as armor! Need proof? Head out to a Renaissance fair with a battle reenactment and you'll see something very similar to the quilted armor of our historical past.

Because quilts were so useful, quilting lessons began early in life. As soon as a young girl was able to manipulate a needle, she began her quilting and sewing career. Historic records show quilts included in a bride's dowry, and