

basic quilting vocabulary

Below is a quick reference guide to some of the most commonly used terms in quilting.

Applique: The method in which you attach smaller pieces of fabric to larger pieces of fabric in a pattern like geometrics or images. There are three common types: machine, hand, and fused.

Backing: The layer of fabric on the back of your quilt. You can use a single fabric, a wide back fabric, or multiple fabrics pieced together.

Batting: The material used between the quilt top and quilt backing.

Bias: This is the directional grain of woven fabric. True bias is the 45 degree angle to the selvage of the fabric.

Binding: A strip of fabric, typically 2 1/2" wide and pressed in half lengthwise, that encloses the outside edges of your quilt.

Block: A combination of unit(s) that make up the foundation of your quilt.

Border, Sashing, & Posts: A border is a strip or strips of fabric that frame the edges of your quilt. Sashing is strips of fabric that divide your quilt blocks. Posts are smaller blocks (often contrasting with your sashing) that join your sashing strips together at the intersection of the blocks.

Chain Piecing: The method in which you sew together your block units without lifting your presser foot or cutting your thread.

Clapper: Made of hardwood, this classic tool is used with a steam iron to set a seam.

Cutting Tools: Various scissors, rotary cutters, rulers, templates, and self-healing cutting mats that are used to cut fabric.

Fat Quarter: A quarter yard piece of fabric whose finished cut size is approximately 18" x 22."

Finger Press: The method of pressing a seam with your finger and pressure.

Flying Geese: A common quilt block. This block is made with a rectangle and two 90 degree triangles on each side.

Half Square Triangle: Another common quilt block often referred to as HST. This block is made when two squares are sewn together and cut in half diagonally once.

Machine Piecing: The method in which you sew together your block units using a domestic sewing machine.

Marking Tools: Various pens, pencils and chalks that can be used to mark fabric units.

Nesting (or Nestle): The method in which your two seam allowances, pressed in the opposite direction are aligned and sewn together. This reduces bulky seams.

Nine Patch: A common quilt block. This block is made with nine squares of fabric sewn together in rows, often with alternating color placement.

Pressing: The method in which you pick up the iron off of the fabric surface and place it back down in another location without sliding it across the fabric.

Quilting Cotton: This is a medium weight fabric which is made with 100% cotton. Quilting cotton is usually 44/45" wide from selvage to selvage.

Quilt Sandwich: The three layers of your quilt -- the quilt top, batting and quilt backing.

Quilt Top: The front of your quilt prior to layering with your batting and backing.

Raw Edge: The unfinished edge of the fabric.

Right Sides Together: Commonly known as RST. The method in which you sew two pieces of fabric together with their right sides facing. The wrong side of the two pieces are facing out.

Seam Allowance: This is the distance between the fabric edge and the seam line. The most common seam allowance is 1/4."

Selvage: The lengthwise edge of woven fabric.

Squaring a Block: Measuring and if needed, trimming your block to ensure accurate size.

Unit: A combination of two or more pieces of fabric sewn together that make up part of your quilt block.

Width of Fabric: Otherwise known as WOF. This is the usable width of most fabrics measuring selvage to selvage.