

Quilting As You Sew or *Divide & Conquer!*

Joan Metzger and Wendy Hill

Why? Why? Why?

1. It's EASIER to quilt blocks or sections than handling the whole quilt.
2. It SOLVES THE PROBLEM of "stops and starts".
3. You can IMPROVE YOUR QUILTING SKILLS while making a real quilt (instead of practicing on samples).
4. You can AUDITION THE QUILTING before you commit to the rest of the quilt.
5. It's possible to ADD MORE QUILTING OR CHANGE THE DESIGN as you go along.
6. It allows you to USE MORE INTRICATE QUILTING DESIGNS.
7. You can BLOCK AND SQUARE-UP BEFORE PROCEEDING, resulting in flatter quilts.
8. You can MAKE REVERSIBLE QUILTS while taking a short cut!

Six Methods for Quilting As You Sew: The Overview

Number 1: Lap Quilting ala Georgia Bonsteel

Quilt each block or section, leaving at least 1" of unquilted area around the outside edge of the block. Connect the blocks or sections by sewing the back to the back, batting to the batting, and top to the top. *More quilting* must be added to the unquilted areas.

Number 2: Piece & Quilt At the Same Time

This is an old method that's been updated. Assemble the block through the batting and backing. The seam line is also the quilting on the back. The finished blocks or sections must be joined to finish the quilt (see Numbers 4A & B, 5 and 6).

Number 3: Quilt Through Batting Only

With this method, most of the quilting (feed dogs engaged/walking foot OR free motion) is completed through the top and batting. After the backing fabric is added, more quilting joins all three layers. (Wendy initially developed this method to avoid practicing free motion quilting! She could hide her hideous looking bobbin stitching lines!!)

Number 4A & B: Quilt Through All Layers; Connect with Narrow or Wide Sashing

For this method, the quilting goes through all three layers (top, batting, backing fabric). The finished blocks or sections are joined together with narrow or wide sashing strips.

Number Five: Quilt Through All The Layers, Sew Right Sides Together, Cover Seams

Quilt the blocks or sections through all three layers (top, batting, backing fabric). Sew the finished units *right side together*; the front looks "normal". Cover up the seams on the back with blindstitched self-made fabric strips.

Number 6: Quilt in Smaller Finished Units Then....

Each section is completely finished with binding or facing. The sections may be hung side by side or connected with tabs, zippers, strings and more.

Quilting As You Sew: Brief Step-by-Step Directions

Although there are some books and magazine articles “out there” on this topic, we have not seen a resource with ALL the information in one place. Joan and I (and Crys Kyle and others) have been using the quilt-as-you-go methods regularly for the past few years, and we both agree: just do it! We think you’ll like it.

Number 1: Lap Quilting ala Georgia Bonsteel

Introduced at least 30 years ago, this method was geared for hand quilting, particularly for quilting sections on-the-go. You can adapt this method to machine quilting.

1. Quilt each block, leaving at least 1” around the perimeter *unquilted*.
2. Sew the blocks or sections together in three parts:
 - A) Sew the top to the top (by hand or machine, by folding or RST)
 - B) Butt the batting to the batting and whipstitch
 - C) Sew the back to the back (fold one side over the other side & blindstitch)
3. After the blocks or units are joined, go back and quilt the blank areas over the seams

Number 2: Piece & Quilt At the Same Time

This is an old method for piecing through the batting **and** backing fabric. As each piece is added, the stitching line is also the actual quilting. No visible quilting shows on the front of the quilt when you are finished, but more quilting may be added after the blocks or units are joined together.

1. Use foundation piecing or flip & sew methods to sew pieces together through the batting and the backing fabric.
2. The stitching line shows on the back as quilting lines, but there is no visible quilting on the front.
3. Sew the blocks or sections together:
 - A. with narrow or wide SASHING (refer to #4A & B).
 - B. by sewing the blocks or sections right side together, pressing and whipstitching the seam open, and blindstitching a seam covering over the seam. (Refer to #5)
 - C. by finishing each section individually (refer to #6).

Number 3: Quilt Through Batting Only FIRST

This can be used with the entire quilt top **OR** with blocks or sections. There may be more lint produced (depending on the batting), so be sure to take care of your best friend, your sewing machine.

1. Layer the quilt top (or blocks or sections) with the batting "as usual".
2. Quilt with a walking foot or with free motion stitching.
3. Pull the thread ends to the back and tie off; you don't need to trim the tails.
4. For quilting blocks or sections:
 - A) Sew the parts RST.
 - B. Press (and whipstitch) the seams *open*.
5. Take the quilted top (either pieced together or already a whole top) and:
 - A) Layer with the backing fabric.
 - B) Add more quilting to hold all three layers together. Wall hangings don't need much more quilting, but a functional quilt should have enough quilting through all the layers to stand up to the wear & tear of use, washing, drying, etc.

Ideas: Quilt in the ditch; echo quilt existing quilting lines; insert more quilting lines between existing lines, etc.

Number 4: Quilt Through All Layers; Connect with Narrow or Wide Sashing

With this method, the quilting always goes through all the layers (top, batting and backing fabric). Quilt right up to or off the edge of each block or section- eliminating most stops and starts. Plan ahead to make a reversible quilt with your choice of backing and sashing fabrics.

For Narrow or Wide Sashing

1. Layer the quilt top (blocks or sections) with batting and backing fabric, allowing at least 1" of extra batting and backing fabric all the way around.
2. Quilt "as desired" with a walking foot or with free motion. Quilt up to or off the edge of each block or section.
3. Optional: wash and dry each block or section now.
4. Square-up each block or section. "Block" the quilt now if it is distorted.

A) Narrow Sashing:

When the finished blocks or sections are joined together with the sashing strips, the seam allowances of the two pieces fill up the sashing.

Examples:

1/4" wide seam allowance, plan for a finished 1/2" wide sashing (cut at 1")

3/8" wide seam allowance, plan for a finished 3/4" wide sashing (cut at 1 1/2")

Since the blocks or sections are quilted through all three layers, there is a sashing strip on both sides of the quilt.

There are four edges for each "join" of two blocks or sections.

* Edges 1 & 2 are on *Side One*, where the sashing strip sits between the two units.

* Edges 3 & 4 are on *Side Two*, where the sashing strip sits between the SAME 2 units.

Machine stitch the sashing strips to the quilted blocks or sections on 3 of these edges. The fourth edge must be blindstitched by hand or carefully machine topstitched (the machine stitching will show on both sides of the quilt).

B) Wide Sashing:

When the sashing is wider than the seam allowance, you'll need to add batting down the sashing strip to fill the "gap" where there is nothing but two layers of fabric.

Piece the quilted blocks or sections with the sashing strips as directed above for narrow sashing. BEFORE closing the fourth edge, add the batting.

- * Cut the batting the same length as the sashing strip, AND a little narrower than the finished width of sashing strip (but wide enough to overlap with the seam allowances)
- * Whip stitch the batting to the seam allowances.
- * Blindstitch or machine topstitch the fourth edge in place as described above for narrow sashing.

Number Five: Quilt Through All The Layers, Sew Right Sides Together, Cover Seams
With this method, the quilting goes through all of the layers (top, batting, backing fabric) but the blocks or sections are joined to look "normal" on the front of the quilt. The seam(s) are covered up on the back of the quilt with a self-made seam covering. *No additional quilting is required- when you're done, you're done!*

1. Layer the top (blocks or sections) with batting and backing fabric.
2. Quilt through all the layers; quilt right up to or off the outside edge.
3. Sew the blocks or sections *right sides together*. The front will look "normal".
4. On the reverse side, press the seam(s) open.
5. The seam won't want to stay open, so whipstitch the edge of both sides of the seam to the quilt, catching the batting only (not the other side, the quilt top). This is all covered up with the seam covering, so a rough whipstitch is okay. (*Wendy calls this a Frankenstein whipstitch- think of those big stitches on Frankenstein's neck!*)
6. Make the seam covering, using the same fabric as the back or contrast fabric:
 - Option #1: Use a 3/4" or 1" bias maker gadget with fabric strips cut on the grain; cut the strips twice as wide as the finished strip (1 1/2" or 2" respectively).
 - Option #2: Cut the strip twice as wide as the finished width, and hand fold each edge to the middle, pressing with an iron as you fold. (*Carol Webb is the expert to see about this method.*)
 - Option #3: Sew a fabric tube by cutting the strip twice as wide as the finished width plus seam allowance. Sew WRONG sides together. Press the seam open down the middle of the tube.
7. Center the seam covering over the whipstitched seam allowance and blindstitch (hand appliqué), sewing through the batting only (*not* through to the front side). Note: It could be machine topstitched, but you'd need to plan ahead for the stitching to show on the front side of the quilt.

Number 6: Quilt in Smaller Finished Units Then....

Each unit, block or section is completely finished with a faced or bound edge.

OPTIONS

A. Hang the units side by side.

You might have seen this in a quilt magazine or at a show. Often this is used with a photograph, where each person takes a vertical strip of the photograph and interprets it in fabric. The finished strips are hung side by side on the same board.

B. Connect the units with tabs, buttons, loops, zippers or some other way.

I have books with examples of this. One quilt has vertical sections connected with what looks like cording or shoelaces. Another quilt has sections connected with zippers. I've also seen a quilt connected with zippers at a quilt show- the units could be rearranged!

C) Joan's *Sew Yourself in Circles* guild workshop, based on a technique written about by Charlene Bement, *American Quilter Magazine*, Volume XXII, No. 4, Projects 2006:

For this quilt, you make finished whole circles, with top, batting, backing fabric and quilting. Then you sew them together to make a reversible quilt with squares on one side and a faux-Cathedral Window quilt on the other.

D) Woven Quilt: I saw this quilt in a magazine in the 1970's.

* Start by making finished quilted columns (warp) and rows (weft). The quilt I saw used extra loft batting for a puffy quilt and solid color fabrics in bright colors.

* Layout the vertical columns. Weave the horizontal units "over-under, over-under" with the columns.

* Snug the columns and rows together. The quilt I saw just used topstitching around the outside edge to hold it all together. But you could quilt along the edges of the strips both vertically and horizontally.

D) Clothing: Think about making clothing with each section completely finished. One idea: make a jacket with sleeves that swap out for other sleeves.

Kayla Kennington markets modular clothing patterns for doing just this! (See Resources next page for more info.)

Miscellaneous Resources

Books

Awash with Color, Judy Turner, ©1997, Martingale & Co. ©1969, Good Books
(Method 4A: narrow sashing)

Beautiful Quilts As You Go, Kern Emmerson, © 2005, American Quilter's Society

Block by Block: New Techniques for Machine Quilting and Assembly
Beth Donaldson © 1995, That Patchwork Place/Martingale and Co.

Cotton Theory Quilting: Quilt First-Then Assemble
Betty Cotton, ©2006 Cotton Theory LLC

Divide and Conquer, Nancy Smith & Lynda Milligan, © 2000, Possibilities

Lap Quilting Lives! Georgia Bonsteel, © 1999, That Patchwork Place (Method #1)

Quilt-As-You-Go, Sandra Millett, © 1994, Chilton Book Co.

Reversible Quilts: Two at a Time, Sharon Pederson, © 2002, Martingale and Co.

Stitch 'n Flip: 14 Fantastic Projects, Valorie Wells, © 2000, C&T Publishing (Method #2)

Two-for-One Foundation Piecing, Reversible Quilts & More
Wendy Hill, © 2001, C&T Publishing
(Methods #4A & B; #5)

Other

"Secrets To Quilting As You Sew", article by Wendy Hill

The \$100,000 Quilting Challenge Magazine, Issue #3, 2006, Reality Publishing, LLC

The Hive Project by Patricia Autenrieth, <http://www.arsaut.com> (click on Hive Project)

Twelve quilt artists each made 68 blocks (12" square, faced). When all the blocks are installed, the "quilt" is 8 feet high by 98 feet long! Since each block is finished, the quilt composition is rearranged with each installation, using all or some of the blocks.

Kayla Kennington, www.kaylakennington.com

Kayla uses modular units for making clothing. Each unit is complete then connected together. Her ideas could be adapted for Method #6 with quilts.

MMQG Members!

In alphabetical order:

Wendy Hill, 541-593-8092

Crys Kyle, 541-593-1724

Joan Metzger, 541-593-2988

