

## DOES YOUR QUILT NEED A WASH?

Courtesy of Quilt Board

You have been using that favorite quilt of yours for quite some time now, and you finally need to give it a wash. It may be that precious quilt that has been stored in a dingy box waiting to be reused again or that special antique quilt. Whatever the case may be, your quilt does need to be washed at some point. So now that you have made up your mind to wash the quilt, you realize that you don't know how to do it properly. Surely it can't be the same way that you wash your clothes, by just dumping it in the washing machine with detergent and adjusting the settings. If you were to do that, then you would have your antique quilt torn to pieces by the end of the final cycle. So how do you wash your precious quilt? Easy! Just follow my step-by-step instructions.

First, before washing your quilt, there are certain things that should be taken into consideration. You should ask yourself how you will be using your quilt. Will it be displayed folded up, hung on a wall, or laid across a bed? If you are going to display your quilt over a folded rack, you may not even have to wash it at all! But keep in mind that it is best not to subject your quilt to stress of any kind. You should also avoid letting your quilt get dirty. Dust and dirt may damage your quilt, creating tears or holes.

If you have a very delicate quilt that you would like to clean, one option is to simply air it out on a nice sunny day. This will remove the dust and freshen up the quilt. You can also lay it on the lawn on top of a clean sheet and then cover it with another clean sheet. Another option is to drape the quilt over a wide railing on top of a sheet protector. Vacuuming is another good option. In the event that you're cleaning a quilt that has elaborate embellishments, place a fine mesh screen over it, and then start cleaning.

### Some Things You Need to Do Before Washing Your Quilt

Normally, a nice, dry cleaning with a vacuum is the best option when it comes to cleaning your quilt. This is ideal when you cannot wash it with water, where your quilt can face permanent and irrecoverable damages, no matter how careful you are. But, in the event, that you plan on displaying your quilt on the bed or on a wall, you may need to wash your quilt with water. Here are some things to consider before washing your quilt:

Check the age and the condition of your quilt before you wash it.

Quilts that are damaged should be repaired first and then washed.

Quilts that are made with non-colorfast dyed material may cause the fabric to bleed during washing.

Some quilting material is made with iron as a mordant to set the dye. This will damage the fabric if washed.

### Does Your Quilt Bleed?

Another important thing that you should do before washing your quilt is to test whether it will bleed or not. To do this, take a wet white cloth and rub it on the different parts of your quilt. Be careful not to get carried away while rubbing each part; if one part did not bleed, another one may. You should notice if your quilt bleeds when it is saturated with water. If your quilt passes this test, it's ready to be washed. The easiest way to wash a quilt is in a washing machine. Fill the water in your washing machine to the highest point, as if it were a giant wash tub. Add a small amount of mild detergent, and then agitate the quilt by hand; let it soak for a brief period. After that, spin out the excess water from the machine.



## **Some Natural Products**

If you're unsure whether or not your detergent is mild enough, you can make your own natural "detergent" with this buttermilk recipe:

For one gallon of water, add one quart of buttermilk (fat content 1% or less) and one tablespoon of lemon juice. Follow the above steps for washing your quilt in the machine. Rinse well.

If your quilt is very dirty, then you can use a commercial detergent or enzyme cleaner. For example, for removing pencil marks, combine 1/4 cup water with 3/4 cup rubbing alcohol and 7 - 8 drops of Palmolive detergent; apply with a toothbrush. Let this soak for no more than 20 minutes. Rinse well.

## **Two Types of Soap Solutions**

There are mainly two types of soap solutions that can be used when washing quilts:

ionic solutions -- e.g. Ivory Snow liquid and Dreft

anionic solutions -- e.g. a few enzymes with surfactants

Both of them attract different types of soil molecules. Whatever solution you use, make sure that you thoroughly rinse your quilt, because the residue of the soap will attract dirt.

## **Is the Washing Machine Recommended for Quilts?**

There is some disagreement about whether washing machines can damage quilts. Washing machines can put stress on a quilt, which is why washing by hand is recommended. But the advantage of using the washing machine is that the quilt dries more quickly. You can dry your quilt by laying it out over a railing padded with towels. You can also cover it with a sheet and use a slow fan speed to help circulate the air. Be sure to change the position of the quilt so it will dry evenly.

## **Antique Quilts**

Unlike regular quilts, antique quilts face their own problems, among them mold and bugs. We often mistake the stains of dead bugs as blood stains. These stains are extremely difficult to remove. Many quilts that are stored will have brown spots; these blood or rust-colored stains are caused by dye migration. Changes in temperature are also a factor. Sometimes more damage will be done in trying to remove these stains.

If you find the techniques described above not to your liking, you can try a traditional method that has been used by the textile industry for years -- Sodium Perborate. The major benefit of this chemical is that it will not bleach past the real color. To clean a test-spot, use a paste of Biz or Ivory Snow. Brush this paste on the spot, and then vacuum it clean.

## **Courtesy of Quilting Board**

There are several types of glue available for basting. Some of them are formulated especially for the quilting industry and some of them are manufactured for other uses. There are advantages and disadvantages of each that I will discuss in the paragraphs below. With the use of these products thread basting is eliminated.

### **Roxanne's Glue-Baste-It!**

One product is called Roxanne's Glue Baste-It! It comes in a small bottle with a long neck applicator so a small dot of glue can be placed on the fabric. The instructions recommend a small controlled dot of glue be placed 1/2" from raw edges of fabric. It will hold firmly until fabric is wetted. Once your appliqué project is glue basted you will be able to stitch needle turn appliqué quickly.

### **Glue Stick**

Acid free glue stick is available in the school supply section of most variety stores. Glue sticks are priced very reasonably. These are put up in a plastic tube that is similar to lipstick. There are several brands available and you will have to experiment and decide which brands you prefer. Be sure to buy a brand that is washable.

## **BASTING WITH GLUE**

Some glue sticks say they are permanent yet washable. In this case the permanent refers to using them in scrap booking or other paper uses. If you use them on fabric and the glue is washable, it will wash out of your quilting or appliqué project even after it is dry.

A swipe of the glue stick on the fabric or freezer paper will hold the fabric in place until it is wet.

Store your glue sticks in the refrigerator, preferably in an airtight container or a zipper seal bag. When one glue stick gets gooey from using, place it back in the refrigerator and use another glue stick that is cold. Continue rotating glue sticks until you have finished basting your entire project.

I prefer glue stick that is white and dries white. Some glue sticks are purple but dry clear. Many quilters use this product but I prefer not to risk having some of the purple color remain in my fabric after glue basting.

### **Elmer's School Glue**

School glue is water based and it washes out completely. It is readily available at most variety stores and now there are even applicator lids that can be purchased. They are compatible with the school glue bottles. You would find the applicator lids at your local quilt store or hobby and craft store.

### **Aerosol Sprays**

Temporary Adhesive Spray is available in an aerosol spray can. Temporary adhesive spray is repositionable. After 2-5 days the glue will disappear leaving no residue. This type of spray should be used if you are going to work on your project within a few days.

### **Sewing the grid**

The interfacing backing with the fabric pieces are then folded with the fabric right sides together and stitched on the machine. After stitching all seams in one direction, the seam allowances are clipped where the fabric butts together. Then the fabric is folded -- again with right sides together -- and the squares are stitched together in the opposite direction.

One drawback of using fusible interfacing I have noted. Fusible interfacing has a directional stretch that will make your piece slightly rectangular. On a fairly large piece you will find a square is not square but slightly rectangular. I simply made adjustments in the borders and didn't mind that one direction was slightly larger than the other.

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Basting Spray will hold indefinitely until it is washed out. It needs to be washed to completely disappear. The aerosol sprays can be a little messy to use as when applying them there will be an "over spray". You either need to protect your spraying surface or you will need to do some clean up when you are finished basting. Most basting sprays clean up with soap and water.

Whatever product you choose, you will need to wash the glue out of your final project. When I finish an appliqué block, I usually soak the finished block in a small basin of warm soapy water. In a few minutes the glue has softened and the block is ready to be rinsed and hung to dry.

### **Fusible Interfacing For Piecing**

Watercolor artists have been using fusible interfacing to assist in piecing for several years. Fusible interfacing is available with a one-inch or two-inch printed grid depending on the brand you purchase. This grid interfacing is available at fabric stores, superstores, and your local quilt shop. If you buy pre-printed interfacing you won't have to draw the grid yourself.

If you cannot find interfacing with the grid you can make your own by using your acrylic ruler and a permanent marker or a ball point pen -- anything that will write clearly on the interfacing.

This interfacing is the grid is printed on the non fusible side. Sometimes if you are working on a dark surface the printed lines do not show through adequately. A good way to overcome this would be to place a large sheet of white paper under your fusible grid. Also remember if you are drawing your own grid you will also want to draw on the non fusible side.

To design your watercolor, the fusible grid interfacing is placed fusible side up on the table. The watercolor fabric squares are placed in a pleasing manner. When the design is completed, slip a bath towel under the interfacing and iron right on the table to tack the fabric pieces in place. Once the pieces are tacked, you may then move your piece to the ironing board for a more complete fusing.

The printed interfacing grid is already printed in one inch or two inch increments. That being the case you will want to cut your watercolor squares slightly smaller or a scant two inches. Once the fabric is fused it will be easier to fold the fabric to stitch.

The interfacing is left in the project permanently so it would definitely need to be machine quilted and not hand quilted. There is a stiffness left by the fusible glue and the additional layer of interfacing but if you are simply making a wall quilt the extra stiffness wouldn't be significant.

Another watercolor landscape artist uses tear away stabilizer for the same purpose. Tear away is not marked with a grid but can be easily marked with your acrylic ruler and a ball point pen. The theory is the same. You mark your grid -- she recommends 2 1/4" and cutting fabric squares at 2". Because the tear away is not fusible you will need to use acid free glue stick -- the kind used for paper -- to glue the squares down.

You don't need a lot of glue for this process. Simply swipe the glue stick along the stabilizer and place your squares. If you need to iron your squares it will be OK. The heat from the iron won't hurt the glue or fabric.

These squares on the tear away stabilizer are folded and stitched in the same way as with the fusible. Stitch with a short stitch -- about half of what you would usually piece with. This will help in tearing the stabilizer away. After sewing all seams in one direction the stabilizer is removed from the seam

allowance only. The project is refolded and the opposite direction and the rows are stitched. Again tear away the stabilizer in the seam allowance but leave the stabilizer in the main part of the quilt until the borders are added. Then tear away the remaining stabilizer behind the squares. Any small amount of glue residue on the fabric will wash out the first time your project is laundered.

Recently some new patterns and booklets were released using a quilter's grid printed on point. They contain instructions to piece nine patch or other simple patterns using a fusible interfacing grid. Again you do not remove the fusible interfacing and would have the bulk and thickness remaining. This concept might be useful for some patterns. Most of the patterns presented looked simple enough to piece without drawing a grid on the interfacing and having that extra step.

The tear away stabilizer method has some real possibilities as it can be torn away and would not be left in the quilt. When fusible interfacing remains in the project it would affect the softness and drape of the quilt.