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QUILTING BLOG

Quilting DIY: How To Hand Tie a Quilt

By **Angela Mitchell** on October 5, 2013

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It is not uncommon to find a quilter who has a stack of quilt tops that are waiting to be quilted. The actual act of quilting can be difficult and a bit intimidating. What exactly is quilting? It's the process of sewing together the three layers of a quilt: the top, batting, and backing. There are three different ways to accomplish this.



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The first way is to quilt by machine. After the layers have been basted together, they are sewn together with the sewing machine (either a home or longarm machine) in the desired pattern. The second option is to hand quilt. This is a traditional technique that is highly beloved. Much enjoyment is had and a unique personal touch is created during **hand quilting**. The last option for finishing a quilt is hand tying, and this is what we are going to take a look at today.



Photos via [Nana Company](#)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TIE A QUILT? THIS IS A VERY BASIC AND BEGINNER-FRIENDLY WAY TO HOLD TOGETHER A QUILT.

Embroidery floss, yarn or a similar product is used to literally tie the layers together every few inches. This works well on both pieced and whole-cloth quilts. It is suitable for a variety of different projects, including those with different weights. Quilts with no batting or those with extra thick batting that are not able to be quilted in any other way are great candidates for this type of technique.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN TYING A QUILT? HERE ARE THE BASICS:

STEP 1:

Gather together necessary supplies: a basted quilt, embroidery floss or yarn, thimble, scissors,

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and a tapestry needle with a sharp point and large eye.

STEP 2:

Decide where you'd like to tie the quilt. This can be in the middle of a block or across a seam. Be sure to keep the spacing equal in distances that are appropriate for the batting that is being used. These intervals can be anywhere from 4" – 10".

STEP 3:

Thread the needle with the preferred tying material. This can be tricky since yarn and floss is pretty thick, so use a needle threader if necessary. If that doesn't work, try folding the thread in half. Pinch the fold in half and try pushing that new point into the eye. Cut thread to approximately 20 – 24".

STEP 4:

Insert needle down through all three quilt layers and then back up through ¼" away from the initial spot. Leave a 2" tail.

STEP 5:

Repeat step in the same location to reinforce.

STEP 6:

Cut thread, leaving another 2" tail.

STEP 7:

Use a double knot to tie the tails together. Trim excess tails, leaving approximately 1".



Hand tying is a quick and easy way to finish a quilt. It adds a touch of vintage inspired charm to any project. Despite its draws, be aware that a tied quilt is not as durable as one that has been fully quilted. Wash these types of quilts sparingly and use care when they do need to be laundered.



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35 COMMENTS



Miss Butterfly
October 5th, 2013

I love it ! I finished two quilts this way and for an other one I just sewed buttons to hold the 3 layers ...It's fast and easy ...And after several washes in the machine I can confirm they still perfect ...so I guess it's the way to go for all the tops waiting to be quilted !!!!

[Reply](#)



Faye
May 14th, 2015

We have quilts that were tied over 20 years ago by my mother-in-law and they are still together after many washings. Love this method

[Reply](#)



Doris Friday
October 5th, 2013

A 4th way is to pick one stitch such as a star and sew the star where you would tie the quilt. This way the 'ties' do not come out when little fingers pull on them.

[Reply](#)



Pat Ost
October 5th, 2013

I like it too- my only problem is the knot- reef, granny or???

[Reply](#)



Sue
October 5th, 2013

I have made several tied quilts, one of which has been on my bed in daily use for about 7 years, and washed repeatedly (the cats' favorite napping spot). The top is pieced entirely with 3" squares with one narrow and one wider border. I tied with yarn at the corner of each nine patch. I notice now that the yarn has popped through the backing (all one piece) into the middle in several places where I took too small of a stitch, so your recommendation of at least 1/4" is a good one. But otherwise it is holding together very well, I'd say. It was a queen size quilt and not "quick" even to tie, but a success.

[Reply](#)



pdxknitterati/michele
October 5th, 2013

I hand tied a whole cloth quilt for my dorm room, a zillion years ago. I still use it; it's on my bed under the down comforter. I can't believe how well it's held up!

[Reply](#)



Kay
October 5th, 2013

I often tie my quilts and find that the 'surgical knot' makes a very sturdy tie, harder to undo than the double knot. I learned it from YOUTUBE, as I recall.

[Reply](#)



Catherine Richard
October 6th, 2013

Your site is very informative. Thank you.

[Reply](#)



Priscilla Pride
October 6th, 2013

I restored an antique quilt for a friend and did not find it fast at all. I did tie it closer than 4 inches though. It didn't have batting in it.

The quilt was made from old clothes, pants, shirts, and flour/rice sacks. It was evidently a quilt that was made because a quilt was needed. No particular pattern and the size of the patches was all different sizes. some were pieced to make the patch. The batting was more flour/rice sacks.

I didn't find it as a fast way to quilt a top. I have a long arm and I could do 4 quilts to what it would take to tie the one I tied.. But if you don't have a long arm, don't want to quilt on a do-

mestic and can't afford to hire it done this is a good way to finish a quilt. It also can be done while you ride down the road. i

[Reply](#)



Edie Hudgins

May 16th, 2015

I always tie mine on the back. I put a drop of either super glue or clear nail Polish on the knot to hold it.

[Reply](#)



Karen Monteith

October 6th, 2013

I have a hexi quilt I have been hand sewing forever. I want to complete it for a gift. Maybe I will hand tie it; the possibility of completing it will be much greater.

[Reply](#)



Kay Cinotto

October 6th, 2013

When I was younger, I helped my grandma and sisters and mom...This is the only method they use! I still love it to this day. I remember the huge, curved needles...In fact I might still have a couple of them. I am going to machine quilt my first time on the quilt that I am making now

[Reply](#)



Anne Rightler

October 6th, 2013

I handtied several baby quilts for my first couple grand children. Needless to say the ties didn't hold thru the hard use of baby/toddlerhood! The later ones I machine stitched and they held up very well.

[Reply](#)



Patty Graves

October 6th, 2013

Yes but tie would not stay in,why?

[Reply](#)



Gerri Dean

October 22nd, 2013

I have hand tied many quilts and love it! It is easy and makes the time shorter to complete the project.

[Reply](#)



Sue Law

September 30th, 2014

I'm still using a hand-tied quilt my Grandmother made when I was a baby, and I'm 63 years old. It has held up to many machine washings and the only repairs have been to fraying edges. Nothing has ever come untied. Long before she died, and we were making one for one of my new grandbabies, she told me that the only way to insure they don't come untied is to use a square knot. I've had very good success with yarn and tightly tied square knots, and have never had anything come untied in the wash or by a baby or toddler for that matter. Ribbon or some other relatively slick material may not hold together as well though.

[Reply](#)



Sue Law

October 20th, 2014

I'm still using a hand-tied quilt my Grandmother made when I was a baby, and I'm 63 years old. It has held up to many machine washings and the only repairs have been to fraying edges. Nothing has ever come untied. Long before she died, and we were making one for one of my new grandbabies, she told me that the only way to insure they don't come untied is to use a square knot. I've had very good success with yarn and tightly tied square knots, and have never had anything come untied in the wash or by a baby or toddler for that matter. Ribbon or some other relatively slick material may not hold together as well though.

[Reply](#)



Ellen Novicky

April 14th, 2015

I tied a quilt, but some of the stitches are longer, like closer to 1/2" long than 1/4". I was wondering what long-term effect this will have on the quilt. I read earlier today about a quilt ripping in each place there was a tie, I was wondering if too long a stitch may be why, or perhaps that not enough ties were used.

[Reply](#)



Kathleen in Arkansas

May 14th, 2015

This is how my grandmother used to make quilts. Her quilts were made from old clothing, very dark colors, she always used red yarn to tie them and it would be the only spot of color on the quilt. It is my preferred method for finishing off a quilt, I think it gives a vintage look to them.

[Reply](#)



Pat

May 16th, 2015

Would like to have copied this about how to tie a quilt, but all I got is a bunch of comments!

[Reply](#)



Mary canaday

June 21st, 2015

i tie most of my quilts I don't have a long arm and the larger ones are difficult to quilt on my machine. My grandma taught me to tie them. I did one for my niece and added bows to it in between the ties she loved it

[Reply](#)



Peggy Burdette

June 21st, 2015

I tack all my quilts. I have made sizes from baby to king size. I can put one in the frame and have it tacked and ready for hemming in one day. My Mom taught me to tack and my grandma taught me to hand sew them.

[Reply](#)



Kathy

August 16th, 2015

I am so glad you are giving this method some attention. I have always tied my quilts and they stay tied. I have started to feel like a second class quilter because I don't machine quilt. Glad to hear this is still considered a good method to secure the quilt.

[Reply](#)



Dotty

June 29th, 2016

No such thing as a "second class" hand made quilter. I learned from my daughter how to quilt. I have made about a dozen, all by hand, it takes me about a year and a half to complete. My daughter always said "we are quilting snobs". I'll never stop. XX

[Reply](#)



mabel carr

August 20th, 2015

how many tacks are needed?

[Reply](#)



Greene

April 26th, 2016

About 20 years ago, or so, I saw an interesting quilt with a mix of tieing, machine (probably regular sewing machine), and hand quilting. While the mix looked visually appealing with the top's mix of blocks and sashing... I suspect that the design features were intended to keep the quilt possible to complete and together when in post display use.

[Reply](#)



debbie

May 12th, 2016

I make piece work tied of granny quilts. How much do I charge

[Reply](#)



Helen Lippold

November 7th, 2016

I have a whole cloth quilt that my grandmother made me 50 years ago. It is tied on both side with square knots. All of the knots have held and it is still perfect. I love to cuddle with it, especially when I am sick. It is much softer than one that is machine quilted. I am the same technique for my granddaughter, but with a modern pattern. She is the same age now as I was then. I have no doubt she will love it.

[Reply](#)



Miss quilter
April 1st, 2017

I am making a quilt right now using this method. It is simple and cute! I love it especially because I am a begginer with quilting and I find this method nice and easy for my first big quilt.

[Reply](#)



Greenleaf
April 15th, 2017

I am thinking about a quilt that I will be making soon. I am undecided if I will quilt it by hand or hand tie it.

[Reply](#)



Margo Moore
June 2nd, 2017

I just selected fabrics for a bed quilt for one of my grand-nieces; I've only worked on small items so this is a bit ambitious for me, and I planned from the start to hand-tie it, in the interests of finishing it within the year. My question is, is this method more compatible with needled cotton batting, or polyester batting? My nephew's wife is a fine person but very busy and I want to make this quilt as easy-care and durable as possible. Would appreciate any advice. I've already purchased the acrylic yarn--the only skein at Joann's with the right color!

[Reply](#)



Linda
October 12th, 2017

Why the rush? I savor the experience.

[Reply](#)



Linda
October 12th, 2017

I am curious how well this article was researched. Tying can add great texture to a quilt and a sharp contrasting thread can be sooo interesting. The reason you may think quilts don't last when tied could be the method. Square or surgical knots are a must and durability of fiber for tying is critical. Use a hooked needle and a long thread – stitch the whole quilt – anchoring each tie, put your needle down, cut all threads, put down scissors and tie – much more efficient.

[Reply](#)



Renee
May 24th, 2018

Thank you for your help with the tying experiences. I'm involved in a project for a quilt give away for families from the Thomas Fire. I want this patchwork quilt to be a special memory and it needs to come from the heart . So I'm hoping that I can do it right. I plan to take the advice of others and tie it with the knowledge that I have gained from you all ❤️

[Reply](#)



Ann
October 7th, 2018

Someone said they used buttons, is that in place of a tie? Just a few on each quilt? Sounds cute I am doing 6 quilts for a lady, I have tops sewn now would like to try the tie method...how do u finish the edges?

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