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QUILTING BLOG

# Prepare to Quilt! How to Get Your Quilt Ready for Stitching

By **Lindsay Conner**, **Anita Grossman Solomon** and **Lauren Lang** on May 10, 2018

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Once your quilt sandwich is finished, your backing is ready to go and your batting is cut to size, you only have two more steps before you can start quilting! It's time to make your quilt sandwich and baste the layers of your quilt.

## FIRST UP IS MAKING THE QUILT SANDWICH

### WHAT IS A QUILT SANDWICH?



Photo from [Startup Library: Quilting with Christa Watson](#)

Simply put, a quilt sandwich is the two layers of fabric and one layer of batting that are stacked on top of each other just before the quilting process. In fact, the quilt sandwich is what makes a quilt a quilt!

### MAKING A QUILT SANDWICH

Creating the quilt sandwich is as easy as stacking the three pieces in a particular order:

1. Quilt backing with the wrong side up
2. Batting
3. Quilt top with the right side up

### HOW TO PUT A QUILT SANDWICH TOGETHER

Sometimes the hardest part of making a quilt sandwich is finding the space to lay out all the pieces. Luckily, quilters have come up with smart solutions for this common problem.

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Photo from Craftsy blogger [Lauren Lang](#)

If you have a wide, hard-surfaced floor, you can lay the three layers right on the floor. This is not the best option if you're working on carpet, though. You'll find you have a hard time keeping the layers aligned since they won't lay perfectly flat.

#### ON A TABLE

If you have a large enough table, you can place your entire quilt sandwich right on the surface. Whether on the floor or the table, use tape, paperweights or other heavy objects to hold each layer in place.

#### ON THE WALL



Photo by Craftsy instructor [Anita Grossman Solomon](#)

Depending on the size of your quilt, you can hang the quilt sandwich on the wall! Instructor Anita Grossman Solomon uses low-tack tape (such as painter's tape) to hold up each layer. Gravity makes sure the layers are even.




Photo from [Startup Library: Quilting with Christa Watson](#)

#### TIPS FOR A PERFECT QUILT SANDWICH

- Your quilt back should be at least 3" larger than your quilt top on all sides.

- It's a good idea to make your batting the same size as the quilt back.
- Press your quilt top and back before building the quilt sandwich to guarantee a wrinkle-free quilt.
- If your batting has wrinkles, don't iron it! Instead, throw it in the dryer with a wet washcloth or sprinkle it with water first.



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## WHEN YOU'VE ASSEMBLED QUILT SANDWICH, IT'S TIME TO BASTE!

### WHAT IS BASTING AND WHY DO I NEED TO DO IT?

In quilting, basting is a technique that temporarily holds together the layers of the quilt sandwich while you quilt.

There are plenty of effective methods for this, most quilters have a strong opinion on the best one. We'll tell you a bit about four of the most popular methods so you can try them out and decide for yourself.

### FOUR COMMON QUILT BASTING METHODS

#### PIN BASTING



Photo courtesy of [Vintage Modern Quilts](#)

One of the most popular basting methods is to use safety pins. In this method, you'll place lots of safety pins all over the quilt sandwich to hold the layers together.

Although pin basting can be time-consuming, it's a good way to ensure that the quilt layers remain in place during quilting. It works for small to large quilts.





Photo by Craftsy instructor [Anita Grossman Solomon](#)

Craftsy instructor [Wendy Butler Berns](#) recommends using 1½” safety pins or 1½” curved basting pins. These are just the right size for pin basting quilts and do not leave large holes in the quilt top. Flat flower pins shafts are delicate and may bend, and safety pins any larger are not sharp enough to pierce all three layers of the quilt sandwich.

You’ll need a big collection of pins — Wendy estimates you’ll need 100 for a twin-sized quilt. Some quilters go by the “hand test.” If you can place your hand on the quilt surface without touching any pins, use more pins!

### SPRAY BASTING



Photo from [Startup Library: Quilting with Christa Watson](#)

The spray basting method uses a temporary adhesive spray specially formulated for fabric to hold the layers of a quilt sandwich in place. Simply spray the adhesive onto the wrong side of both the backing and the quilt top, then make your quilt sandwich.

Spray basting is fast (you can baste a twin-sized quilt in about 10 minutes!) and effective, leaving fewer wrinkles than pin basting.

But spray basting can also be a little pricey — about \$13 for a 10-ounce can, which of course cannot be reused. Plus, the spray can be harmful to breathe in, so it should only be used in a well-ventilated area (or not at all if you are pregnant). It’s flammable as well, so keep the bottle of spray away from your hot iron!

For spray basting, you’ll need special spray adhesive. Make sure to choose one with the word “temporary” on the label so that it will wash away later! A few of my favorite brands include June Tailor Quilt Basting Spray, Dritz Basting Spray and 505 Spray and Fix.

### FUSE BASTING

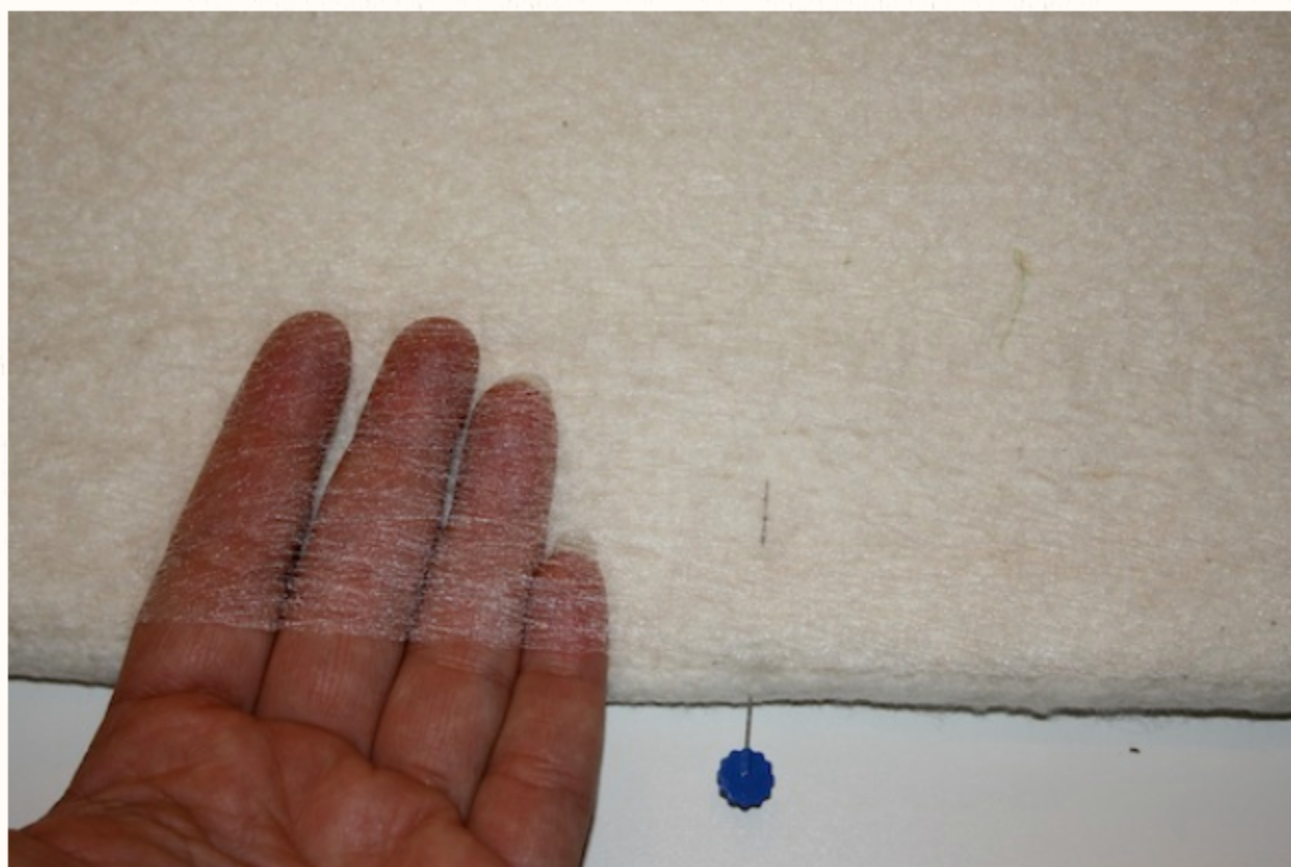


Photo courtesy of [A Quilty Kind of Girl](#)

You can also use a fusible product to help baste your quilts. Place large cuts of a double-sided fusible web, for example, on both sides of the batting to fuse the quilt sandwich. Or, use strips of fusible tape to create small basting tacks between the backing, batting and quilt top.


Although this method can add to your materials cost, it can also be a time-saver! It might be a good choice for smaller quilts and quick quilting projects like table runners.

### HAND BASTING



Photo courtesy of [Hobby Stash](#)

This method of basting, you'll make long, loose stitches by hand to hold the layers together. Since the basting is done by hand, this method works best for quilters who plan to hand quilt their projects. During hand quilting, you can remove these stitches along the way by simply snipping the threads.






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#### 10 COMMENTS

 **Lavonne Breaux**  
October 24th, 2013

would like to know how can order some these pattern that was on how to basting a quilt , theres two of them that I really would like to order in method1 and 2 and the price on the patterns thanks

[Reply](#)

 **Lindsay**  
October 24th, 2013

Hi Lavonne! I don't know the patterns for most of these quilt patterns, unfortunately. However, I can tell you the link to one, which is a free tutorial I put together: <http://www.craftbuds.com/jungle-lattice-free-baby-quilt-pattern/>

I hope this helps!

[Reply](#)

 **Dorothy Golding**  
October 24th, 2013

I use bulldog clips to clip the backing to a large table. I then put batting on top, removing clips and clipping both layers together. Then I do the same with the quilt top. I then use curved safety pins to pin all together. Not a pleasant job but very efficient.

[Reply](#)



**Scheri Manson**

October 24th, 2013

I just tried spray basting as taught by Ann Petersen in her quilting big projects on a small machine. Results were great!

[Reply](#)



**Jen Dunn**

May 10th, 2018

Please can we try to pin or hand baste? Spray basting is bad for the environment (and you).

[Reply](#)



**Olusuyi Sola**

September 24th, 2014

I wasn't sure about the fuse basting method but I just tried it on my 18" quilt sandwich and it is great! Thank you!

[Reply](#)



**Kim Martin**

May 5th, 2015

I have been hand stitching using the Herringbone stitch and two boards for basting a large quilt. It's working great, however I do have a question. Since the stitches will be easier to remove can I machine quilt over these basting stitches and last pull out the basting stitches before binding the quilt?

[Reply](#)



**deb loveridge**

January 9th, 2017

No, hand basting is for hand quilting. You will have a hard time removing the basting stitches if you machine quilt over them. Also hand basting often gets caught up on the presser foot. That said, if you still prefer hand basting, get wash out basting thread and long basting needles.

You didn't ask but I'll tell you from experience, don't pin baste if you are going to machine quilt. Your thread will get tangled around the pins and using a hoop will be difficult.

Best wishes for an enjoyable experience!

Deb Loveridge

Silverado, California

[Reply](#)



**Cheree**

May 11th, 2018

Kim, I now have a long arm but for many years I hand-basted and then quilted on my regular machine all the time. You will just have to take care not to catch your basting with your foot and you will not be able to just pull your basting but more carefully remove it paying attention to where you may have stitched over it (I used a small scissors and/or a seam ripper). Once I finally gave over to trusting curved safety pins, I found them to be way faster than hand-basting. With these, just remove them as they come into your path right before you quilt there and you avoid any issues with thread tangling etc. (I never once used a hoop and never had any puckers). Just take your time, think it through and good luck!

[Reply](#)



**Nancy Hennings**

May 14th, 2018

Kim, use water soluble thread. I have hand basted large and small quilts for years using water soluble thread. I have both hand quilted and machine quilted them, then I wash the thread away.

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