

QuILTish Corner

MY TOP 6 TIPS & TRICKS

For those of us who have been quilting for a long time there are things we do totally by habit or from knowledge we've acquired over a long period of time.

Beginners, especially those who are self taught because they have the passion already, don't have experience behind them to know anything different. This short list of some of my favourite tips will help you on your way:

1

Use a medium coloured neutral thread for all your piecing, and purchase the best quality, low lint thread you can afford. There is no need to be matchy matchy with thread for a quilt project when piecing...especially if working on a scrap quilt. High quality thread produces less lint so the tension discs and bobbin case don't get bogged down with extra fuzz. My personal fave is Aurifil Mako 50wt.



2

Change machine needles frequently. There are a couple of rules of thumb for when this should happen. Some people swear by the rule of changing out needles after 10 hours of sewing. Some people change out needles after 5 full bobbins have been used up.



My favourite thing to tell students is that if you hear a "thwack, thwack" sound when the needle goes through the fabric it means the needle is dull. Dull needles are often responsible for tension issues as well as causing snags in the fibres of the fabric.

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3 Chain piecing is a must. If you have a gazillion squares to sew together it can be a daunting task, especially if you sew 2 together, take them out from under the presser foot, clip the threads and then continue doing that over and over and over again. Just feed them through the machine one set after another leaving a small stitched gap in between. You will not believe how much time, not to mention thread, that you will save.



4 Treat yourself to a new rotary blade. I'm guilty of this myself... using a blade long past its expiration date! Once changed that blade slices through fabric like a hot knife through butter. No more going over the same spot twice (or 3 times!) to cut the fabric. Not only that, but the type of cutting board you own means that you may have to change it more frequently...some boards with a shiny surface are harder on blades than the matte ones.



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- 5** Prewind a bunch of neutral bobbins. It's a pain in the butt to have to stop in the middle of an Olympic sewing session to wind a bobbin so I usually have a few ready to go before I start a large project. You will thank yourself for that in the middle of making 300 flying geese units!



- 6** Maintain your sewing machine. I can't stress this enough. You've paid a lot of money for that machine and you should take good care of it so it will last for a very long time. I clean out the bobbin case area of my machine after each large project or 2 or 3 small projects. Check your sewing machine manual for maintenance directions.

Cleaning your machine yourself doesn't mean that you shouldn't have a pro give it a "spa day" once in a while. I take mine to my buddy, Roy, every 18 months or so for a good overhaul.



These are just a few tips that will make your sewing journey easier, more efficient and less frustrating.

Have fun!