

Title:

How to Buy Cotton Quilting Fabric - Part I

Word Count:

578

Summary:

Buying quilting fabric seems like it should be pretty simple, and on the surface it is. But for the best results in your quilting, there are some things you should think about when you buy your quilting fabric.

Keywords:

buying cotton quilting fabric, quilting fabric, cotton, quilting tip

Article Body:

Buying quilting fabric seems like it should be pretty simple. And, frankly, when I began quilting it was simple. At least I made it that way. I wandered through the fabric store and found fabric I liked - the pattern, the color, the design. But generally, I bought fabric just because I liked it.

As a result, my quilting fabric stash included all types of fabrics - polyesters, cotton/polyesters, rayons, and some wools. After a few quilting experiences (some of which were pretty bad), I learned the advantages of different fabrics. Now I look at a few different things when I consider fabrics to buy.

Generally I prefer natural fibers. It's probably a sense of connecting to quilters of yesteryear. Or it may be that a comment made to me years ago about "wrapping a baby in plastic (polyester)" just stuck with me - in a negative sense.

While I prefer natural fibers, I have made some fun quilts that include lame, and an occasional polyester or poly/cotton blend, because it offered some design benefit that I couldn't find in cotton - like a sports logo.

This is one of a series of articles about different types of fabric quilters use in their quilts. For simplicity, I will focus on the natural fibers cotton, wool and silk. I have used them all (although not in the same quilt). So you will get my firsthand experience and observations. Personal opinion as it is.

Since you can go online and find plenty of articles and websites that describe

the fascinating way fabric is made and dyed, I'll let them do the describing about that, and I will focus just on what quilters want to know - how will it be working with that type of fabric?

Since 100% cotton fabric is clearly the most popular quilting fabric, let's start there.

There are several specific reasons quilters prefer 100% cotton:

- Cotton is easy to work with. After you sew a seam, you can easily finger press your seam allowances in the direction you want them to go. (That means that your fabric will stay put without pressing it every step along the way.)
- Cotton sticks together while you sew your pieces. Polyester tends to slip and slide, requiring pinning or basting, lest your patches end up being sewn cockeyed.
- Cotton has a little "give" to it that synthetics don't have. This allows you to pull and tug a bit (as well as bunch it up a little) in order to get the seams to match and make your corners square.
- Cotton breathes. Whether you are making a baby quilt or a bed quilt, 100% cotton fabric will allow air to circulate while capturing the warmth. How this works is just a mystery to me, but it seems to be true.
- Cotton absorbs the dyes better. Maybe it's just me, but I think that the colors are more vibrant and the patterns have more depth.
- Cotton is durable. It has stood the test of time and constant use.
- Cotton can be torn (or ripped). Although this can be a benefit or a drawback, it means that you will be able to determine exactly how the fibers line up. You will be able to "square up" the edge just torn, since it will not rip across the threads.

Part II explores the types of 100% cotton fabric, and some of the considerations as you purchase and use these fabrics in your quilts.

Happy Quilting!