

# 10 Expert Quilting Tips for Making a Good Quilt Great —

by award winning quilter Linda Pumphrey



Jodi Butler

**Read directions first, cut later.** To help avoid mistakes down the line, always read the complete cutting instructions before you begin.

**Make the most of your yardage.** Cut out the larger shapes before turning to the smaller ones. “Even though I try to be super careful and follow the ‘measure twice, cut once’ rule, mistakes can happen,” says Linda. “If I accidentally miscut a larger shape, it’s usually possible to cut a smaller shape out of that oops piece.”

**Use tools wisely.** When rotary cutting, start with the blade about ½” up on the ruler, then cut it back to the tip and then cut forward. “If you always start cutting at the tip, the tip of your ruler will get chipped away from the blade over time and no longer be square,” says Linda.

**Be precise.** To ensure points and seams match perfectly, you must cut correctly, sew accurately, and press precisely. “Pressing is an equal part of the three,” says Linda. “You cannot skimp on this step. Pressing seams flat, and open is a must.” Make sure to press each seam before moving onto the next step.

**Press correctly.** Pressing is achieved by moving the iron up and down on the fabric rather than ironing, which moves the iron back and forth across the fabric. “Ironing can stretch the fabric and cause the shape to become distorted,” says Linda.

**Prevent shadows.** To avoid shadowing when working with high-contrast fabrics, such as red and white, press the fabric seam toward the darker fabric or press seams open. “I prefer pressing seams open,” says Linda. “It takes a little more time and attention, but the results are definitely worth it.”

**Trim loose threads.** “When working with high-contrast fabrics, the back of the quilt top is just as important as the front,” says Linda. She recommends clipping and removing loose threads because “darker stray threads will shadow through the lighter fabric once the quilt is quilted.”

**Prevent appliqué from shifting.** For machine appliqué, Linda suggests using a small spot of washable fabric glue to hold the pre-fused appliqué shapes in place before pressing them to the background.

**Choose the right stitch.** Linda’s go-to stitch for machine-appliqué is the double blanket stitch. But sometimes she likes to mix it up by using one of the many fun decorative stitches on her sewing machine. “Decorative stitches are an easy way to add dimension and flair to any quilt,” says Linda. **Coordinate the batting color.** Her advice: “If one of the fabric colors in the quilts is white, use a white batting. Do not use a cream or natural-color batting. It will muddy the white fabric once quilted.”