

Nickie J: Two-color quilt binding (matching binding to front and back fabrics of quilt)

Cut binding strips to the following widths: front binding 1" wide, and back binding 2" wide. Sew strips together with ¼ inch seam. Your binding strip is now 2 ½ inches wide. Press seams toward darker side of strips. Sew the two-color binding to your quilt in the same way as usual, with the matching pattern on front. When finished, the seam line where you joined your two strips will be positioned along the outer edge of your finished quilt.

Lynn H: Organizing sewing machine needles by size

Sometimes, it is necessary to change a sewing machine needle for a different project. Lynn has a tomato pincushion which is marked in each section with needle sizes, i.e., 60/8, 80/12, 90/14. If the needle she removes still has more hours of sewing in it, she puts the needle in the section marked for that size. Thus, she will re-use that needle again when she needs to change to that size.

Rose L: Using insulation sheets for pinning quilts

Purchase a 4' X 8' insulation sheet at a hardware store. These have a silver color paper coating, are lightweight, and the board's composition makes it great for pinning fabric into it. These boards can be cut to size so you can have a smaller piece for use with wall-hangings. The best use is for sandwiching a quilt: Put the board on a table, and lay the quilt back on top of the board, wrong side up. Smooth the quilt top on the board, and pin the corners and along sides, as necessary. This keeps the quilt back from slipping or moving, and the pins are easily inserted to the board. Next, lay your batting on top, smooth in place, and finally, the quilt top. Once all three layers are in place, use your quilt pins to secure the three layers. You will find that the pins are easy to insert because the insulation board underneath makes the pinning easier. When this is done, the straight pins that secured the backing to the board are removed, and you're ready to quilt your sandwiched quilt. The insulation board can also be used as a design wall.

JoAnne F: Keeping track of sewing machine needles:

Usually, it is difficult to read the size of a sewing machine needle, even with a magnifier. When JoAnne changes her sewing machine needle, she writes the needle size and the date installed on a small post-it note and affixes the post-it on the side of her machine. This reminds her when that needle was installed. More importantly, if starting a project that requires a different size needle, there's no question about which size needle is still in the machine, and, if the needle being removed still has more life for future sewing, that needle can be fastened into the small post-it note and saved for future use.

Connie S: Labelling your scissors:

Take an expired credit card and cut the card crosswise (approx. ½ inch in width) making sure your name is included as part of this saved strip, now measuring approx. ½ inch by 3 ¼ inch. Use a hole punch at one end of the strip, then secure the name tag with a ribbon or string to your scissor handles.

Sue Y: Quick comfort quilt:

Sue uses fleece fabric for backing quilt tops for her charity quilts. This eliminates the need to use batting. When both backing and quilt top are cut to size, Sue lays out the quilt with right sides together, and sews "pillow case style", leaving an opening of about 6 inches for turning quilt to the right side. After pressing the turned quilt, slipstitch the opening. Quilt as needed.

Lynn H: Organizing sewing supplies:

Plastic chewing gum containers make for an excellent way to organize sewing supplies. They are especially good for disposing used needles and bent pins, or as emergency sewing kits for travel.

Lynn H: Basting a quilt, using a marble to help:

Put a marble on the table, under the area you are basting your quilt. The marble under the quilt keeps a space between the table and the quilt, making it easier to work your basting stitch. As you move along with your basting, it's easy to reposition your marble underneath the quilt.

Mary R: A free resource for quilting templates, applique patterns, and foundation piecing:

Mary saves the containers from fruit and produce for making templates for her quilt designs. Mary suggests that adult coloring books have excellent designs that can be used for applique patterns. Mary endorses used dryer sheets for foundation piecing. These sheets can be sewn together if a larger foundation is needed for your project. The sheets are lightweight, so no need to try and remove them, and the foundation will give better stability to the quilt top.

Pat T: **Children's coloring books** have been very useful as applique patterns also.

Judy S: Supporting your arms when doing handiwork and carrying cases for supplies:

Judy brought a pillow that she made, which is perfect when doing handwork. She positions the pillow on her lap, and it gives her the right level for her to work on her handwork. Information for the pillow is available at: www.makingalegacy.com. Reference: LEG 6106

Judy recommended a carry case, which is called a "Worm Binder" and can be purchased at sports stores, i.e., Bass Pro Shops. The case is perfect for carrying supplies to classes or for travel.

JoAnne F: Preventing burned fingers when pressing difficult or small pieces:

A leather thimble (without a metal piece in it) is great to wear when doing intricate pressing on quilt pieces. Sometimes, it is necessary to hold a finger close to the tip of the iron when pressing difficult pieces. The leather thimble allows you to put your finger close to the iron tip without getting burned.

Billie L: Cutting and sewing quilt bindings with greater accuracy:

Billy shared this great suggestion about cutting and sewing bindings for quilts for greater accuracy when she taught a class at our guild. The best way to measure your binding strip is not measuring the length and width of the edges of your quilt top, but to measure from the center. Place your quilt top on a table or other flat surface, smoothing flat. Take your binding strip and lay it across the middle section of the quilt, edge to edge. Once placed, you will cut two identical pieces of binding, and pin these pieces to the top and bottom of the quilt, easing as necessary. Press the sewn binding pieces. Lay out the quilt again on your flat surface, and this time you will lay out the binding pieces lengthwise, end to end, down the middle of the quilt top. Again, make two pieces of this binding, pin to quilt sides, and sew to the quilt. When all four pieces of binding are eased in place, pinned, and sewn, the quilt top will be square.

Unattributed: Batting scraps have many uses:

One is to make a cover for a yardstick that is great for cleaning under the refrigerator, behind radiators, etc. No need to sew both ends of the batting; just slip off and throw the cover away when it's dirty. It takes about 5 minutes to make a replacement, anyway, and all quilters accumulate narrow strips of batting from projects.

Unattributed: Threading a needle:

When threading a needle for hand sewing or machine threading, don't wet the thread. Thread swells up when moistened, making it harder to fit through the needle opening. However, if you moisten the needle opening, it will help with the threading process.