



BEGINNING QUILTING : Tools of the trade!

Quilting is as old as the hills. Quilts have been made and used and loved for centuries and the good news is that these days, there are so many tools and shortcuts to make quilting so much quicker and easier than it was in days of old. You can choose to do many steps on your sewing machine and add some hand finished touches to make it extra special. It is still a long process, but all beautiful things take time and I promise...it will be worth it in the end.

HAPPY STITCHING.....Ruby x

One thing you have to get used to with quilting is using inches and yards. It can seem a bit disconcerting at first but as most quilting fabric, books and info on the internet come from the US it has remained in these measurements. Once you have a cutting mat and ruler, the adjustment will follow more easily than you might think!

What you need to get started.....

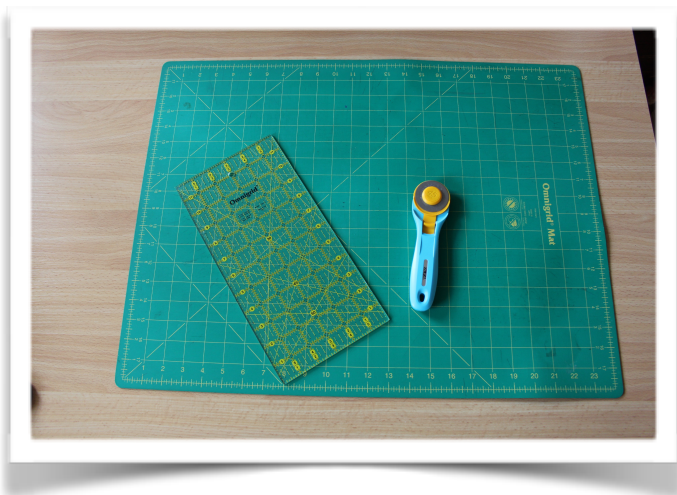
There are a few essential tools that make a quilters life so much easier that I recommend you purchase these in the beginning. You can sometimes buy starter sets which contain the first 3 items on my list and this seems like a good choice to get going with.

A Rotary Cutter

Makes life SO easy. Once you get the hang of using this with a cutting mat and ruler, you will never look back. They are a relatively inexpensive piece of equipment and you can simply buy a pack of replacement blades. Most quilters will say that they wait far too long before changing the blade and I would have to put my hands up to this one.... a bit like changing the needle on my sewing machine!



A Cutting Mat

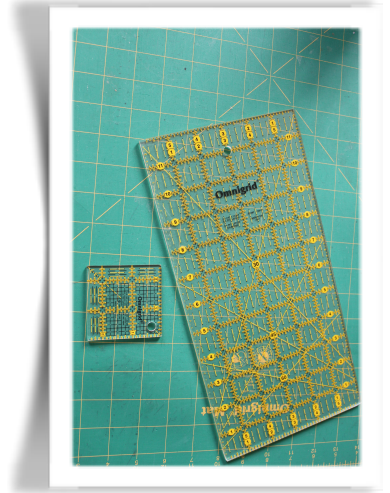


These are invaluable and essential for use with a rotary cutter. They come in a few standard sizes and when I first started quilting I bought the 18" x 24" size and used it constantly for 5 years until I bought a larger size for a dedicated cutting table. The mats have useful angle lines on them as well as the clear measuring lines, which make it simple to line your fabric up accurately. I still use my original mat on my sewing table for all my work in progress and for cutting and trimming pieces.

A Cutting Ruler

There are a ton of different quilting rulers out there in all shapes and sizes. Some of the specialist ones, like the Dresden plate ruler and the 'bloc-loc' rulers are really very clever and useful, but in the beginning you really only need to buy one....or maybe two.....

For many years I just had a standard 12" x 6" ruler and a small 2.5" square. I do have a selection now including a longer 24" x 6", which is useful for cutting longer lengths of fabric, but in the beginning, as long as you have one, it will be fine. These transparent rulers with clear markings make it simple to cut a quarter of an inch or even to an 8th of an inch. The angled lines will be useful later on if you are making for example Star blocks and use triangles.



A Sewing Machine

There are a huge variety of sewing machines available now, at very reasonable prices. Basically you only need a fairly standard one for piecing fabrics and traditional straight line quilting, so there is no need to spend a fortune to get started. I

I made all my first quilts on a very standard Janome machine. I have upgraded my machine now to a Janome Horizon, which does have a longer arm space for larger quilts and this makes a huge difference. It is a fantastic machine, but I sew every day and honestly a standard one will do just fine in the beginning.

If you are interested in learning how to do free motion quilting, you need to check that it has an open toe foot attachment, which looks like this. You can usually order these attachments later, if you decide to, but it might be worth checking that they are actually available with the brand and model if you are buying a new sewing machine.



Another useful foot for your sewing machine is a 'walking foot'. I have to say that I resisted using this for a long time, but once used, never forgotten! It gives an even feed for quilting long straight lines along a quilt which is made up of several layers. Well worth the investment in my book!

While these two attachments are optional and may be added later - the following is absolutely **ESSENTIAL** really.

A quarter inch foot for your sewing machine

These are readily available for most sewing machine brands and are inexpensive. It looks like this:

The blade along the edge is used as a guide to keep your stitching straight and at a perfect quarter of an inch from edge of the fabric.



A marking pen or pencil



There are a lot of choices in this category and ultimately it is up to you to decide what you like to use, so maybe try a few and see how you go.

My favourites are the 'Sewline' range of products. The refillable fabric pencils are excellent and there is a rubber too to remove the mark if necessary and the glue stick is great for English paper piecing and appliqué.

YOU WILL ALSO NEED THE STANDARD SEWING THINGS LIKE PINS, SCISSORS & THREAD and good light work with.

There are lots of other useful tools you can buy to help with your quilting, and information about some of these, along with tips about fabric and thread, feature in some of the other tutorials on the website, which I hope you will check out.