



Batting 101

Whether you are just getting started with your first quilt, or are an experienced quilter with dozens or even hundreds of quilts under your belt it is important to understand the role that your batting will play in your finished quilt. The type of batting you choose can and will affect the final look of your quilt even over the thread, fabric and the final quilting. It is the second most important element in a quilt—and it isn't even seen!

The first thing that you have to decide is what type of batting fill you want to use in your quilt... and you have options. The most common battings are cotton and cotton/polyester blends. Other materials used as fillers include sheep or alpaca wools, silk, hemp, bamboo, and bamboo/cotton blends.

Types of Batting:

Cotton—Cotton is an all natural and breathable fiber that is most commonly found in quilts. It is soft, washable, and quilts easily unless it's been needle-punched. It wears well with age and washing. On the down side, as a crop, conventionally grown cotton takes a lot of fertilizers, pesticides, and bleaches before it reaches the quilter.

Polyester—using polycarbon fibers as a batting fill allows you to have any number of loft thicknesses and sizes. It is lightweight, warm, non-allergenic, doesn't shrink, and is completely machine washable. On the other hand it doesn't breath as well as natural fibers and has a greater tendency to beard. It is also a synthetic petroleum based product and not a renewable source.

Cotton/polyester blends—blending the two materials ads loft to the batt while still maintaining some of the good qualities of the cotton including its breathability and softness. Both polyester and conventionally grown cotton are fairly eco-unfriendly products.

Wool—Wool batting is lightweight, warm, breathable, and naturally flame resistant. It quilts really well because of the natural lanolin in the fibers, and is a good choice for heirloom quilts. However, it needs careful washing and drying to keep from shrinking, can cause allergic reactions, and must be protected from moths and other insects. It also tends to be more expensive than other types of battings.

Bamboo—Bamboo and bamboo blend batting is fairly new on the market and is growing in popularity. Bamboo is a highly sustainable plant that needs no chemical fertilizers or pesticides to grow, it is breathable like cotton, has minimal shrinkage, contains no bleaches, glues, or binders, and is naturally antibacterial. It is bit more expensive than cotton but is proving to be a good choice for heirloom quilts.

Silk—Silk batting is lightweight and thin yet still warm and breathable with a beautiful drape. It is a good choice for quilted clothing. However it must be washed carefully as it shrinks a good deal and it is also quite expensive.

There are two main methods of creating a batt:

Bonded batting: fibers are generally combed into a web and then chemically glued together with a bonding agent or resin. Some polyester battings are actually lightly melted together to form the batt.

Needle-punched batting: fibers are knitted together using a needle punched through the fibers. The needle used in this process is actually thousands of needles that push fibers into a consistent stable batt using scrim. Scrim is a very thin, transparent, non-woven fabric that is needled into batting. It reduces fiber migration and controls stretching to create a very stable batt.

Other things to take into consideration include:

- **Drape:** The stiffness of a batting or finished quilt. Higher quality battings can hold more stitches while still retaining their soft feel. Stiff cheaper battings will result in a harder stiffer quilt.
- **Bearding:** How often batting fibers will push through your finished quilt. Poor quality battings will tend to pull apart after washing or extended use and migrate through the fabric of the quilt. This will result in little fuzzy balls appearing over the surface of your quilt over time. Good quality battings will minimize or eliminate this effect all together.
- **Loft:** The thickness of the batt. Thicker battings will be harder to baste and quilt, while giving a puffy look to the over all quilt. Thinner battings will hold tighter smaller quilting designs, but won't be as warm. If you have a specific thickness of quilt you are looking for it is a good idea to choose the fiber type that will work best with your loft preferences.
- **Breathability:** How well the quilt will regulate heat and cold. Thicker more dense fibers will tend to keep the heat in and be warmer as a blanket. Natural fibers tend to allow for temperature regulation a little better than synthetics.

The right batting will make or break a quilt, just as the wrong batting could ruin countless hours of time spent on your latest quilt creation. Before you buy any batting it is important to ask yourself a few questions.

- What will I use the quilt for?
- How will the quilt be cared for?
- How much quilting will be done on it?
- How much do I want to spend?

Winline battings are designed to take the guess work out of batting selection.

All of our battings are made of hand-selected fibers from certified vendors and adhere to the strictest standards of quality—limiting the use of chemical binders, bleaches, and fillers. Our battings are all needle-punched with scrim to give them added strength and durability. They will add a level of comfort and class to your next project.

If you have any questions about what kind of batting to use in your next project our Fabric-Chicks would be happy to talk to you and make some recommendations. We'd love to hear from you!

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