

How to make a quilt sandwich

The basics for making a quilt sandwich are the same regardless whether done on the floor, a table or other surface:

1. Your backing fabric and your batting should be 2-4" larger than your quilt top on all sides.
2. Make sure to press deep-set creases or wrinkles out of your backing fabric. They may seem to come free when you pull the fabric taut, but as soon as you release it, they usually come back. If you are using a pieced back, press the seam allowance open, if possible, to prevent bulk when quilting.
3. If you have packaged batting or batting that has been folded for a while, you probably need to hang it to get the wrinkles out. If you are using cotton batting, you can also use an iron.
4. If you are laying out your quilt sandwich on your floor, make sure it's clean!! If you are worried that pinning or spray basting will damage your flooring, take care to protect it by laying down cardboard or newspapers under your quilt.
5. Lay your backing on the clean surface, right side of the fabric facing down. There are many different ways to secure the backing to the floor or table you are using.
 - a. If you have a tile, linoleum or wood floor, painter's tape, masking tape or even hand weights work to hold it down. (I don't recommend using your pet or child to hold it down as the back may get disrupted when he or she gets tired of sitting still!)
 - b. If the floor is carpeted, you can use T-pins to secure it to the carpet.
 - c. If you are using a table, the suggestions in a. work as well as binder clips, depending on what kind of table you are using and how thick it is.
 - d. Whichever method you use to secure the quilt back to your surface, make sure you pull the backing taut, but don't stretch it out of shape and use enough tape, pins or whatever, to make sure that the backing is secure. There should be no bubbles or giant wrinkles.
6. Quilters have different preferences for finding the center of a quilt back. Some prefer to fold the quilt into quarters and mark the edges with a pin or disappearing marking pen or chalk. Some just wing it. I like to use a tape measure and yardstick method. I have tried several and depending on the project, I sometimes combine the methods.
7. Once you've found your center and made your marks, you need to find the center of your batting. For the batting, I tend to do the "fold it into quarters" method and touch the folded center to the marked center of the backing, then start opening it up. Make sure you smooth out the batting so it has no bubbles.
8. Once your batting is down, you can secure it as you did the backing.
9. Find the center of your quilt top, using one of the previously mentioned methods and lay the top down, right side up, centering it on the batting. Smooth out the top and make sure it is centered & straight. If you are doing this on the floor, it is nice to be able to stand up and stretch while checking the view from the top.
10. Make sure that you don't stretch any of the layers out of shape when assembling your sandwich.

11. Baste your layers together using your preferred method. Make sure that it is secure enough so that when you are transporting it from your layering spot to your sewing machine and pushing & pulling it through your machine, it stays together.

For the thread basting & pinning methods, start in the center of your quilt sandwich & work your way out. Some prefer to use thread basting when hand quilting in a hoop because the pins tend to get in the way of the hoop. Others prefer to use pins when machine quilting because the thread, once stitched over multiple times, is hard to remove.

- a. If you are hand basting the sandwich, use a contrasting color of thread. For example, if the primary color of your quilt top is yellow or white, use a darker color or red. Use large, 1-2" stitches. You want to be able to easily pull these stitches out when you are done quilting. Make sure to knot both ends of your thread so it doesn't come out on its own. Basting should be close enough together that you have no risk of the layers shifting on you while you quilt.
- b. If you are pinning your layers together, use safety pins, not straight pins. (Ask me how I know.) There are specially-made curved safety pins made just for quilting. You **MUST** close the pins. Make sure that when you pin, that you pin enough so that by laying your hand down on the quilt sandwich, you touch at least two pins. However, it is advisable not to pin in the route you will be quilting on a machine unless you are prepared to stop frequently and take the pins out as you go. Do **not** sew over the safety pins!

Spray basting: This is a little different.

- a. Use a good, long-term basting spray if you are relying on this being the only method for holding your layers together.
- b. Spray basting is not recommended for use indoors or where there is no ventilation due to fumes.
- c. Fold down half of your batting so that half of the backing shows. Spray the basting spray on the batting, starting from the center and going in a circular motion. As you spray, you can put your hand under the batting I work your way up to the top, smoothing the batting down as you go. Once you have the top half done, repeat for the bottom half.
- d. Follow the same process for spray basting the quilt top, smoothing the top as you go.

My preferred method for securing the layers is to do a combination of spray basting and pinning.

12. Once you've made sure that the layers are secured and will not shift during quilting, you are ready to pull up the tape, loosen the binder clips or pull out the pins and take your delicious quilt sandwich to your machine for quilting!

Here are some websites & blogs I found with information on making a quilt sandwich:

<http://quilting.about.com/od/quiltbasting/a/Make-Quilt-Sandwich-for-Machine-Quilt-Basting.htm>

<http://www.allpeoplequilt.com/how-to-quilt/finishing/assembling-quilt-top-layers>

<http://www.howcast.com/videos/507517-How-to-Layer-a-Quilt-Sandwich-Quilting>

<http://www.craftsy.com/blog/2013/03/spray-basting-your-quilts/>

<https://www.shopmartingale.com/images/marketing/howtoquilt/quilt-sandwich.pdf>

<http://www.joaniestrendyquilts.co/2013/02/tutorial-on-how-to-sandwich-quilt.html>