

Charming Station

Quilt Project

BINDING 101



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Binding 101

After your quilt is quilted, you need to finish the edges going all the way around the quilt. This is my favorite part of quilting!

You can buy binding for a quilt but your choices are very limited. Most stores have only solid colors and it often is a lower quality grade of fabric than the 100% cottons that are used throughout the rest of the quilt.

We are going to show you a simple method for making your binding and the attaching it to the quilt and making mitered corners.

We pulled out our favorite quilt to get some photographs for you and we got a lot of help from "Sneakers".

This is about two thirds of the quilt - it's a full size bed quilt so it's difficult to find anywhere that I could take a picture of the entire quilt:



The squares are all from a variety of Debbie Mumm fabrics in autumn tones. To finish this theme all the way out to the binding, I used another Mumm fabric with small checks that matched the larger squares in this quilt.



I chose this quilt for the photo to illustrate how you can select the perfect fabric for your binding and to show you a nifty little trick. This fabric is printed with the small squares in even rows. When we cut it into binding and sew it to the quilt, notice that it seems to be on the diagonal. If your binding fabric is made of straight stripes, it will do the same thing and that can add some pizzazz to your quilt!

Picking the Fabric

One of the reasons you want to make your own binding is that you can pick your own fabric for this. It doesn't have to be a solid color and, in fact, you can have some fun with prints. Any print should be relatively small (there will be less than 1/2" showing as you look at a quilt). Other than that, just about anything will do.

- You can pick a coordinating color or even repeat one of the colors used in your quilt
- You can pick something nondescript that will simply create a final frame, or
- You can pick something that will stand out and noticeably create that final frame.

Examples



This is a bed quilt I made for Sammie a few years ago. I used the wildest, boldest prints I could find for the butterflies and flowers and carried that theme out through the borders and with the binding fabric.



This is a lap quilt that stays on the couch during the summer in case anyone thinks the air conditioning is too cold (it's never too cold for me!).

Since everything on this quilt was light, I chose a dark print to finish the edges.



Repeating A Color

If you want to carry out a theme right to the edge of your quilt, use one of the fabrics already in your quilt for the border. In this quilt, we used the same yellow for the cornerstones, the inner border and the binding.



Nondescript Frame

If you want the quilt center to stand out, pick a quiet coordinating color for the binding. It provides the final frame but, like the frame on a portrait, you rarely notice it - you are looking at the center.

“Look at Me” frame

I love to find stripes to use as a border on a baby quilt. Since we are going to cut the fabric on a diagonal, stripes look like a barber pole along the edge of the quilt. I’ve also used checks that were a coordinate to the colors in the quilt. That brings all the colors together.



Silly Tip

I always work with a larger piece of fabric than I actually need for my quilt. This gives me leftovers that I keep in a shoe box. When I have a small project (like quilted potholders) I can just pull out a pretty piece of binding from the box. If you want to be a bit eclectic, you can also sew all these leftovers together and use them as binding for another quilt.

What you will need

Since this your first try, we are going to start with 1 yard of your choice of fabric. If you have followed our previous directions, this will give you a little bit more binding than you need but it's always easier to cut off the extra than to try to piece together a little bit more to finished the edges.

You will also find it very handy to have post-it notes or masking tape that you can write on for this first part.

The third thing you will need is a pencil that you can see on the back of the fabric. If your fabric is light use a gray quilter's pencil (so it won't bleed through the fabric). If your fabric is dark, use a white quilter's pencil.

Understanding Bias Binding

You can cut strips directly across your fabric like we did for sashing strips, sew then ends together and make binding. This kind of binding will not wear as well because all of the stress will be in the same direction as the threads are woven together. In addition, it does not have any stretch at all so going around corners will be harder.

When we first started this project we told you that fabric has a "straight of the grain". When you hold up a large piece of fabric, if you pull it from end to end in the direction of the selvage, you are pulling on the **lengthwise grain**. In this direction, there is virtually no "give" to the fabric.

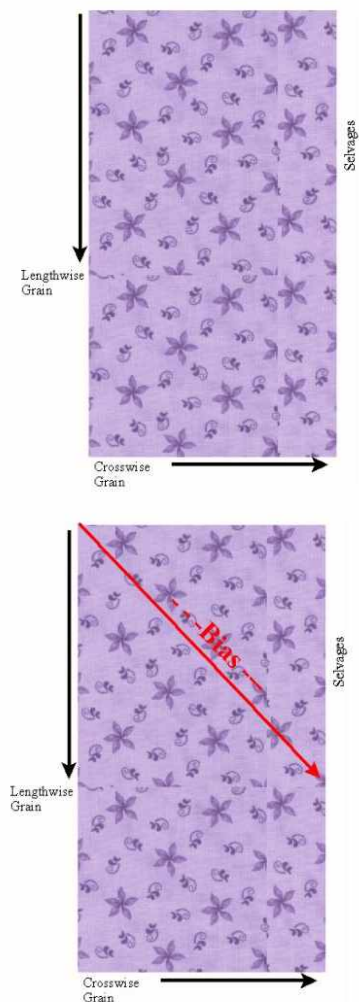
If you switch so that you are pulling across from selvage to selvage, you are pulling on the **crosswise grain**. There is a little "give" in this direction, but not enough to gently turn corners without stressing your fabric.

In order to work with binding that has the most stretch, you need to find the **bias** - the 45° angle across the fabric - and cut strips along that line.

Preparing your Fabric

This binding fabric needs the same preparation you used on your quilt top:

- If you pre-washed other fabrics, pre-wash this one
- Cut off a snip and put it in a clear glass with some very hot water. If any of the dye bleeds out into the water, this fabric needs to be pre-washed until no more dye leaks out. The worst thing that could happen if you don't do this is that you sew it onto your quilt, the first time the quilt is used, the dye in the binding bleeds over onto the white parts of your quilt! Ugh.
- Dry the fabric if you washed it and iron it out in one large flat piece (no folds).

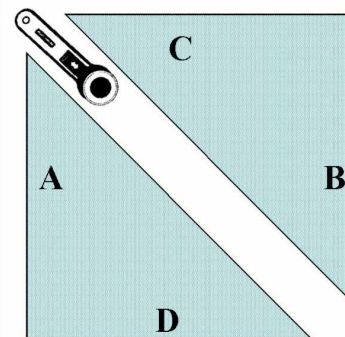
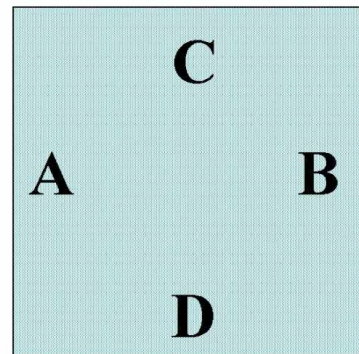


This whole lesson is a “trust me - it works” lesson. Please read each step carefully and do the steps in the order they are listed here (even if they don’t seem to make sense at the time!).

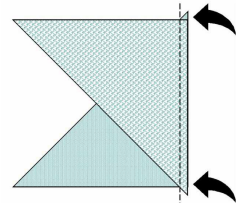
Cutting on the Bias

Once we make the first diagonal cut, you will have two pieces that will be very stretchy. You want to handle these carefully so they don’t get stretched out of shape.

- Fold your fabric in half, selvage to selvage just once. (This is the way it usually is on the bolt of fabric when you purchase it.)
- Lay it on your cutting mat, smoothing out any bumps or wrinkles.
- Use your ruler to “square up” one end of the fabric.
- Measuring from that squared up end, cut a strip that is 25" wide by the width of the whole fabric.
- Open up the strip that you just cut and smooth it out on the table. Press it if necessary to get a smooth piece of fabric. Lay it out right side up.
- Cut a 25" square from this strip.
- Set the remainder aside in case we need it later.
- Use a post-it note to put a label on each side of the fabric as you see in the picture. Be sure that your labels are in the same position. You can use a very light pencil mark here as long as it can be easily removed.
- Use your rotary cutter to cut this square in half on the diagonal - be sure to cut between the labels as shown here.
- **This is the diagonal cut mentioned above - handle these pieces with care. That cut edge is the “bias” edge.**
- You now have two pieces, right side up.

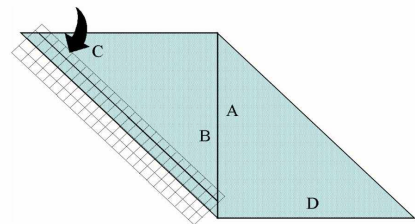


- Lift one side of your triangle and place it on the other side so that it matches this picture:
- Now close A/D over C/B (like closing a sandwich)
- Shift the layers slightly so that your $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam line starts and stops at the same place that the two fabric layers start and stop. The corners do **not** line up exactly!
- Sew this with $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam



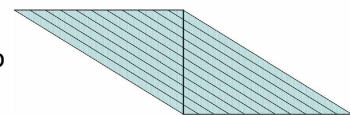
Remember to handle this gentle - you are working with fabric cut on the bias and it is very stretchy.

- Open your fabric and press this seam **open** (to avoid a large lump in your binding)
- Lay your fabric out on a table with the wrong side up
- Use your ruler to find the two inch mark along the edge of the fabric as shown.
- Use your pencil *very lightly* to draw a line from edge to edge (move your ruler if necessary).



Tip: run the pencil lightly back and forth several times to make a legible line rather than pressing hard - you don't want to stretch the fabric, just mark it.

- Continue to draw lines across the width of this piece, every two inches apart.
- If the last line you draw leaves an uneven section or a section that is not a full 2" all the way down, use your scissors to cut along the last line and get rid of the partial row.



Here comes another “trust me - it works”:

This next part is where many quilters give up. What we need to do is sew the two ends of this fabric piece together.

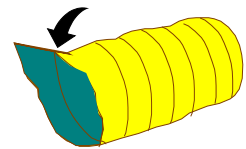
But, you need to line up those lines you have drawn in a special way.

Read through this first and then follow the steps:

- Bring the two ends together (to form a tube).
- You are going to match the lines you drew so that the $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam sews right through the intersection

AND

- Shift the fabric so that the *second* line on one side matches up with the *first* line on the other side.
- Looking at the lines you have drawn, shift the edge so that the first line on one side matches up with the *second* line on the other side.
- Put pins at every other intersection (or so) to help you keep this lined up. The goal here is to have the lines that you drew with the pencil cross each other.



The tube you have now is oddly shaped and mismatched, but, this is exactly what you need to get one continuous line of bias binding!

- Sew across with a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam. (Remove the pins as you go - don't sew over them!).
- Press this seam open. You'll see that you really do have a tube now.

Here comes the easy part:

- Now take your scissors and start cutting on one of the lines at the end of the tube. As you cut, rotate the tube.
- Just like the lines in a barber pole, you should be able to cut one long continuous length of bias binding from this object.

Remember to handle all of this very carefully - especially after you cut it into a long strip - it is really stretchy now.

Folding and Pressing

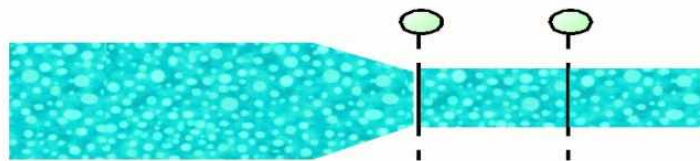
The next step is to take the one long piece that you now have to the ironing board. You want to press the entire length in half with *wrong sides together*.

- Starting at one end, fold the strip in half (lengthwise) **wrong sides together** and press.
- Be sure not to slide the iron around in this step to avoid skewing the material.
- **Watch out!** The iron is hot and fabric will be hot when you press it - handle it carefully so that you don't get burned!

Not so Silly Tip

I have extremely long, flat pins that I like to use in quilting. They come in really handy here:

- push the tip of a long pin in and right out picking up just a little bit of your ironing board cover
- leave about an inch and then do the same with the tip of that pin again
- place two pins like this about 2 inches apart.



- Starting on one side of the pins, fold the strip in half (right sides together) and slide it under the pins as shown here.
- Press the folded strip as it comes out of the left side.
- Then pull a little bit more through and press again.
- Keep going until you have pressed the entire strip.

This gives you a guide and makes this folding/pressing step go a lot faster. This is only a simple guide to help you get the fabric folded without putting your fingers too close to a hot iron!

Attaching to the Quilt

Now we are ready to attach the binding to the quilt. You are actually going to sew around the perimeter of your quilt twice - once to attach the binding to the front, and again to tack it to the back.

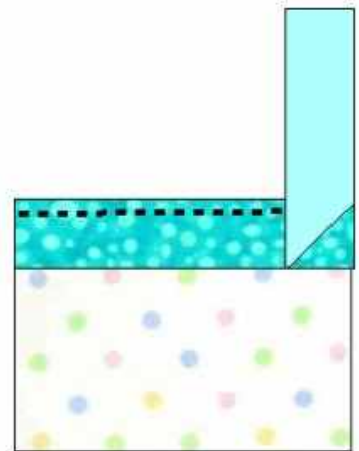
If you have a lot of excess batting and backing, you can "rough" trim this with scissors. Cut off the excess but leave at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " of it showing all the way around the quilt. We will trim this to size *after* we have sewn on the binding.

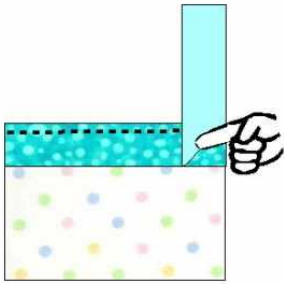
- With your quilt facing up, pin your folded binding strip on one side:
 - Start about half way down one side (it will be easier to end in the middle of a straight edge than on a corner.)
 - Place your binding so that the raw edge of the binding matches the raw edge of your quilt **top (not the edge of the batting or backing)**.
 - **Start sewing 8 inches down from the end of the binding strip.**

(You want to leave 8 inches or so unsewn so that we can connect the binding when you have come all the way around the quilt and are ready to finish sewing it on.)

- Sew a careful $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam down toward the first corner
- Stop $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the end of this side (you can mark it with a pin or a pencil mark to be sure).
- Backstitch (yes, you do want to do that here!)
- Remove this from your machine and trim your threads.

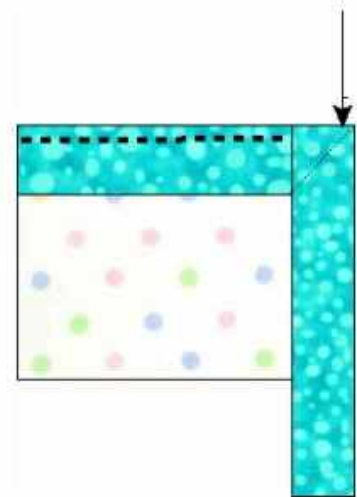
- Now take the long tail of binding strip and fold it on the diagonal in the direction that you just backstitched as shown here in this picture.





- Place your finger on the fold to hold it in place

- Now fold that long tail back down over the first fold you made tucking that folded angle inside. The diagonal line here shows where that extra fold is.
- Start sewing from the edge and sew $\frac{1}{4}$ " all the way down this side of the quilt
- Stop $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the edge.
- Repeat the steps to turn the corner.
- Do this for all four corners.



Ending the Binding

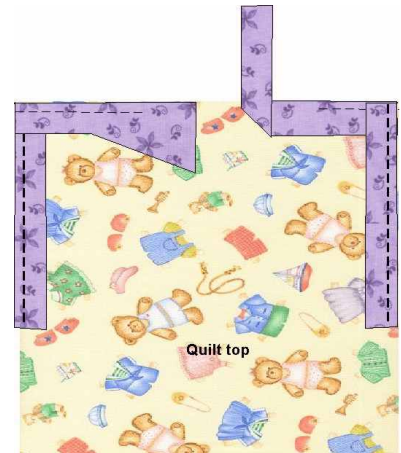
There are several ways to end the binding. The steps we give you here will make the joining of the two ends look just like any other seam in the binding.

- Stop sewing when you get about 12 inches from the end
- You can remove the quilt from the machine if it is easier to do the next steps on a flat table. Smooth the quilt down flat
- Bring the tail of the end of the binding down and lay it flat over the beginning of the binding.
- Mark where it overlaps with a pin.
- You now need to place a second pin further down the **ending** tail. This pin should be placed down the same measurement as the width of our binding (2 inches).
- Now trim the ending tail just next to that second pin. This leaves you about a 2 inch overlap with the beginning end.
- Remove the pins.

Here is the only “tricky” part. You need to bring these two ends together to sew a seam BUT you are not going to sew just across the ends. You are going to sew this on a diagonal.

Since we have cut this to the measurement needed for the quilt, to get these to overlap for this seam means that you will have to bunch the quilt up a bit in the middle. That's okay because we are only sewing on the two binding ends, not through the quilt itself. You can bunch up the quilt just to get it out of your way for the moment.

- open the end of the beginning of the binding and lay it out flat



- open the end of the ending of the binding and bring it around so that it is at a 90 degree angle from the first strip, right sides together.

- sew across this at a 90 degree angle as shown here.
- use your scissors to trim the excess next to that seam
- open it out and use your fingers to press the seam open.



Now smooth your quilt out flat again. As you fold the binding in half and flatten out your quilt, it should now lay along the edge just waiting for the final sewing along the last edge.

- Go ahead and sew it down.

Okay - we're half way finished!

Final Trimming

At this point we can trim any excess batting or backing that remains around the edges. Here's what you want to know:

- When you fold over the binding, you need a bit of batting to fill it out.
- You already have $\frac{1}{4}$ " of quilt (top, batting and backing) between the seam you just sewed to attach the binding and the edge
- Trim *just to the outside* of this edge, leaving a tiny bit of excess here to be sure you have enough to "fill up" the edge.
- If it turns out to be a little too much, you can spot trim as you sew the binding on.

Sewing on the Back

Some people like to sew the binding on the back of the quilt by machine. We don't recommend this only because it is hard to make sure that your stitches won't show through on the top. We recommend sewing the binding on by hand.

Part of the reason for this is so that you can inspect your quilt for any problems as you finish it.

- Work your way around the quilt turning the binding from the front to the back.
- At each corner, you should have a little pocket that can be turned and folded neatly in the back. We'll show you how to sew this in a minute.
- Some folks prefer to pin binding in place as they turn it. We strongly suggest you NOT use straight pins at this point. Since you will be sewing by hand, you don't want to get pricked and bleed on the quilt when you are so close to finishing it!
-

Quilt Clips



A while back someone (who was probably tired of getting stuck on straight pins!) discovered that we can use clips like the ones little girls use in their hair to hold binding in place.

You can buy these in a quilt store but they are considerably cheaper if you go to the pharmacy or grocery store and look in the Hair Care aisle.



These are terrific for holding quilt binding in place. You can clip them on and off with just one hand and there is no danger of getting stuck by a pin point.

- As you turn the binding, inspect the area that you have sewn to make sure that you have sewn through both layers of the binding and into the quilt. If you haven't - you'll see a raw edge when you turn the binding. Stop and re sew that area catching all the layers.
- Check your corners as you turn too. If you can't get the corner to turn, you may need to snip out a thread or two from your seam line. If there is a gap on the front when you turn the corner you may need to put one or two more stitches into the front part.
- Find a thread color that matches with the color of your binding (rather than your backing).

- Use a blind stitch to sew the binding to the back of your quilt all the way around the four sides of your project. (The next few steps will explain how to do this)

The goal here is to only see a tiny bit of the binding thread on the binding itself - you should never see any stitching in the backing of the quilt.

- Knot your thread and start by sewing a stitch somewhere in the middle of one of the sides (make sure the knot is up under the binding).
- Bring the needle up in just the edge of the binding strip and pull the thread through.
- Now put the tip of the needle down into your quilt *directly under* the binding where it came up. (Go back down as closely as possible to where you came up.)

- If you put the needle down as close to where it came out as possible, you can then point it toward the next stitch in between the fabric layers and your stitches will be virtually invisible.
- If you let the needle "travel" and put it down further away from the point where it came out, you will see your stitches on the outside.

- Don't go all the way through to the front of the quilt – try to only go through the backing fabric and the batting.
- Turn the tip of the needle so that it comes out of the back again about ¼" down from where it goes in.
- Try to line the tip up so that it comes up through the edge of the binding as well and pull the needle through.
- Try to get your stitches an even distance apart. That consistency is what a judge would look for.

By putting the needle back in directly under where it came out, your stitches will appear to be really tiny. With a good matching thread, your stitch will be almost "invisible"!

Corners



Everyone has a different technique for doing corners. Most quilters prefer to have the corners look “mitered”. Think of a picture frame and how the corners in the frame meet on an angle - that is a mitered corner. The two pieces meet at a 45 degree angle.

The way that we sewed the binding on the front of the quilt actually set this up for you. All you need to do is finish sewing the miter on the back.

As you are sewing the binding on the back, go down the side until you reach the corner.

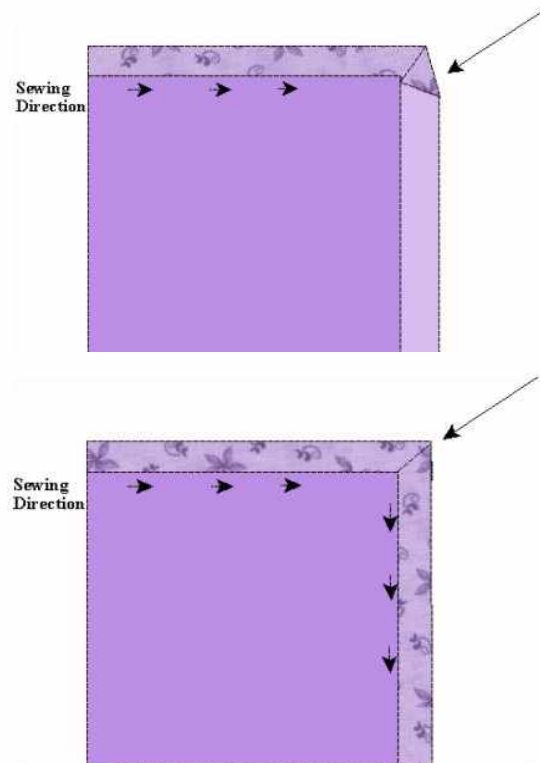
Assuming you are sewing in the direction of the arrows, stop an inch or sew before the corner. Start by tucking in the side you have been sewing on and then bring the other side of the corner over it.

Fold the binding over and at the corner make sure it is at a 45 degree angle. Continue sewing along the top where the arrows are. When you get to the corner, put a stitch in the angle to hold it in place.

Fold the other side down matching the angle in the corner. Take a stitch in the angle to hold it in place and then continue on down the side. Remember to try to make this stitch as small and “hidden” as you can.

Remember the goal here is to make your stitches tiny so they barely show at all.

Do this for all four corners.



Next Step The Last Step!

You only have one more thing to do to finish this quilt. There is a booming business today for quilt appraisers who analyze quilts and try to place their time in history. From the 1800's on many quilts were labeled with at least the quilter's name and a date. Today we add even more information so that others will know who made the quilt, when and why.

Your quilt will not be finished until you do this.

First, you should name your quilt. Yup - think of a name that reflects the quilt or how you feel about the fabrics or what the finished quilt looks like to you.

It can be as simple as "GiGi's quilt for Matthew" or "Alex's Big Boy Quilt". Pick anything you like.

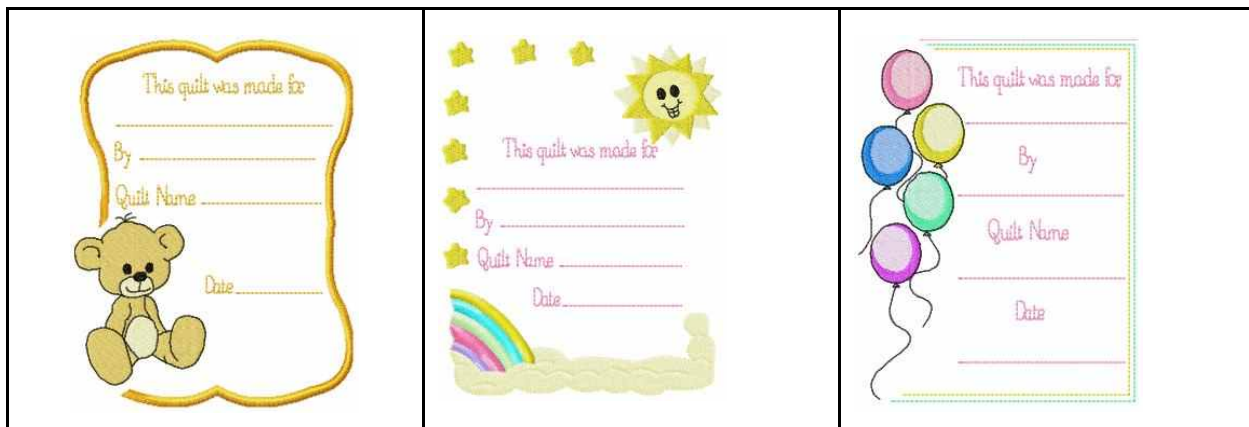
Creating a Label

You should create a label that has your name as the maker of the quilt and the date on it as an absolute minimum. It would also help if you add to whom the quilt will be given and, better yet, a little information about why. You can create a label by using a permanent ink pen and writing on a piece of fabric that is sewn to the back. But wait! You have an embroidery machine! You can embroider a label!

It doesn't matter whether you have a 4x4 hoop or something bigger. If you check around the Internet you will find samples of quilt labels and some for sale.

If you don't want to buy anything, you could repeat one of the designs that you put on the front and then put the information under it or along side of it. If you only have 4x4 hoop - just rehoop it and shift it over to get everything there.

We have a set of quilt labels that have just a border and you can fill in any text you want or the same design with some titles and underlines for you to fill in. Here are a couple of samples:



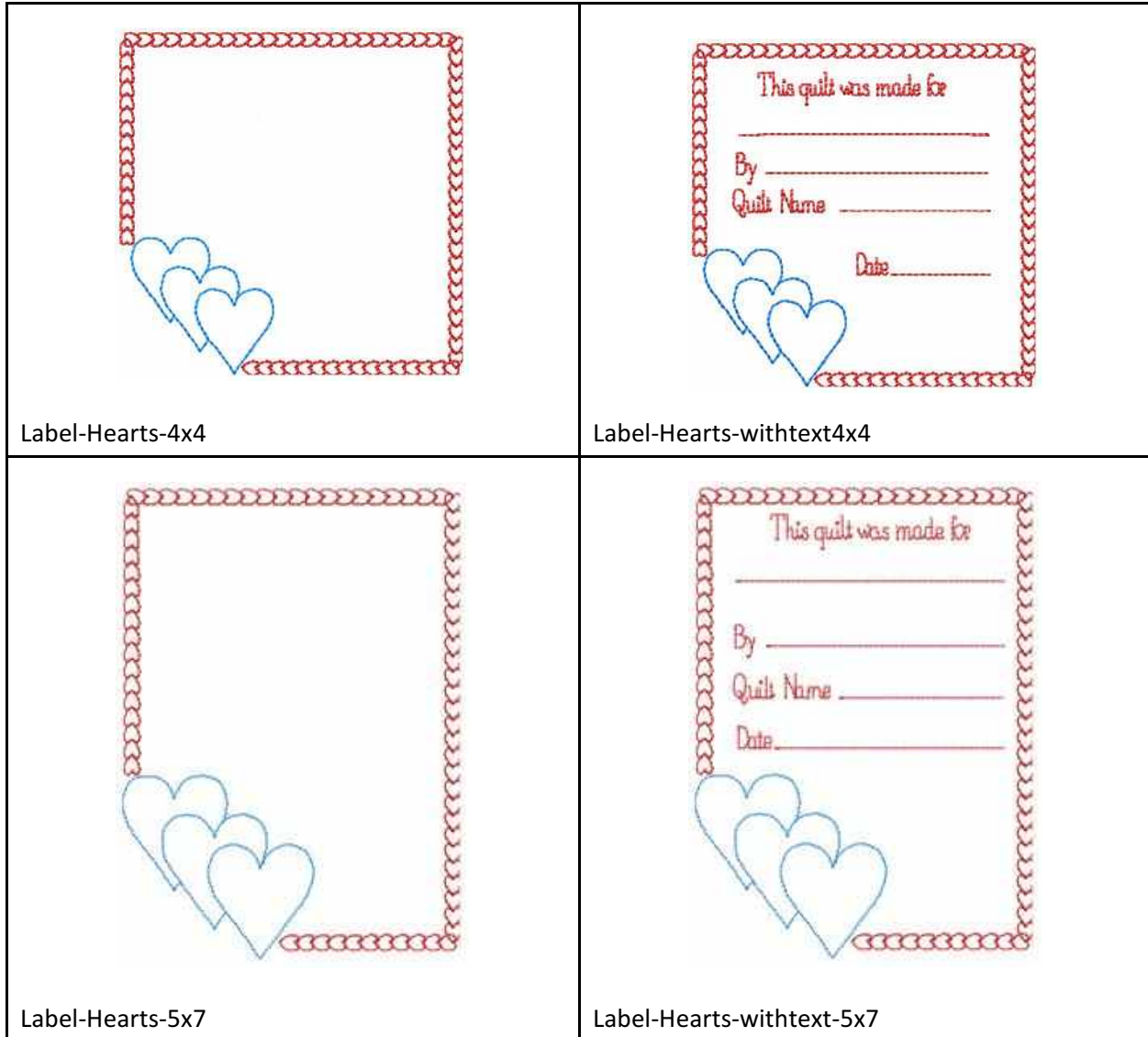
Here's a link if you would like to see more:

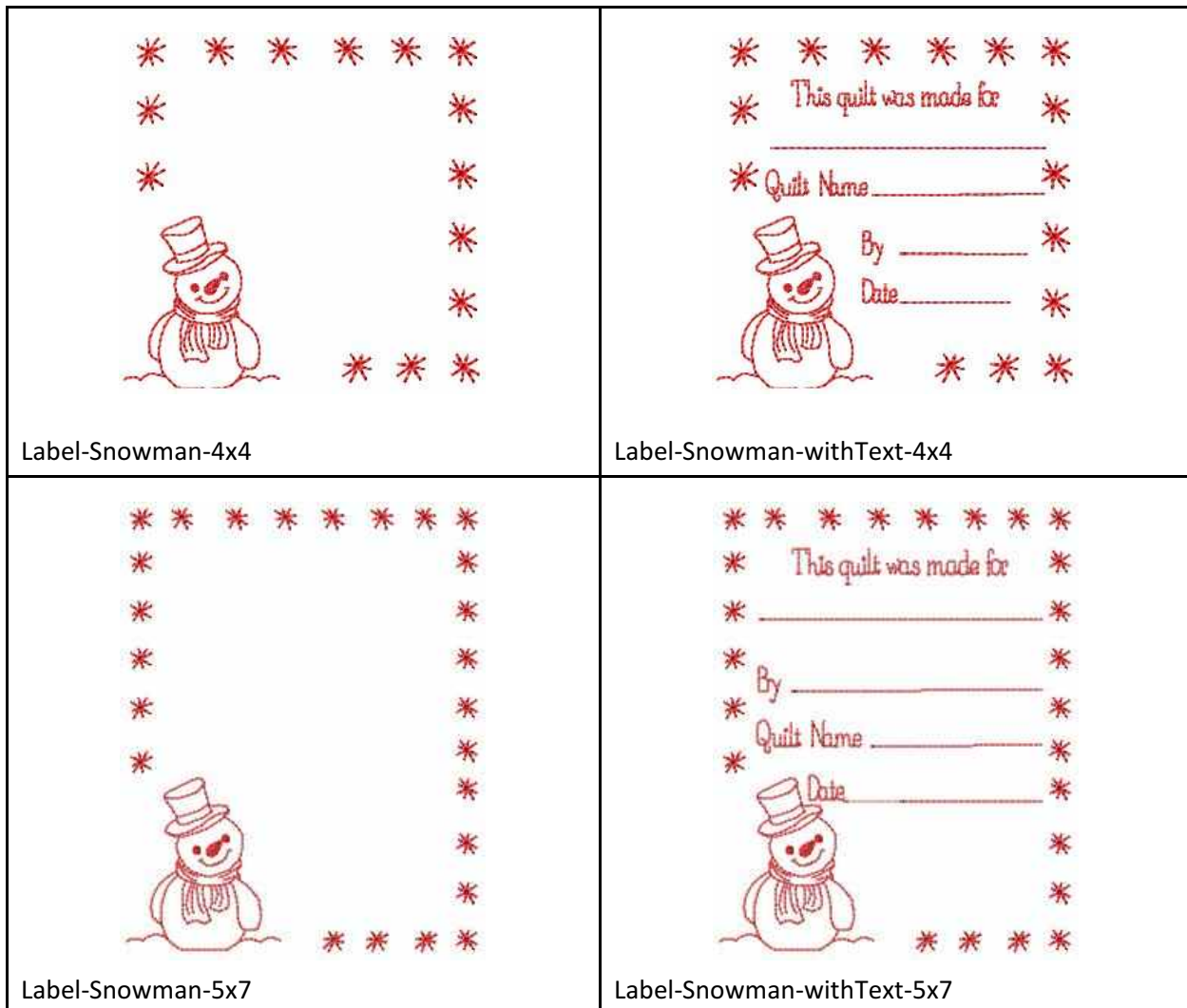
<http://www.charmingstation.com/SpecialSets/Specials2/Specials65.htm>

Free set of Labels

We also have a little mini set of labels for you.

These are pretty generic so you could use these on anything you like. This is a small reward freebie for getting through your project. This link is a private link for those who get to this page. I won't be posting it for everyone!





To download this set for free, use this link: <http://www.charmingstation.com/quilt/label-mini-set.zip>

This zipped file has HUS, JEF, PES and VIP formats in it. If you need something else, please send an email to GiGi@charmingstation.com.

Free Set of Your Choice

If you have used our directions to make a quilt - no matter how it turns out - once it is finished, take a picture of the front and back and send them to us at:

GiGi@Charmingstation.com

If you are willing, please post them in the photo section of our group too. This is not a prerequisite, just a request. But if you don't want to post them, that's okay.

When we receive your pictures, we will send you an email inviting you to select a free set of your choice from our site.

Since we were late with these instructions - we will extend this offer through the end of September, 2009. We hope this gives you a little incentive to finish your quilt!

Congratulations!

You made it all the way through to the end.!