

String Quilt-as-you-go

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Successful Strategies:

Use a walking foot. Use a flatbed sewing machine in order to control the tension of the backing.

Use 50 wt. thread to sew blocks together – it's a high stress area.

Choose a backing that will go well with your front strings – it will show on the front.

Consider the width of your backing fabric when deciding what size squares to cut. You can get three 12 ½" squares or four 10" squares from a width of fabric. Use sizes that match your rulers.

Cut strips for strings at various widths with rotary cutter for straight edges. Press neatly.

Technique:

Cut squares of backing fabric at least one inch wider all around than your batting squares. A 10" square of batting goes well on a 12 ½" square of backing (and is the size of common rulers). An 8" square of batting goes well on a 10" square of backing. Lay backing square wrong side up, place batting square in center of backing square.

Take your center strip, fold in half, right sides together, to line up with diagonal corners of batting, and then unfold, smoothing center strip diagonally across batting. Place a strip, right sides together, along side of center strip, lining up edges to keep that diagonal line going across the block. Sew with a ¼" seam so that the strips don't start going off angle. Press new strips to the side and add another strip (Consider working off both sides of the center strip at the same time to lessen trips between machine and iron). Start and stop each row of stitching just beyond the edge of the batting, not the end of the backing. Use a lock stitch if you have it. Watch the tension on the back – no ruffles or ridges.

When block is complete, turn upside down, lift edges of the backing out of the way in order to trim away the strips to the same size as the batting. If necessary, pull at stitching a little to give you a better view of batting edge – the stitching will be locked when the blocks are sewn together.

Pick up two blocks and hold them together, right side of backing to right side of backing, and stitch along the edge of the batting. Try to get the batting squares to line up by holding the blocks up against the light, or by feeling. Press the seams open. Fold the seam allowance in half and half again towards each of the two blocks. Press and then stitch down with a decorative stitch, using interesting thread. Continue putting blocks together in rows and then sew the rows together in the same way as the blocks. You could even add borders in the same way – as a single unit on each side. When you're done, you still have the outside edge to finish off. Turn it in towards the quilt in half and then half again and use the same decorative edge stitching as before. You've completed your quilt.

Additional Ideas:

Consider cutting up old blocks and adding them to your strips for visual interest.

Consider using lots of different squares of backing with some common theme, like all black backgrounds, or changing the backing fabric for the outside border – just remember that it will show on the front.

Consider making each block half dark and half light in order to use log cabin patterns for the quilt layout.