

The First Quilt Field Guide

Fabric, cuts, and a finish line — your first quilt in order

Quilting looks complicated but breaks into three steps: cut fabric into pieces, sew them into a top, add the batting and backing. This guide gets you through all three without the fabric math panic.

Choose your first project

- Start with a simple pattern: a nine-patch or rail fence quilt. No triangles on round one.
- Fat quarters (18"x22" cuts) are beginner-friendly — no yardage math required.
- Pre-washed 100% cotton quilting fabric is forgiving; avoid stretch fabrics entirely.

The cutting essentials

- A rotary cutter + self-healing mat + acrylic ruler is the power trio. No scissors.
- Cut strips along the straight grain; strips give you the most efficient blocks.
- WTF rule: Where's The Fabric? Always measure twice, cut once — fabric doesn't grow back.

Piecing and finishing

- Sew with a 1/4" seam allowance; every quilter's machine should have a 1/4" foot.
- Press seams open or to the dark side — just be consistent throughout.
- Baste the quilt sandwich (top/batting/backing) with safety pins every 4" before quilting.
- Binding: cut 2.5" strips on the bias, sew to front machine-side, hand-stitch to the back.

Insider glossary

Fat quarter — An 18"x22" piece — a quarter-yard cut differently than a long quarter.

Quilt sandwich — The three layers: top, batting, and backing pinned together before quilting.

SABLE — Stash Acquired Beyond Life Expectancy — the badge of a serious quilter.

UFO — Unfinished Object. Every quilter has several.

Starter checklist

- Rotary cutter
- Self-healing mat (18x24" minimum)
- Acrylic quilting ruler
- 1/4" presser foot

- 100% cotton quilting fabric
- Low-loft cotton batting

WTF Where's The Fabric — quilt life tee at l5d0.com/shop/quilting/