

## A Treasure Trove of Tips

Remember the quilter's secret weapon: give your fabric a generous spritz of **starch or spray sizing** and press with a hot, hot iron before you cut any fabric in order to piece. If you are allergic to the perfumes in starch and sizing, try **Best Press**, which comes in an unscented version. It is sold at The Quilting Season.

Use **blue painter's tape** instead of regular masking tape. It will not leave sticky residue on your fabric. Find it in the paint aisle at the hardware store.

When your self-healing cutting mat becomes fuzzy after cutting polyester fleece or batting, **clean it up by using one of the plastic "scrubbies"** used to buff your skin in the shower or tub.

Every time you wind a new bobbin, **clean out the bobbin area** to prevent a buildup of lint, which could wreak havoc with your stitch tension, or even stop your machine in its tracks.

If your sewing machine did not come with a special bobbin area cleaning brush, **use a Q-Tip**. The lint will stick to the cotton tip.

**Put a few scraps of the fabric** used to make a quilt top behind the label. Applique around the edges of your label, enclosing the scraps like an envelope. If you ever need to make a repair, the fabrics will be close at hand.

When threading a needle, do not moisten the thread ... **moisten the eye of the needle**. Do not push the thread through the eye ... hold the thread vertically, and **put the eye of the needle onto the thread**. If you find it

difficult to thread the needle, try turning it around. Sometimes there is an invisible burr that makes it hard to thread the needle from only one direction, while the other is fine.

When you pre-wash quilt fabric to remove excess dye and pre-shrink, throw in a **Shout Color Catcher**. You can use each about five times, or until it starts to turn dark gray. They have saved many a quilter from disaster. You can find color catchers in the laundry products aisle. They are also great to **use when you wash a finished quilt**. If the color catcher has any hint of dye on it, wash the quilt again with a new color catcher, until no new dye comes off the fabric.

When basting the layers of your quilt with safety pins, use a **serrated grapefruit spoon** to help you close the pins.

If you are working in your sewing room while children are nearby, **wear a "fanny pack" around your waist**. If, as you are working, you need to leave to attend to the children, you can slip your rotary cutter, scissors, pins, etc. into the fanny pack and zip it shut, keeping your sharp tools out of the reach of the children.

Stiffen the bottom of a tote bag by **cutting up an old, worn-out rotary cutting mat to the size you need**.

Rather than clip loose threads, **use the blade of your scissors to cut them like a knife**. You'll be much less likely to damage the fabric by accident.



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