

MAKING QUILT LABELS

WHY YOU SHOULD MAKE LABELS FOR YOUR QUILTS

Making labels for your quilts may not be your favourite part of quilt making but it is important to take the time to make them. A carefully made quilt label shows that you thought as much about it as you did about making the top. This is particularly important if the quilt is to be given as a gift. I have seen beautifully made quilts with shoddy looking labels. I can only wonder why the quilter didn't spend a few extra minutes making a presentable looking label.

Be proud of what you have accomplished. Your quilt may not be a national award winner but you have spent a great deal of time, effort and money so why not let the world know you made it. It is your signature on your piece of art.

Putting a label on your quilt documents it for history. Think about a pioneer woman sitting by candlelight working on a quilt. Did she ever consider that she was making something of historical significance that would end up in a museum? Many have. Conservators and appraisers are extremely grateful when there is an information label attached to the quilt. I'm not saying that one of your quilts will end up in a museum but you never know.

I am sure that many of you have heard stories about lost or stolen quilts. If this happens to you, a label may be the only proof you have that the quilt belongs to you.

Not only can you put a label on a new quilt that you have made you may also consider attaching a label to a family heirloom that has previously not been documented. Include as much information as is possible. It may be incomplete but at least it will be a guide for future generations to help them document the provenance of this quilt.

WHAT YOU SHOULD INCLUDE ON THE LABEL

A quilt label can tell the quilt's story for those who will enjoy it today and for many years to come. The quilt's label should include the quilter's name, the name of the quilt, the year it was made (for some of our UFO's there may be several) and the location. It can also include other information you feel is important especially if the quilt was made as a gift for a new baby, a birthday, wedding or anniversary. Other options are pattern and design information, the name of the quilter if different from the quilt maker and care instructions.

WHERE TO PUT THE LABEL ON YOUR QUILT

Most labels are sewn on the back of the quilt, usually in one bottom corner, but there is no reason why a beautifully made quilt label that blends well with the top of the quilt can't be put on the front.

There are some quilters who attach their labels before quilting so that it is next to impossible to remove the label without damaging the quilt. You may also consider using fusible web to iron your label on to the back of the quilt. These options are good if you are concerned about security issues.

DESIGN IDEAS

There are many ways to make a quilt label. You can be as creative making the label as you were making the quilt. The label may be a reflection of the quilt design on the front considering pattern and colour. If it is an appliquéd quilt one of the front motifs may be replicated on the label. If it is a patchwork design the label could be a block or partial block from the front or you might want to make a miniature version of one of the blocks. Design ideas can come from many sources including quilt books and magazines, embroidery and cross stitch patterns, the computer and, of course, your own design ideas.

MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED

The materials and tools you will need will be determined by what kind and method of quilt label you are making. I will go through some suggestions now so they won't have to be repeated when discussing some of the sample labels.

1. If you are going to print or write your label 100% tightly woven prewashed cotton works best. Prewashing your fabric allows for better ink penetration. Avoid tone on tone fabrics as the pattern is painted on and will make writing difficult and the ink won't penetrate. If you are using embroidery for your label this is not as important.
2. If you are writing on a label a permanent ink for fabric pen is a must. I like the Micron Pigma pen with a .01 sized point. They come in a range of colours and are available at most quilt shops. Beware of Sharpies and Pilot pens as they may bleed or smudge easily. If in doubt test your pen on a sample piece of fabric. Follow the manufacturer's directions (if any) for setting the ink. Wait 24 hours for the ink to set then wash. If you are happy with the results then continue.
When writing on fabric work slowly with a lighter touch than you would normally use on paper. This allows time for the ink to flow into the fabric and lets you control the letters.
3. If you are writing or printing on your fabric you will need freezer paper to act as a stabilizer. If you have never used freezer paper before make sure you buy the plastic coated kind as the wax coated paper will leave a residue on your fabric.
4. If you are using the computer to make labels you will need an ink jet printer. Do not use a laser printer.
5. You may use commercial ink jet fabric sheets following the manufacturer's instructions but later I will tell you how to make your own sheets at a fraction of the cost.

HOW LARGE SHOULD THE LABEL BE?

It can be any size you like, determined by the amount of information you want to include. You may want to design your label on paper first to see how much space you will need including appliqué motifs, border designs etc. Remember to include a ¼" turn under allowance on all sides if you are appliquéing the label onto your quilt.

KINDS OF LABELS

1. You can write directly on the backing of your quilt. This can be tricky as there is no stabilizer so forming the letters can be difficult. I guess this option is better than nothing.
2. There are quilt labels available for purchase at quilt shops. Simply cut out the label you like including the turn under allowance and iron a piece of freezer paper on the back for stability. Write the information on the label, peel off the freezer paper and you have a quick, attractive label to sew onto your quilt.
3. You can write on fabric then appliqué the label to your quilt. To do this decide the size you want your label to be. Cut a piece of fabric the required size. Iron a piece of freezer paper on the back of the fabric. You may want to draw guidelines on the dull side of the freezer paper with a marker before you iron it onto the fabric to help you keep your lines of writing straight. Make your label then peel off the freezer paper. Turn under the edges and sew the label on to your quilt.

This type of label lends itself to some embellishment. When designing your label consider drawing or stamping a frame around the words, drawing an appropriate picture or even one of the quilt blocks from the front in ink. Sewing a frame around the label using some of the quilt top fabric can also enhance this label.
4. This label is a variation of the one just described using foundation piecing to make it. Choose a foundation piecing pattern making sure that there is a large enough area for your information. When you have finished sewing the block iron a piece of freezer paper to the back of the large area, write your information then peel off the freezer paper. You could also embroider this label if you wish. Lay a used dryer sheet on the right side of the block and pin in place. Sew all around your block on the seam line of your block pattern. Trim the block leaving a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. Remove all of the foundation paper. Cut a slit in the dryer sheet and turn the block right side out. Press and attach to your quilt. This method works well so you don't have to contend with all of the foundation seams when sewing the label on.

5. This label is an example of using embroidery to make your label. If you enjoy this medium you may consider this way to make your labels. It is more time consuming but you can produce very attractive labels. Trace your motifs and information onto the fabric using very light pencil then embroider.
6. You may want to explore using the waste canvas technique. Waste canvas is basically needlepoint canvas. You can purchase it at craft stores or use plain needlepoint canvas and it works very well. There is a bit of math involved in making this label. The finished size of your letters will be determined by the gauge of the canvas and the size of the letters in your alphabet. I find that 5 holes high works well with the 14 -count canvas. You can find alphabets in embroidery and cross stitch books and magazines or on the internet. Chart your information on graph paper. By counting the squares you can figure out the length and width of your label. It is a good idea to add an extra inch all of the way around. It can be trimmed to size later. Baste the canvas to the top of your fabric and using a back stitch embroider the letters. When you are finished wet the piece which dissolves the glue in the canvas. When it is dry the canvas threads are pulled out and your label is ready. Cross stitch can also be used but you will have to make adjustments to the size of your label and letters.
7. Another option is to use fabric(s) from the quilt top to make a label. It carries the theme of the top to the back. Make the borders, iron freezer paper to the back, write the information on it, peel off the freezer paper and sew it in place.
8. These directions are for using regular crayons on 100% cotton. Crayola crayons are the best as they have more pigment than the cheaper ones. If you are using synthetic fabric you must use fabric crayons. Prewash your fabric without using fabric softener. Stabilize your fabric by ironing a piece of freezer paper to the back. Trace your design on the fabric using a pigma pen. Colour your design pressing firmly. The darker the colour the better. Put a pad of newspaper on your ironing board to protect it. With the coloured side up cover your label with a piece of paper towel. Press with a dry iron set on wool. The paper towel will absorb the wax. Keep changing

the paper towel and iron again until there is no longer any wax showing on the towel. When using this method, the quilt should be washed in cold water and air dried.

9. Decorative stitches on your sewing machine are perfect for making borders on your labels. Just cut your fabric to the required size and back it with a piece of tear away stabilizer or our old friend – freezer paper. Choose your design, sew it, print your information then tear away the stabilizer. If your sewing machine has letters, then your whole label can be made on the sewing machine. If you have an embroidery machine use it to make your labels.

10. Using your computer is a great way to make quilt labels. As mentioned before you must use an ink jet printer. There are pre-treated fabric sheets available at quilt shops. If you are using them just follow the manufacturer's directions but you can also make your own. When making labels using this method it is recommended that you pre-treat your fabric with Bubble Jet Set 2000 and rinse your labels with Bubble Jet Rinse when you are finished. These products are available at some quilt shops – I know that Thimbles and Things in Orillia sells them or you can order them on line from the Dharma Trading Company.

Iron an 8 ½" x 11" piece of freezer paper to the back of the same sized piece of prepared fabric. Make sure there are no loose threads that will jam your printer. Design your label using a word processing program. Once you are satisfied print the label on a piece of paper just to make sure you are happy with the design. Place the prepared piece in the printer and print the label. Make sure you know which side of the paper/fabric should face up or down so it will print on the correct side. Peel off the freezer paper and rinse.

When it is dry heat set the ink with a hot dry iron. Cut out the label with a 1/4" turn under allowance and it is ready to sew on to you quilt.

11. There are several sites on the internet which have free pre-designed quilt labels. Google Making Quilt Labels or Free Quilt Labels and you will have no problem finding them. As explained in the information just discussed you will need pre-treated fabric sheets or your own prepared ones. After

printing your label fill in the information with fabric pen before you remove the backing then heat set with a hot dry iron.

12. Care Instruction Labels – As mentioned earlier you may want to include a care instruction label on your quilt. You can make a label using your computer and following the directions just described. You may also choose to have a rubber stamp made using the care instruction symbols found on clothing. An article found on the Internet suggests that the best permanent rubber stamp ink is called VersaCraft Real Black or Chocolate for light coloured fabrics and VersaMagic Cloud White for dark fabrics.

QUILT LABEL BOOKS

50 Nifty Iron On Labels by Barbara Baatz Hillman
Kooler Design Studio
Published by Leisure Arts Inc.
5701 Ranch Dr., Little Rock AR 72223

Foundation Pieced Quilt Labels by Linda Causee
ASN Publishing
1455 Linda Vista Dr., San Marcos CA 92069

One Of A Kind Quilt Labels by Thea Nerud
Martingale & Company
20205 144th Ave. NE, Woodinville WA 98072-8478

The last book can be found in our Guild Library.

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