



All About Quilt Batting

How To Choose the RIGHT Type of Wadding for Your Quilt

Another Sewing Guide from Sew Much Easier



Get to know your wadding for quilting.

By the time you've completed your first quilt top, you'll need to choose a suitable batting for your quilt – whether you plan to do the quilting yourself or sending it away for long-arm quilting.

If you're new in the world of patchwork, you'd probably be shocked when you go to buy your batting for the first time:

“Wow – they are so THIN! And so many types – they look all the same.”

What to do next..? Let's find out.

Quality Quilt Batting Is Costly.

So is YOUR time invested in making quilts. **Choose wisely.**



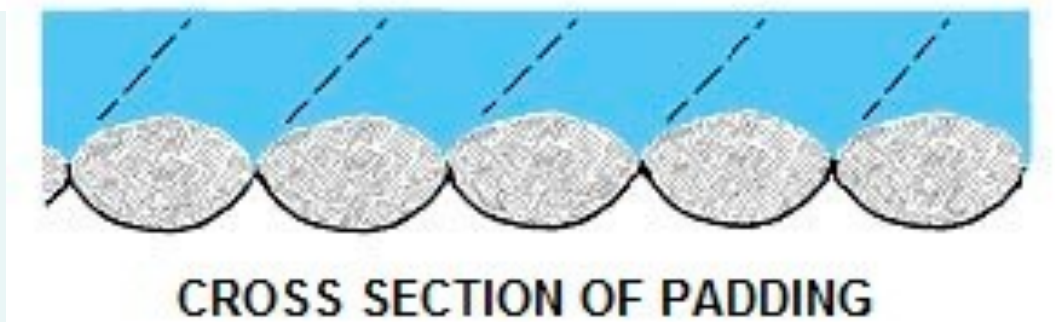
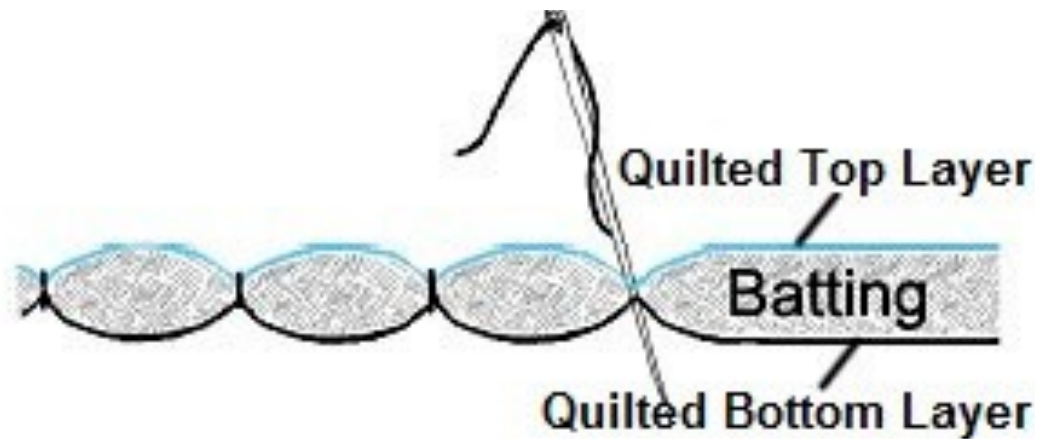
When it comes to types of quilt batting (or wadding, as they are often called in UK, Australia & NZ), first you need to know what they are NOT.

Patchwork quilt batting is NOT...

- a doona insert – you cannot put it into a duvet cover and use it like that
- a thick & fluffy filling like what you'd find in a sleeping bag or puffer jacket
- a finished material – it needs to be stitched into a quilt before you can use it

So - What is quilt bating, exactly?

What is Quilt Batting?



Batting is the soft layer between the quilt top and the backing – typically known as a “quilt sandwich”.

Your batting gives the quilt dimension and definition, and adds warmth and comfort. As much as they appear the same, different types of batting can make a quilt flat or puffy, stiff or drape-able – depends on your preference.

Quilt Batting Has Come a Long Way.

Take a peek inside an antique quilt, and you'd find...



Historically, quilt-makers used whatever fibre on hand for the quilt's middle layer – as a filling – with warmth & thrift as the main consideration. Think wool rovings and loose cotton.

Early batting of this type contains nothing but layered fibre with no other added processes for structure. The fibre is not bound together in any manner and is very easy to quilt.

The major issue with early batting is potential for fibre migration and shifting - especially in washing.

This type of batting will tend to bunch and shift between the quilt lines if not quilted as close as 1/4 – 1/2 inch spacing, and still clump up over time with daily use and regular washing. Not what you want. Instead...

How Modern Batting is Made



These days, quilt battings made for the patchwork world are more reliable, because of how they are made.

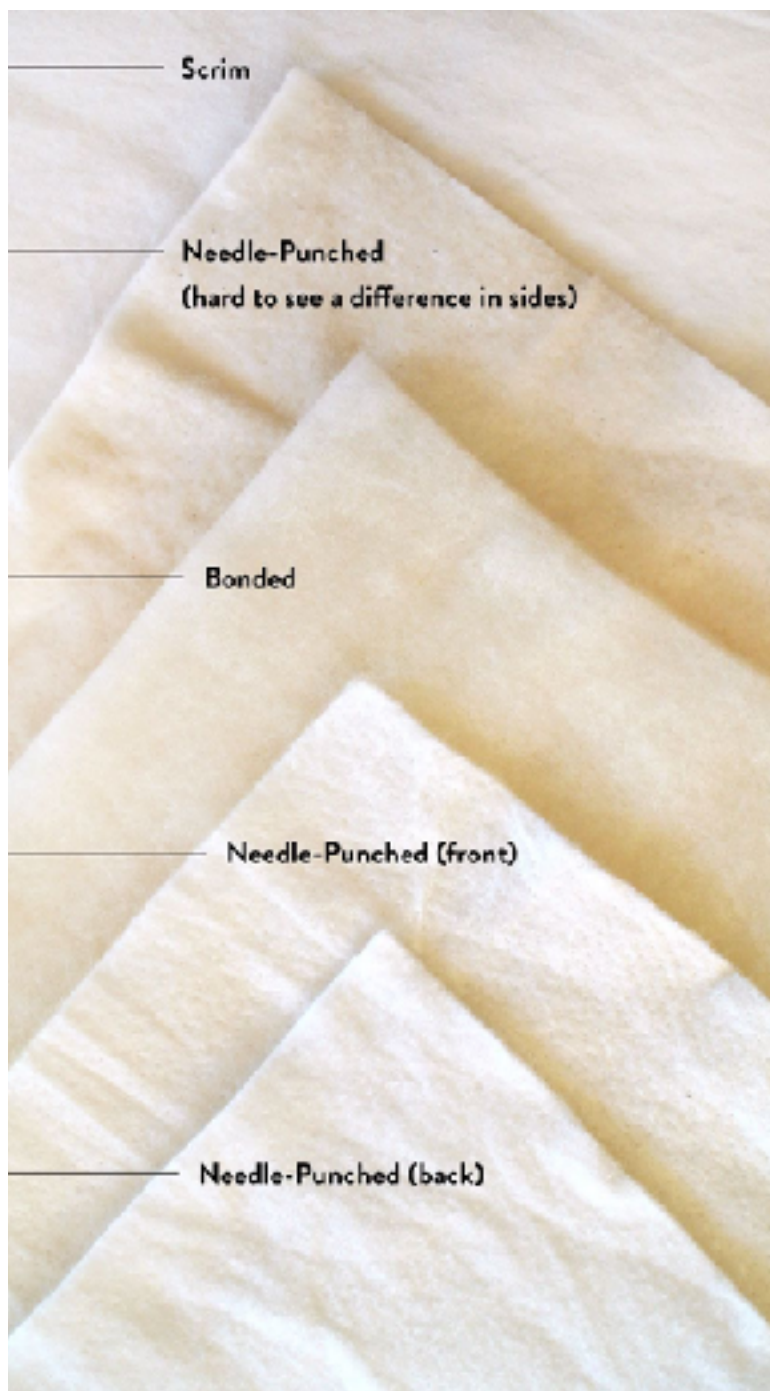
Modern quilt battings are made in two ways:

- Needle-punched
- Bonded

Let's take a closer look in the next page...

Anatomy of Quilt Batting

Let's get to know the insides of your quilt.



Scrim

a fine layer for the fibres to hold onto

Does Batting have a "right" side?

Sides doesn't matter for batting, because it will be enclosed inside your quilt top & quilt backing.

Bonded

both sides look the same

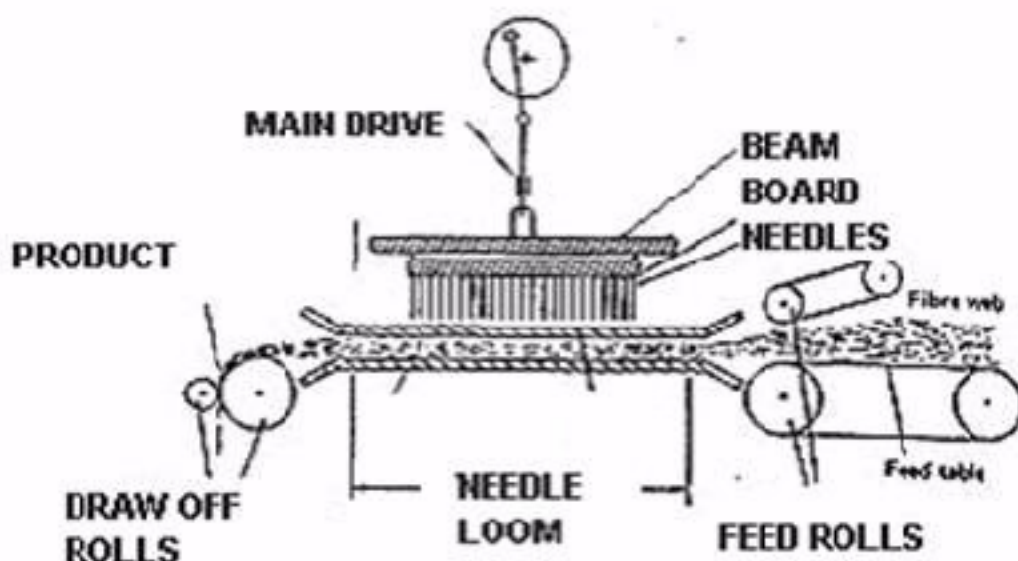
Needle-Punched

front

Needle-Punched

back

Needle-Punched Method



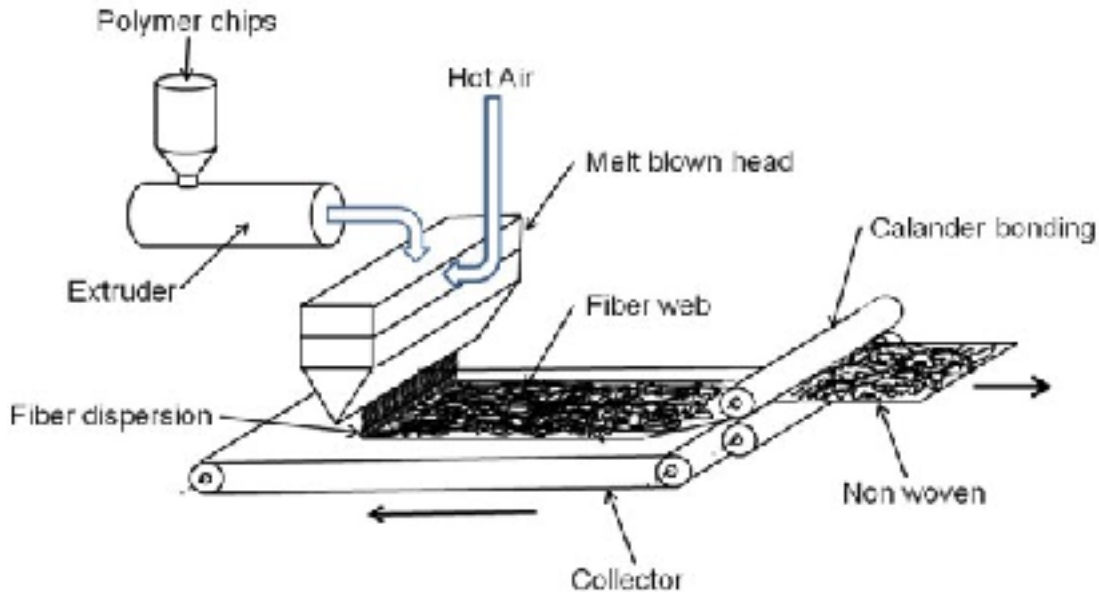
Needle-punched battings are made similarly to felt – where loose fibres have been put through a machine that has millions of needles (but no thread), and these fibres are being “punched” into a fine base cloth – known as “scrim” – before being rolled into huge rolls.

Scrim is a thin, non-woven base layer that provides structure for loose fibre to cling on to, locks in fibres to prevent bearding / piling. The Scrim also gives the batting strength and body - ideal for quilting.

Having scrim in needle-punched batting is essential. ALL needle-punched waddings / battings has it, though the weight and drape can vary. You might find that some battings feel like there’s a layer of interfacing embedded in there, and others are barely detectable.

Either way – by the time your quilt is made, the scrim will no longer be noticeable because it would be enclosed inside and become part of the fabric. Think of it like interfacing for garments.

Bonded Method



Bonded batting is made differently all together. The fibres are put together by either **thermal** or **resin** method.

Thermal (heat) bonding has a low melt fibre blended with standard polyester to hold it together. This can allow bearding but doesn't break down with washing and dry cleaning as fast as resin bonded batting.

Resin (glue) bonded batting is made from a variety of fibres including polyester, cotton, and wool. Resin is applied to both sides then dried and cured. This makes it resist bearding better than any other batting.

Pros & Cons



While bonded battings tend to have a cloud-like softness and higher loft (i.e. thicker), the manufacturing process and added resin / melted fibre can change the way that natural fibre behaves.

That means you may not gain the full benefit of breathability and absorbency from natural fibre such as cotton, wool or bamboo. However, some hand quilters prefer this because the absence of scrim offers less resistance - therefore less effort for hand quilting.

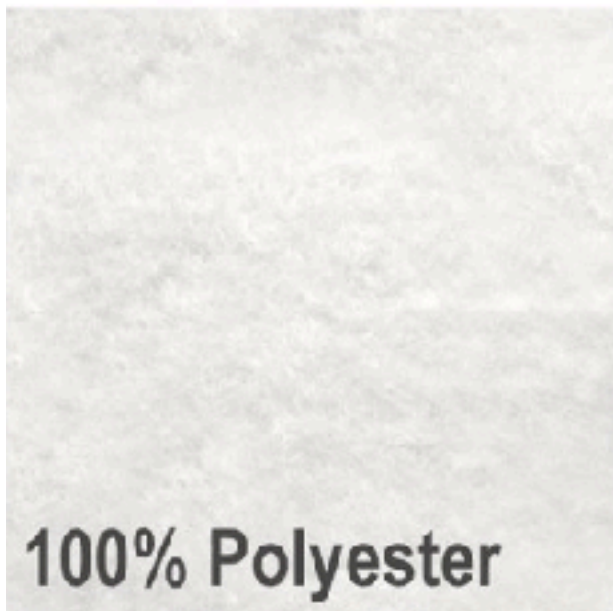
Needle-punched battings appear felt-like. They tend to be stronger and denser with lower loft (i.e. thinner and flatter).

While you do benefit more from the natural fibre, some may find it more challenging for hand quilting – depending on the scrim and overall fibre density. The integrity of needle-punched batting makes it ideal for machine quilting, and excellent for regular use and washing.

What will you choose? Depends on your project :-)

What Battings Are Made Of

Let's Talk About Fibre Types





Cotton is a natural choice for many quilters because we're already working with cotton fabric. Typically, cotton batting has a low loft, drapes beautifully, is soft, cuddly, warm and natural.

However, cotton will always have a tendency to shrink within your quilt, which produces a soft, crinkly effect on the surface, which adds a lot of characters with a "well-loved" feel.

This is terrific for bed quilts, but probably not the best choice for wall hangings that needs to retain its sharp corners and hangs straight.

Of course, there is always the option to never wash or pre-wash. More on washing later.

Let's look at other fibre types next...



100% Bamboo

Bamboo is a wonderful fibre for batting because it is harvested from a fast growing plant – and makes it a low carbon footprint product. It is amazingly soft with a silky feel, drapes beautifully and low loft.

Bamboo batting is ideal for use in humid conditions because it dries 3 times faster than cotton batting and naturally resistant to mould or mildew growth.

Similar to cotton, bamboo batting also has a static grab that holds onto fabric so it is easy to handle in the preparation of your quilt sandwich prior to quilting. While it has a scrim, some quilters are happy enough to hand quilt it because of the softness.

As cotton, bamboo also tends to have a bit of shrinkage, so you may wish to use them in projects that have a soft, crinkled vintage feel. Bamboo is a great choice for summer time bed quilts and lightweight throw quilts. Perfect for warmer climates.



100% Wool

Super warm and soft, wool is a great choice for winter bed quilts. The natural spiral in the wool fibre forms large air pockets and traps air – which is why it retains warmth while still breathes. Wool is well-known for wicking moisture away, so it is a practical choice for quilts that will be used regularly.

Depending on how it was made, and the weight of the scrim – different brands of wool battings vary a lot in weight and feel. Wool battings that are bonded can feel a lot softer and fluffier with much higher loft, compare to needle-punched wool battings – which are denser and resembles wool felt.

One of the best characteristic of wool fibre is the resilience – that it doesn't hold creases so your quilts will always bounce back smooth, even when folded up tightly for months. For this reason, wool is a very popular show quilt batting.

Be mindful with washing 100% wool batting though – because wool fibre “felts” easily, and could turn into lumps instead of staying soft. Be sure to follow manufacturer's instructions.

60% Wool / 40% Cotton



This batting is an unusual blend – and enjoys the benefits of both wool and cotton fibres.

It is soft to touch and drapes better than the popular wool/poly batting. It has the warmth of wool with the softness of cotton. It still resembles felt and has low to medium loft.

A popular and reliable choice for show quilts, this batting has a lower shrinkage to 100% Cotton and is more washable than 100% Wool. That means it is also a practical choice for quilts that will be used regularly.

100% Polyester



Polyester is a synthetic fibre - we all know that.

While it never sound as good as natural fibre), it has virtually no shrinkage and produces quilts that are perfectly square and hangs stunningly straight on a wall.

Polyester batting is also extremely stable and a perfect choice for special quilting techniques – like trapunto – that relies on the batting holding it's shape perfectly.

A good quality, low-loft polyester batting makes an idea choice for quilts that sustain the most amount of use, and needs regular washing for hygienic reasons. Baby quilts, for example.

Other popular uses include charity quilts that are made for the homeless and animal shelters.



Not All Polyester Are the Same

While our polyester batting IS 100% poly – it is NOT to be confused with the high loft polyester wadding – like Dacron (see above) – which is intended for upholstery & soft furnishing as a filling material. Think pillow & doona inserts.

This kind the wadding is commonly mistaken for quilt wadding by non-quilters or newbies.

We don't recommend high-loft poly wadding because it is really difficult to quilt and doesn't play nicely with your lovely patchwork cotton fabric – so best to avoid if you intend to make a traditional patchwork quilt.

However, high-loft mimics the look of down, and it is also often used in tied quilts. So if that's the kind of interior decorating project you're making, then by all means go for it!

Characters of Batting



In the next few pages, let's discover some crucial points to consider when choosing a suitable quilt batting for your next quilt...

- Bearding / Fibre Migration
- Drapability
- Loft
- Resiliency
- Warmth & Absorbency
- Washability & Shrinkage

Chosen well - your quilt will come together effortlessly :-)



Bearding, also known as fibre migration happens when the fibres separate and start working their way through the weave of the fabric, escaping the quilt, and giving a beard-like appearance on the surface of your quilt.

This is especially obvious when you use a pale colour batting inside a dark colour quilt. Wool tends to be more prone to this issue compare to other fibres.

Use a good quality batting made by reputable brands to avoid bearding.



Drability

Drability = Drape-ability

This refers to how a quilt feels and hangs after being quilted. Good batting will allow your quilt to drape around your shoulders following the natural curve of your body without being too stiff.

The density or sparseness of the quilting and the loft of the batting will also affect the drape, or relative stiffness or softness, of the finished quilt.



Loft levels determines different appearances in a finished quilt. In general, the higher the loft the harder to machine and hand quilt.

The term “loft” refers specifically to the thickness / puffiness of the batting, and not strictly relating to the fibre type in the batting itself. For example, cotton fibre by nature is generally low-loft, but it can be blended to achieve a higher loft - especially for a bonded batting product.

Polyester is traditionally made into high-loft wadding – such as Dacron – though low-loft poly batting is preferred these days for ease of quilting, and still produces a soft and drape-able quilt.

The best kinds of loft in the patchwork world is **Low to Medium**. This kind of batting adds texture, gives enough “puff”, and provides some warmth, while still easy to handle and lovely to use.



Resiliency

This refers to the batting's ability to regain its original shape – how quickly it can spring back when unfolded and how it resists creasing.

Wool fibre has great resiliency because of the natural spiral shape of the fibre.



Warmth & Absorbency

Both cotton & bamboo battings are great at absorb moisture, making them cool in the summer and warm in the winter.



Washability & Shrinkage

All finished quilts CAN be washed- no matter what type of batting - as long as it is fully stitched and enclosed with NO part of the batting exposed.

While polyester batting resist shrinking, natural fibre like cotton can shrink from 3 to 5 percent, similar to garments.

The shrinkage produces puckered, well-loved look in quilts. This accentuate the quilting, which makes it a desirable characteristic.



Prewash?

Should you wash your batting prior to use?

Generally – NO. Especially wool.

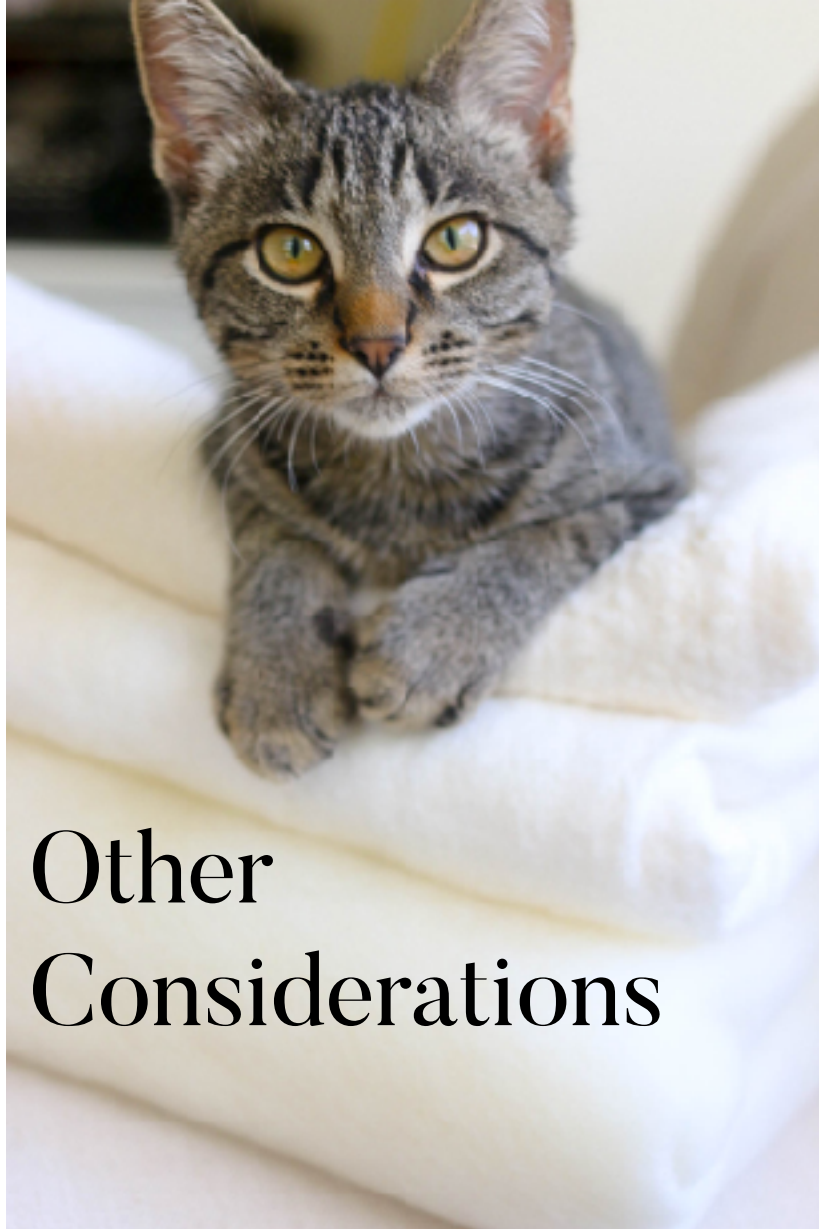
It's best to only wash your quilt when it is ALL finished, so the fibres in the batting are encased inside your fabric and not exposed – to avoid damaging the batting.

If you really must avoid shrinkage, you can pre-wash cotton and bamboo batting – but NOT wool – because it can turn into felt. In any case, shrinkage less of an issue for wool and poly batting.

Here's how to prewash cotton / bamboo batting:

1. Use cool water and mild detergent, soak for 15 mins
2. Squeeze out excess moisture by rolling in a dry towel
3. Then air-dry by lying flat. Expect about 4% to 8% shrinkage

Without pre-washing and pre-shrinking, you will achieve a vintage, softly wrinkled look and feel in your finished quilt. This effect is generally preferred, which makes cotton or bamboo batting popular with quilters!



Other Considerations

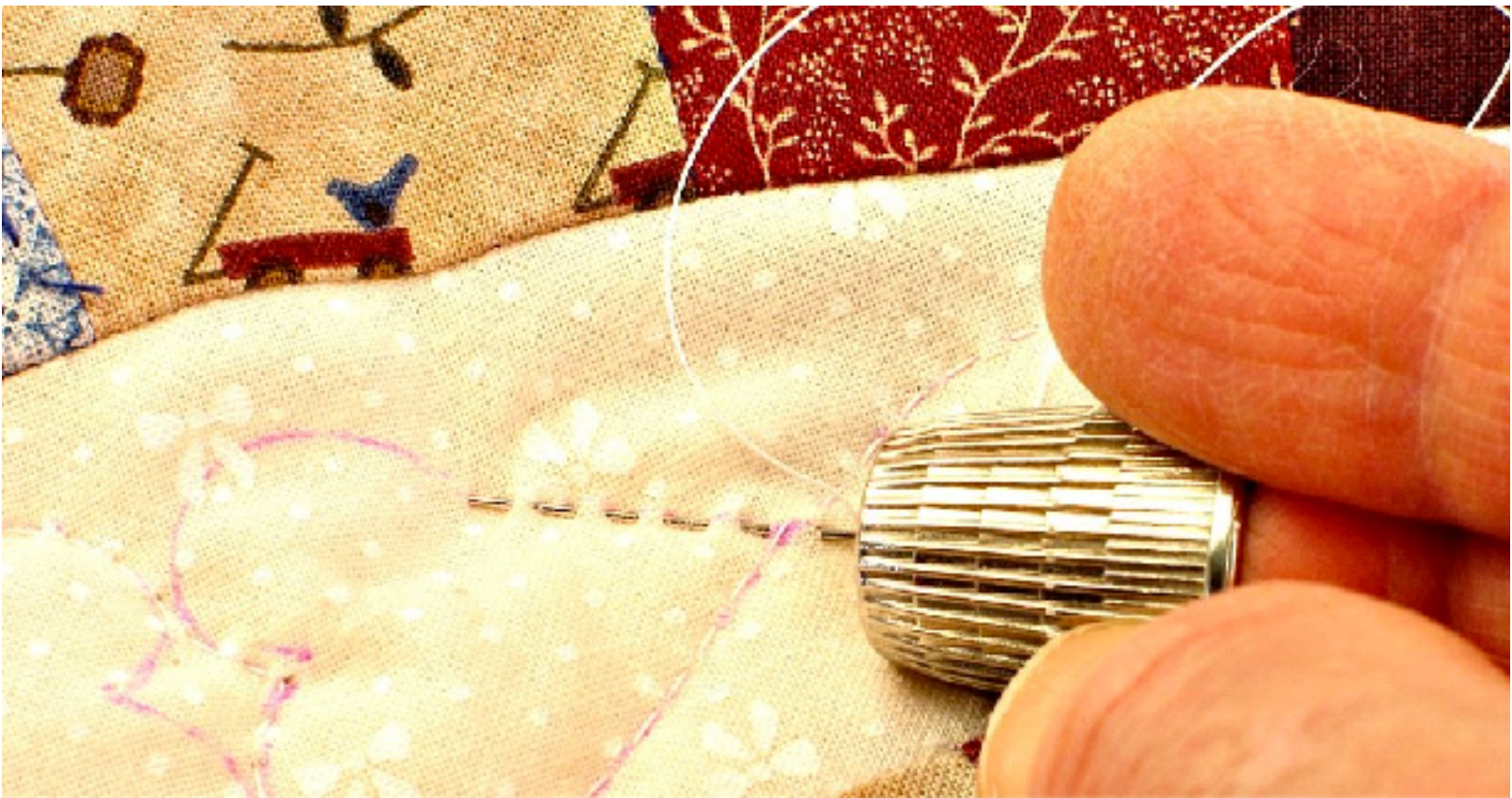
Ready to get quilting?

Consider some practical points...

- How will your quilt be quilted?
- How will your quilt be used?
- How much batting do you need?

Let's discuss them in details...

How Will Your Quilt Be Quilted?



Will you machine quilt it? Or hand quilt it?

Generally, hand quilters prefer battings that do NOT contain scrims – which means the traditionally preferred choice for hand quilting might be bonded battings.

Though some of the modern needle-punched battings now contain a very fine scrim, which some quilters are happy to hand quilt – especially with large running stitch in perle cotton or shashiko thread.

For machine quilting, needle-punch battings tend to be easier to handle because the scrim gives body and structure to your batting, and holds the shape better.



How Will Your Quilt Be Used?

Before you make your final batting choice, consider how your quilt will be used.

Is it a baby quilt that will be washed and dried extensively? Will it be placed on a child's bed and get pulled and tugged? Or, are you making a wall hanging that needs to maintain sharp, crisp corners?

Or are you making a quilt that you want to drape loosely over a bed and tuck beneath the pillows? Is it an heirloom project that will be used sparingly and only laundered once every few years? Or is it a decorative item that will never be washed? Is it a table runner that needs to lie extremely flat?

Your usage will help determine what batting would suit best.



How Much Batting to Buy?

Quilt batting is most commonly sold by the meter, off a roll. Unlike doonas and sheets – batting sizes are NOT the same as bed size, and there is no such thing as “standard”.

Because patchwork quilts tend to be generous compared to mattress or bed size, and people often want some over-hang when the quilt is finished.

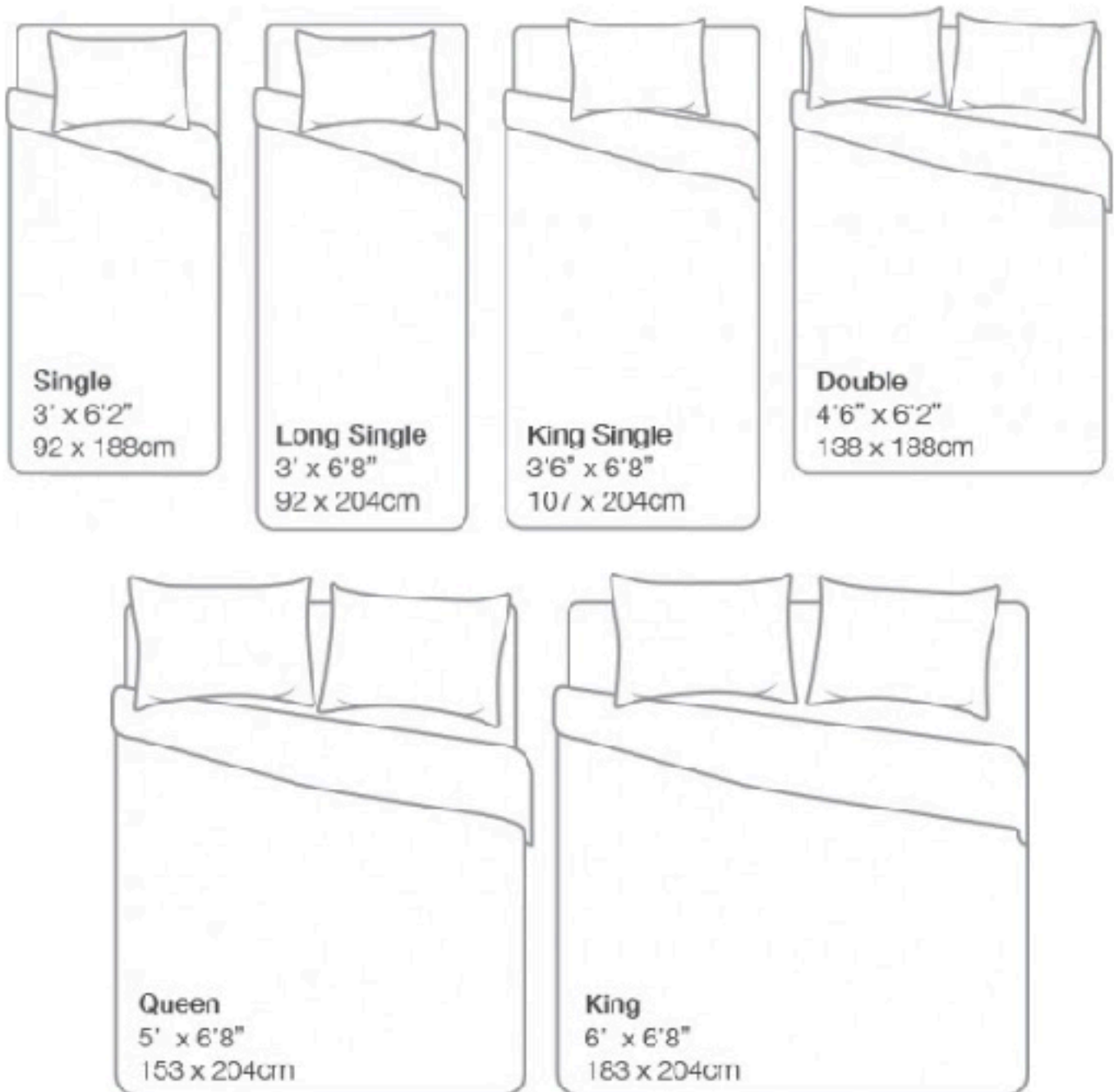
Most importantly – you always need to allow some excess for trimming after quilting.

See next page for more details...

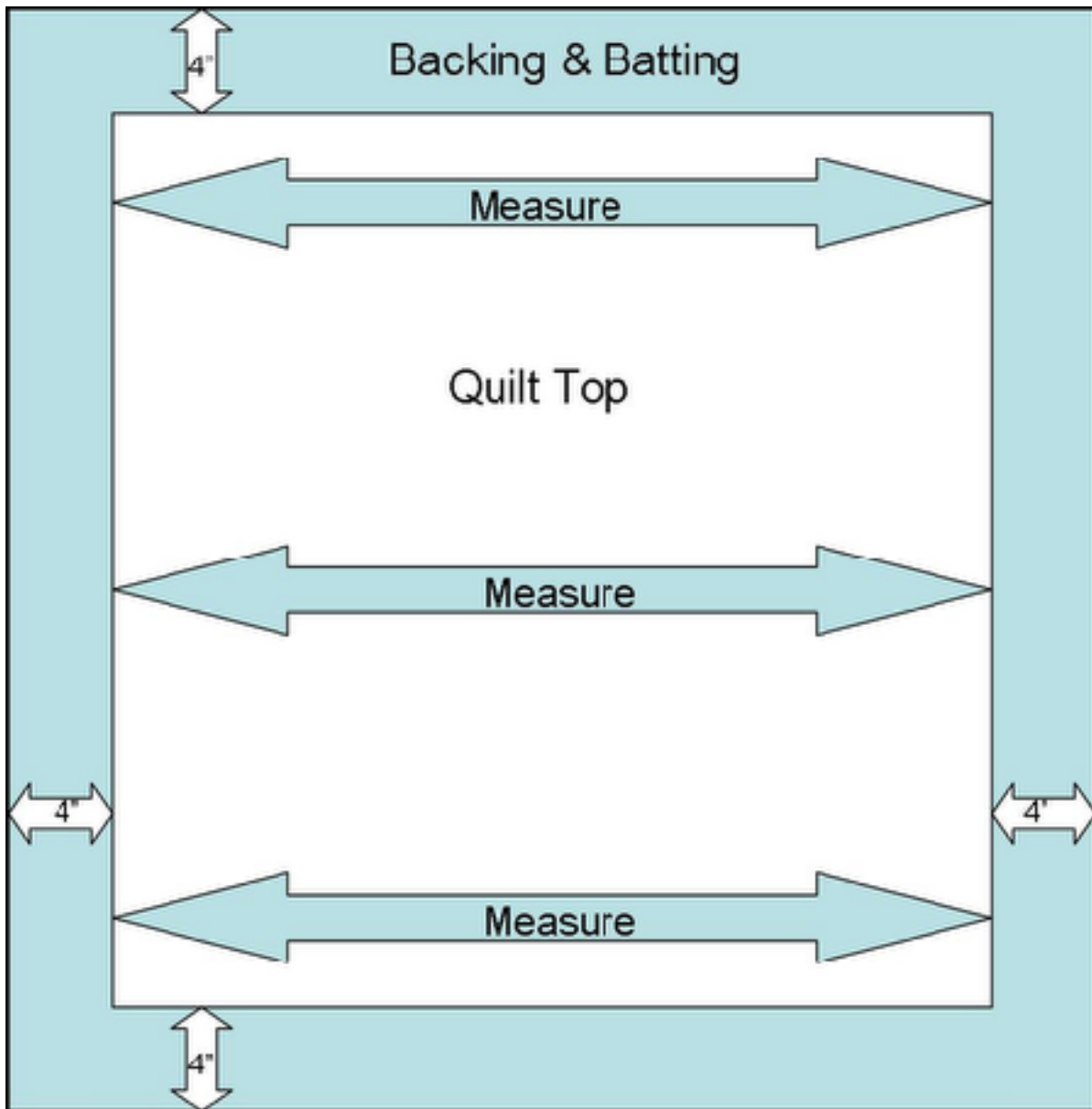
Australian Mattress Size Chart

Use this chart as a rule-of-thumb guide for quilt size. Because some block layouts will suit a square better than a rectangle, or vice versa.

Remember - it's BEST to let your design determine the finished dimensions!



Make Generous Allowance



Measure the width of your quilt top. Add 4-6 inches each side to the measurement and this should be enough.

If you plan to make a few quilts, it is always BEST value to order by the whole roll.

See Whole Roll Batting

Doing Your Own Quilting?



You're going to need these feet...

- [Walking Foot](#) - for quilting straight lines, in the ditch, or geometric patterns.
- [Free-Motion Darning Foot](#) - for free-hand meandering stitches also known as "stippling"
- [Quarter Inch Foot](#) - for piecing your quilt top with a precise 1/4 " inch seam

See next page for better value...

Get The Set for Half Price!



Why not get ALL the presser feet you need for patchwork quilting in [one](#) complete set?

Simply use this code **FEETSET50** at checkout so you can enjoy 50% Off...

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Come along & **Discover the Truth** that *No one* talks about...

"I just don't understand how people spend so much on sewing machines, then use cheap inferior feet!" Said K, somewhat exasperated.

"If only they knew the risks..."

"Risks? There are risks?" I asked. This was how it all began...

Continue Reading Here...

www.sewmucheasier.com/not-all-presser-feet-made-equal



Hello, I'm Shelley

I confess that I'm a **fabric** addict. I love nothing more than geeking out over the ins-and-outs of **sewing machines** - and all the bits that come with it. **Presser Feet** are my specialty :-)

I've been sharing my passion of sewing all my life - with a career in fashion design and patchwork teaching. Now **I serve fellow sewist** everywhere. We deliver curated sewing goodies to your door and help **celebrate your joy** in the simple act of making something by hand.

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Or, simply pick up the phone and call **1300 88 11 59** (we're in Australia).

Let's be friends, and **Happy Sewing!**

Shelley

XOXOX



Thank You.

At **Sew Much Easier**, we have ONE intention - **to help you SEW... much easier!**

We stock only a handful of curated sewing goodies - hand picked and tested ourselves - before we decide whether or not they make it on the website. Because we're only interested in handing over what YOU would be happy with. **I'm here to make YOUR day :-)**

So, How can I Help You Sew Easier Today?

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