

Whole Cloth Quilting

This sample will give you a quick learning tool for making even larger whole cloth quilts, as the technique is the same no matter the quilt size.

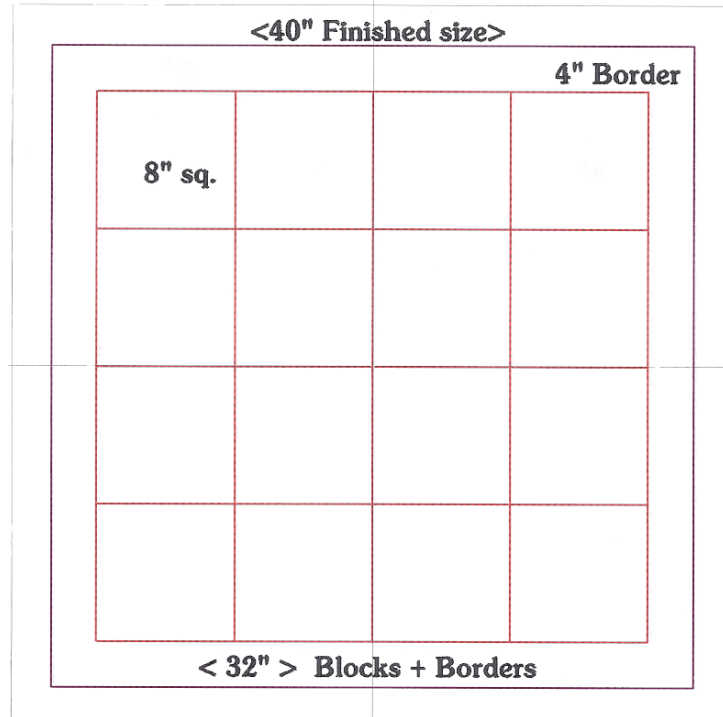
For this sample wall-hanging, I started with 1 ½ yards of 44" wide fabric and used half the width for the front and half for the backing. Do not cut your selvedge edges at this time, the extra width will come in handy when hooping.

I always mark my grid on the backing fabric with chalk or ceramic pencils, and then I don't have to worry about washing the quilt to get the marks out, because with chalk the lines will disappear by the time the quilt is finished. (*Sewline Fabric Pencils* are great for this)

I never use wash-away marking pens.

Because most of my quilt backings are larger than my table, I frequently fold my backing in half lengthwise, spray starch and iron dry. The center crease will be the center marking of your quilt.

With masking or packing tape, tape the backing fabric to the table, right side up, keeping the fabric straight, taunt and smooth; I frequently use the edge of my table as the straight edge. Tape all 4 sides when possible, do not completely cover the edges with tape as you will be measuring from these edges. For this sample you will be marking Four (4) – 8" blocks across the width and 4 blocks the length (4x4) plus 4" borders top and sides. (if your fabric is narrower, use 2" borders)



Measure and mark a line 8" from the fold, measure and mark a 2nd line 8" from the first. Mark a 3rd line 4" from the 2nd line for the border. Now mark from the top down. I usually give myself about 2" of excess fabric at the top edge, this allows for my first mark to be straight across. From this first line, measure and mark 4" for the top border, now add 4 rows 8" apart. And finally the last mark will set the 4" bottom border. Your folded fabric should show 2 – 8" blocks across, plus a 4" border, and 4 blocks down plus top and bottom borders. To be sure the markings will line up on the other half when you turn your fabric, run a straight pin thru the beginning and ends of each of your lines.

Carefully remove your taped, pinned fabric, flip and re-tape. Mark the rest of the grid lines, measuring each, but aligning the ruler with the pin markings from the other side. Unfold your fabric and carefully mark that center crease line with chalk.

Your quilt back should now resemble the pictured grid. There will be excess fabric beyond the borders, depending on the width of your fabric to begin with. This excess will give you gripping fabric when you embroidery your borders.

Accuracy in marking your grid is imperative, so take your time.

The grid is marked, remove the backing fabric from the table and place the quilt top face down on the table and tape. Smooth the batting over the wrong side of the quilt top, carefully layer the marked backing on top, right side up. Try to carefully match the outside edges as well as the center crease lines. Tape in place. If you are not familiar with Sharon Schamber's method of basting a quilt you may want to watch her video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhwNylePFAA> it is my favorite way to baste any size quilt, whether for hand or machine quilting.

For this small piece I used pins to baste the 3 layers, (hand basting is more secure, pinning is faster). If pinning, place a pin on each side of your grid lines, far enough away that your sewing foot will not come in contact with the pins as you sew.

You are now ready to set up your machine. Use thread to match your fabrics on top and bobbin.

I use an 80 or 90 Sharp needle. Set your machine to straight stitch 3mm length, center needle position. I have frequently used decorative stitches to construct my grid, but I suggest a straight stitch for this first attempt at gridding.

Position your quilt under the needle so that the center line of your grid is directly under the needle. You have two options now; if your machine does a tacking stitch, you may want to select this, if not, or if it makes a looping knot when it starts, I prefer to hold my top thread, hit the needle down button and needle up, and pull the bobbin thread to the top (this is the back of the quilt you are looking at) You can later tie these threads and weave them into the quilt, or you can, start with the needle about 3 stitches down from the beginning of the line, pull the thread up from the bobbin, back stitch to the start, and then sew forward to the end, back tacking about 3 stitches, cut leaving a bit of a tail so that you can pull the bobbin thread to the top and snip the threads.

This being a whole cloth quilt, these stitching lines will not get a lot of stress and are not apt to pull out easily. If in doubt as to how you want to stitch these lines, there is ample fabric on your edges to run some short test stitches.

I start stitching the middle line, and work to one edge, and from the middle to the opposite side and then do the cross lines of the grid. **Do not sew the grid lines thru your border area.**

Remove all pins or basting stitches.

Your quilt is gridded, and ready for embroidery.

I usually start my embroidery in one of the center blocks and work down and then out by rows, but since your quilt is well grounded, there should not now be any shifting of fabrics. (my old habits die hard!)

Using a Hera marker or a chalk pencil, mark the centers of your first block. (You can probably mark 2 or 3 blocks at this time.) These blocks are 8", mark in 4" from side and top.

Set up your machine for embroidery. Thread top and bobbin with the same embroidery thread.

(A well balanced Embroidery stitch always draws at least a 3rd of the top thread to the back, if you use a lighter weight bobbin thread than top, the tension will draw the thread down, and therefore your quilt will not be reversible, therefore matching top and bobbin thread is always best for whole cloth quilting.)

Turn off your auto scissors Cutting your any jump stitches by hand will give a neater look to the back.

Select a design from your storage. Place the outer hoop on the machine. Loosen the setting screw so that quilt and inner hoop will fit smoothly into the attached hoop section. Place the quilt over the hoop and under your needle, slip the inner hoop over the quilt, and centering the center lines with the centering marks on your hoop frame, adjust the quilt so that it is square and push the inner hoop and quilt into the outer hoop. If your block is not straight, try again, but for this sample using the butterflies,

don't worry about absolute straight because as we add designs you will be rotating some so that they do not all fly in the same direction.

The only current criteria is that your machine will sew the butterfly without hitting the hoop. (Always do a trial path before sewing)

Once the quilt and inner hoop are seated to your satisfaction, tighten the screw as tight as you can. You do not want the quilt to pop out in the middle of sewing!!!! Ripping is not fun! Do your trial run. Here again, I pull my bobbin thread to the top, (prevents nasty loops and knots on the back side.) allow the machine to sew about an inch and trim the threads.

Hit the start button and you are quilting in the hoop! Mark centers and sew the remaining blocks, turning the butterflies at different angles based on what your machine will allow, or mirror imaging them. It is rare that you will ever get a set of block designs with more than 10 images, so you need to be creative so that the eye has to hunt for duplicates.



class sample