

Frugal Quilting

By Levada Pendry

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Quilting like many hobbies can get to be expensive! All the new “toys” like rotary cutters, mats, and special rulers can be very pricey. Not to mention the cost of quilting magazines, books and patterns. But quilting especially has a long and honorable history of being frugal; with women using up scraps to give new and useful life to something like clothing or empty feed sacks.

In honor of our resourceful fore-mothers, I would like to talk about how today’s quilter can do some “Frugal Quilting”.

FABRIC

I actually started quilting because a neighbor was moving and gave me a large box of fabric. I had an interest, and figured that this fabric was free, so why not? I checked out a quilting magazine from the library and made my first quilt.

Free fabric is always an option.

Cotton clothing that is lightly worn can be cut up and used as fabric for a quilt.

If you have the “Freecycle” in your area, which is a Yahoo Group, you can ask for fabric. Many ladies are sewers but not quilters. They may have scraps or yardage that they are not going to use, but hate to see go to waste or just be thrown away.

Ask your local cleaners that do alterations to give you their scraps. A lot of times the alterations are to shorten pants or dresses or skirts. A nice strip of fabric (or even the whole bottom of pant legs) hits the scrap bag, and it would be fun to use so large a variety of colors and fabrics in a string quilt or a log cabin quilt. I was once given a huge bag of fabric from just this source! Myself and two other quilters had a “scrap” party. We had a ball picking out which scraps we wanted, and some very nice charity quilts resulted.

Offer to finish UFO’s. Lots of quilters for whatever reason, get part way thru a quilt, and do not finish it. Oh, the guilt! Help your fellow quilter lose the guilt, and take that never-to-be-finished project off their hands! Not only will you get all the fabric, but a free pattern too.

Inexpensive fabric is an option.

Sometimes you just need to buy some fabric. But you don’t have to pay full price. I like to wait for my local Joann’s Fabric to have the 50% off coupon in their sales brochure. I use it to buy a lot of one fabric, even a whole bolt if I can get it. Strangely, no one has ever asked me why all my quilt backs are blue....<grin>. Seriously, especially for the

back of the quilt, I don't much worry about the color, I am just happy to have lots of fabric on hand to use for the backing.

Just a note about Joann's though, be careful about your fabric selection. They can have wildly varying fabric quality. That half price coupon isn't really saving me money if I get see-through fabric that is going to fall apart in three washings! Not a bargain that I want.

I also use the half-price coupon to purchase my batting. I like to buy a 10 yard roll. Or take advantage when Joann's has a sale with no coupon required if I want a special batting like cotton.

QUILTING TOOLS

For all those fun gadgets like rulers and rotary cutters and mats, again I take advantage of Joann's half-price coupons. You have to be patient! All the stuff you want can be collected at half the regular price, over a period of time.

Once you have your tools, with reasonable care, they will last you for years! I do admit that I am on my third mat. They do wear out with time.

Another resource I have taken advantage of is another Yahoo group: QuiltersFleaMarket. Here your fellow quilters are selling their used stuff, anything from sewing machines to special feet, to rulers and patterns. Yes, even fabric. All you have to do is join Yahoo and join the group to be notified of listings.

PATTERNS

The premier frugal resource of quilting patterns is the Internet! There are so many free patterns that you could never make them all. Most of the quilting magazines have free patterns on their websites. Jinny Beyer has over 100 patterns in 3 sizes on her site: www.jinnybeyer.com.

The Quilter's Cache is huge, a wonderful resource of patterns that I find myself returning to again and again. Signup for her newsletter, and she will notify you of new patterns posted. Here is the URL: www.quilterscache.com

If you know someone interested in quilting, but is daunted by the price of this hobby, share this article. Or if your budget is tight right now, don't let it stop you from quilting. Thank our wonderful resourceful quilting heritage for the courage to use it up instead of throwing it out. I know I do.