Quilting By Mail
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Cleaning your New Quilts

When planning a quilt consider the intended use. What fabrics are used, the type of quilting done, etc. - are dependent on the intended use of the quilt. Consider the investment you have in the quilts you make (the cost of the fabric, batting, thread, and your time). Quilts are given as gifts, used at home on a daily basis, displayed on a wall, and some are stored. These cleaning tips are for newly made quilts only, not antique or vintage.

WASHING QUILTS

Never allow your quilts to become severely soiled. If they are well-loved and get lots of use, wash them often. Soil can settle in the natural cotton fibers of the fabric and become difficult if not impossible to remove. Quilt shops carry products specially designed for quilts. Orvus® is one such product. All commercial detergents are much too harsh and can strip color from quilt fabrics. Dry cleaning a quilt is not recommended either. Large tumble machines are used and harsh chemicals are applied, which can be pretty damaging.

WASHING A QUILT BY HAND

Test for stability of the dyes in the fabrics. Always use a very mild soap such as Orvus in a solution of 1/2 ounce of soap to 1 gallon of distilled, filtered or softened water. Use a container large enough to accommodate the entire quilt at one time. (i.e. a bathtub) Gently clean your quilt, dipping in and out of the water and squeezing and pressing it down with your hands. Do not twist it. Remove excess water by pressing gently with clean white toweling. Lift quilt with a towel sling or with both arms so that the weight is evenly distributed. DO NOT lift by one edge or corner. Lay flat to dry on a clean non-porous surface.

WASHING A QUILT BY MACHINE

Test for stability of the dyes in the fabrics. Fill your washer with cool water and add a mild soap such as Orvus in a solution of 1/2 ounce of soap to 1 gallon of distilled, filtered or softened water. With the washer turned off, add quilt and gently agitate by hand. Soak five to ten minutes. Drain the water and refill with clean water. Agitate by hand to remove soap. Use low spin cycle to remove excess water. Lay quilt flat on a white sheet on carpet or other surface. Block quilt. Use the “Fluff” cycle on your dryer when the quilt is nearly dry.

ALTERNATIVE CLEANING METHOD

Laundering a quilt may not be necessary. Many will only require having the dust removed. The best way to remove dust from a sturdy quilt is to place a nylon stocking over the nozzle of a vacuum hose and then gently vacuum the quilt - preferably on both sides. Be sure to avoid surface abrasion. Airing a quilt can also remove odors and dust. There is no need to beat the quilt and keep in mind that sunlight is bad for your quilt.

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