

# What is a Rag Quilt?

by Designs By Rhonda



Front

Back

## Basic Instructions

Rag quilts are quilts that have exposed seam allowances on their fronts and finished, traditional seams on their backs. There is no edge binding, the edges are exposed too. It's the Perfect Quilt for Beginners and I feel it's the most Perfect Imperfect Quilt you can make. Soft and durable the more you wash is the softer it gets. Perfect to cuddle up with on the couch and for gifts. Kids just love them. It's very forgiving when you make boo boo's with layer alignment.

The only thing that is important is to get the corners aligned, but you can still kind of tug them into place a bit.

### **Rag quilts have three layers:**

a top, cotton batting, and backing.

But the quilts are assembled using a completely different method than you might be accustomed to. They are made 1 block at a time. Each block is finished on it's own and THEN you sew them together.

## What are the Best Fabrics for Rag Quilts?

I use regular quilting cottons, flannels, home spun and denims for rag quilts -- or combinations of the four. Avoid polyester blends -- they don't fray very well. No matter what I use for the quilt's front and back, I prefer cotton batting. It fills out the frays and leaves a soft finish on the front of the quilt.

Flannel does a very nice job too.

Don't use your expensive flannels for batting, but consider how the color(s) you select will look when their threads become part of the quilt's frayed edges.

## Materials used for rag quilt batting.

- Quilting cottons can be used, but the frays won't be as lush as flannel frays.
- Some quilters use low-loft cotton batting in rag quilts. It takes longer to use that method and quilting is necessary to keep the fibers intact.
- No quilting is necessary if you use flannel or another fabric for batting, because they remain stable in the quilt.
- I like the thin Natural Cotton Batting as shown in the picture. If you don't use an embroidery on the square, you will need to sew an X from corner to corner to keep the batting from slipping.



## Materials Needed

Quilt Size: 38-1/2" x 53-1/2"

These are approximate Yardage estimates.

More may be needed if material is less than 42" wide.

Print: 1-1/2 yards

Solid: 1-1/2 yards

Backing: 2-3/4 yards

Flannel or Batting: 2-3/4 yard

### Contrasting:

Cut (2) 8-1/2" x 44" strips, then pre cut (8) 8-1/2" squares\*\*

### Back Color:

Cut (4) 8-1/2" x 44" strips, then pre cut (17) 8-1/2" squares\*\*

### Flannel or Batting:

Cut (4) 8-1/2" x 44" strips, then pre cut (17) 8-1/2" squares\*\*

# How to assemble a Rag Quilt

**Rag quilts are assembled in sections.**

Each block or portion of a block is made into a top / batting/ backing sandwich before you sew.

A walking foot **is not** required, but its feed dogs help keep the multiple layers together as they move through the sewing machine.

## Rag Quilt Seam Allowances

Sew rag quilts together with a ½ -inch seam allowance

## Rag Quilt Sandwich Assembly

Position a backing square right side down.

Put a flannel or cotton square of the same size on top of it, aligning all.

Now place a quilt top square on top of the batting, right side up.

Slide a few straight pins through the stack to hold fabrics together.

## Stitching The appliqué

Make a “sandwich” out of material.

Bottom layer is right side down, then the batting layer and then the

Top square is right side up.

Hoop with a easy tear away stabilizer or a water soluble stabilizer.

I prefer to hoop water soluble stabilizer like H2o so it can just be washed out.

(the more you wash a rag quilt the prettier it gets)

Then pin the layers on to it on all sides.

Be careful to not let the pins be so far away from edge that it is in the design area.

Make sure that all layers are aligned and centered in the hoop.

There are color changes, but these are for stop and starts only. Use a matching thread in the bobbin, the bobbin thread will show on the other side of the quilt, so you want a nice matching contrasting embroidery thread. I prefer using the same color thread through out the quilt unless the back is going to be checkered with different colored blocks.

Arrange the stacks in rows as desired. This is so that you can see what it will look like and decide where you want each applique to go.

Color 1: This is the outline for the placement of the applique material.

Remove hoop from machine. Place a piece of flannel or cotton quilt batting over the stitching Then place a piece of material over the top of the flannel or batting

Color 2: Stitch the tack down running stitch.

Color 3: This is the Triple Running Stitch.

Remove hoop from machine and you can now remove material from hoop.

Cut  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to  $\frac{1}{3}$ " around the outside of the design. Then take small scissors and make clips about  $\frac{1}{2}$ " or so apart all around the applique.

On a few of the designs, there are more than one color as shown. There will be color stops to show when to place the new material and batting.

Remember to use the matching bobbin thread, it will be the back of the design.

Here is a pic of the front and the back.

As you can see, the Snowflake isn't an applique, it is for the plain empty blocks.



Gently remove the stabilizer from the back. If using the water soluble, it will wash out.

## Sew the Rag Quilt

We'll sew sandwiches together side by side in horizontal rows.

Gather the first two blocks in the first row. Place them wrong sides together, and note which edges should be connected. Sew along that edge with a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch seam allowance. Add the next block, again placing wrong sides together. That might sound simple, but it can be difficult to break the right sides together habit.

Sew the blocks in each row together. Attach rows to each other, placing them wrong sides together and matching seam intersections. I've found that frays look more balanced later if you do not press seams to one side before joining rows -- just fold the allowances to each side and match seam lines.

When the quilt is complete, sew a seam around the quilt,  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch from each side.

## Finishing a Rag Quilt

Clip straight into the seam allowances about every  $\frac{1}{4}$ "

After your rag quilt blocks are sewn together and your seam is sewn around the quilt's perimeter, it's time to clip the seam allowance to encourage fraying.

Any sharp scissors will do, but spring loaded scissors that open automatically after each cut help keep your hands from becoming tired. Clip all along the exposed seam allowances, making cuts perpendicular to the seam and spacing them about  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch apart.

Take care not to cut too close to the seam.

Be sure to clip carefully at the quilt's corners and seam intersections to avoid accidentally cutting away a chunk of fabric; that can happen when you're making perpendicular clips -- from two directions into the same area.

## **Wash the Rag Quilt**

Wash the rag quilt. You can wash in plain water with fabric softener, soap or just plain water.

Some people recommend putting a filter on your washer drain to keep loose threads from creating a problem. Make sure that you do run your hand around the drum after removing the quilt to gather any loose threads.

Inspect the quilt. Did you forget to clip any seams? Clip them now, before you dry the quilt.

Remove when dry and clip away loose threads if necessary.

Inspect the back of your quilt. Are all of the seams intact? If you accidentally clipped into one or two, fold back the frays and sew over the original seam, back stitching at the beginning and end of the new seam.

For extra strength, make the repair a little longer than the original seam line.

Wash and dry the quilt one or two more times if you'd like the frays to be softer and more noticeable.

The nice thing about Rag Quilts is that you can make one size, and later down the road decide to make it bigger.

The more you wash them, the better they look and feel.

I hope you enjoy my applique take on Rag Quilting.

Rhonda