



Creative Quilt Challenges  
November 15, 2016

**Questions and Answers  
from the webinar**

Hi Sewing Friends!

Thank you so much for joining us for the Creative Quilt Challenges webinar or watching the recording. If you joined us live, we hope you enjoyed the live webinar as much as we enjoy presenting these programs to you. This month Wendy Hill and Pat Pease were our special guests. They shared some stories about their challenge quilts and the special techniques they used in creating the quilts from their book *Creative Quilt Challenges: Take the Challenge to Discover Your Style & Improve Your Design Skills*. This webinar was a lot of fun and our live audience had a lot of great things to say about the webinar.

We certainly enjoy bringing programs like this to you and your support is your way of letting us know how much you like them. Thank you so much for all of the positive feedback. If you cannot schedule the webinar into your day, please consider registering anyway. We want to include you in our limited-time special promotions and give you access to any freebies, the recording of the presentation, and a PDF of the presentation, following the webinar.

## **Pre-Washing & Washing the Quilt Top Before Sewing the Satin Stitch Edge Finish**

Do you prewash fabrics since you wash before binding? What about shrinking batting before use?

A: Pat and I do prewash cotton and other washable fabrics, because it's quite likely we'll be washing the finished quilt later. But we don't wash specialty fabrics - such as hemp burlap, silks, synthetics, etc., - because those will most likely end up in a wall hanging and never be washed.

Tip: Put a nylon stocking or piece of netting over the hose of your vacuum to clean the dust from your wall quilts.

Wendy: It's been a long time since I pre-washed batting. I think batting shrinks less now than in the "old" days. For baby, lap and bed quilts, I like the effect of shrinking, adding a little texture to the finished quilt. I don't always wash quilts intended to hang on a wall, so pre-washing the batting doesn't come up. Having said all that, if I wanted to wash a quilt without the batting shrinking, I would pre-wash the batting. Remember, pre-washing the fabric and the batting will not prevent a little shrinking later- it's the quilting, the stitching lines through all the layers - that also contributes to shrinking. The more dense the quilting, or the more the lines cross each other, the more the quilt will shrink.

Pat and I both wash our quilts before finishing the outside edge, even when we've pre-washed our fabrics ahead of time. The truth is, your quilt will shrink when you wash it. By washing it before finishing the outside edge (binding, or facing, etc.), the whole quilt is free to shrink at an even rate. When the quilt is washed after sewing on the binding (or facing, etc.), the quilt shrinks but the binding (etc.) is holding the outside edge in place, while the middle shrinks more freely. In my experience, this is one of the major reasons quilts get warped.

Try it our way with your next quilt: measure the quilted-quilt before and after washing and drying. How much did it shrink? You will probably be quite surprised! Now add the binding (or facing) knowing the next time the quilt is washed, it won't warp.

## **Spray Basting and Auditioning Fabric Pieces with Sulky KK 2000™ Temporary Spray Adhesive**

Is a twin sized quilt too large to spray baste?

A: Not at all. But a good tip is to store the sandwiched quilt in a Zip-Lock bag with all of the air squeezed out, when you're not working on it. This will keep the KK 2000 sticky for a longer time.

On the "Cut Up" quilt are there raw edges on the finished quilt on each of the fabrics she sprayed to the batting?

A: Pat - "Cut Up" contains 36 blocks that were made from commercial cottons, silk, hemp burlap, burlap, hand-dyed cottons from Africa, shot cottons, linen, and cotton double gauze. The blocks do not have finished edges and were applied directly to batting that was sprayed with Sulky KK2000™ Temporary Spray Adhesive. I wanted the quilt to have a frayed or raveled surface. The only edges that are finished are the four outside edges, and I did that by using a faced edge. Our book, *Creative Quilt Challenges*, has photographs of the steps.

## **Sulky Cotton Blendables® Thread**

Are Sulky Cotton Blendables® Thread a variegated or ombre thread?

A: There are some Sulky Cotton Blendables® Threads that are variegated, and some that are multi-colored. Cotton Blendables® have random color-changes, that have a masterful blend of different colors within the same range of tone and intensity, with random, subtle color changes every 2-1/2 to 5 inches! No other thread does this! Sulky Cotton Blendables® Threads are available in 126 different colors!

## **Bobbin Thread**

What thread is being used in the bobbin?

A: Wendy uses 30 wt. Sulky Cotton Blendables® Thread in the bobbin. You can use the same color thread that is being used in the needle or use a color that matches the backing fabric.

## **Needle Size**

What is the type and size of needles being used?

A: When your machine is threaded with 30 wt. Sulky Cotton Blendables® Thread, we suggest using a 14/90 Topstitch Needle, and a 16/100 Jeans Needle when sewing with 12 wt. Cotton Blendables® Thread.

Wendy uses a 12/80 needle with the 30 wt. Sulky Cotton Blendables® Thread and Pat uses a 16/100 with the 12 wt. Cotton Blendables (and other thick threads such as silk cord, wool, and so on). Since machines and projects vary, Pat and Wendy believe in experimenting with needles and thread to get the best stitch quality.

Michelle prepared this chart which might be a quick reference, too:

## Sulky Threads

	Larger the number the thinner the thread		Smaller the number the thicker the thread	
60 wt.	50 wt.	40 wt.	30 wt.	12 wt.
<b>PolyLite</b> <b>(11/75)</b>	<b>Cotton+Steel</b> <b>by Sulky</b>	<b>Rayon</b> <b>(12/80)</b>	<b>Solid Cotton</b> <b>(14/90 Topstitch)</b>	<b>Solid Cotton</b> <b>(16/100 or</b> <b>16/100 Jeans)</b>
<b>Bobbin</b>		<b>Poly Deco</b> <b>12/80</b>	<b>Blendables</b> <b>(14/90 Topstitch)</b>	<b>Blendables</b> <b>(16/100 or</b> <b>16/100 Jeans)</b>
				<b>Cotton Petites</b>

4



## Fabrics Used

What is shot cotton?

A: Shot cotton is special because the warp and weft yarns are 2 different colors woven together to create a special depth, a “shot” of color. When the edge of this fabric ravel, you can see a bright contrast to the body of the fabric.

What fabrics were used on the squares? It appears that you have a background and then up to two additional fabrics layered over the background.

A: Pat gave Wendy a piece of woven linen, which had a pattern of colored woven squares in it. Wendy cut medium and small squares of shot cotton, raveled the edges to reveal the colors of the warp and

welt, and stacked them over the woven squares in the background. Since the woven squares had irregular edges (not sharp lines), it all worked together well. You can see the steps for doing this in our book, *Creative Quilt Challenges*.

## **Making Fabric**

You mentioned stitching on fabric and then cutting it apart, how do you keep the stitches from fraying?

A: Wendy: It's a combination of handling the cut pieces gently and the use of a wider seam allowance. I've never had a problem with fraying after the seam is sewn and pressed.

## **Stitching Techniques**

Is the batting under the fabric, or is there just a single layer of fabric, when you do Surface Stitching?

A: Wendy: There are many options when Surface Stitching! You can use Surface Stitching as an embellishment on fabric before cutting it up, on the quilt top before quilting through all the layers, on the quilt top to batting only, or on all 3 layers (top, batting, back). It might seem overwhelming but it's really just figuring out what you need to do to get the end result you want and personal preference - both come with experience. You can't know all these things in the beginning, so just start trying options.

Some examples:

- Wendy: I used weaving to make new fabric yardage for an *unlined* vest. I cut strips of fabric, wove them together (over-under-over-under etc.) and surface stitched the new woven panel. I did the weaving over Sulky Solvy® Water Soluble Stabilizer. True to the name, the stabilizer formed a base to hold the woven strips, it added weight for good stitch quality, and it washed out leaving a soft, flexible woven fabric for my vest. (See my first book, *On the Surface*, 1997, C&T Publishing).
- Wendy: For a reversible baby quilt, I surface stitched whole cloth for one side of the quilt. I layered the cloth with batting before doing

the surface stitching. (I washed and dried this panel before proceeding because surface stitching leads to a lot of shrinking.) I pieced the other side of the baby quilt. To finish the quilt, I layered the two sides (wrong sides together) and stitched through both layers. One side of my baby quilt had a lot of thread texturing, while the pieced side had just the quilting lines. Cool!

As you were quilting, did you change the stitch on the machine or stop and change thread and stitch at these places?

A. Pat uses a basic straight stitch, and stitches lines with prior marking & not much of a plan. When she feels like stopping, she does. Sometimes she'll switch to a different thread and continue, but in the example in the webinar she just stopped, and ended the line with a satin stitch burst. When using a thread like the Sulky Cotton Blendables® Thread, the random color changes on multi-colored fabrics can make it look like you are actually changing the thread. That's why Wendy says "you get a lot of bang for your buck" with the Cotton Blendables®- a lot of color impact with just one spool of thread.

Do you start in the middle or on a side?

A: Wendy - When the layers of a quilt are securely basted, it doesn't matter where you start. As a self-taught quilter from 1971, I never used safety pins, but I did try it. I hated the way the layers shift. I used to hand baste with a special basting thread (that breaks easily), but now I use a spray basting product. We both love using Sulky KK 2000™ Temporary Spray Adhesive.

For the quilt Bright Hopes, Pat started stitching vertical and horizontal lines many inches apart, to secure the layers even more. Knowing Pat, she just does what she feels like doing in the moment, so it wouldn't surprise me if she stitched a line somewhere in the middle, while also stitching from side to side. She looks at what she's done, decides what to do next, filling in the grid until she's satisfied.

Do you press all seams open or do you press toward the darker color?

A: Wendy - I press my seams open about 99.9 percent of the time. I am a self-taught quilter going back to 1971. I had to rely on my common sense and my experience making clothes. Pressing the seams open, with a wider seam allowance (about 3/8") made perfect sense to me. Pat uses irregular seam allowances for her quilts. She likes to start with a 1/2" or larger seam allowance, which gives her freedom to "unsew" and do different things. We also use a tailor's clapper, a piece of hardwood that holds in the steam. (I still have my original clapper from high school, oh so many decades ago!) Oh yes, we use steam, which is safe if you "place and press" the iron, instead of "sliding and gliding", which will stretch your fabric.

People often comment on our quilts- they are smooth and flat even at the intersections. You can't feel the seam allowances in our quilts. When sewing a seam by hand, you must press your seams over, but our sewing machines sew strong seams that can handle being pressed open. I still have some of my quilts from the 1970's, and the pressed-open seams have held up just fine.

Have you ever used a serger to finish off a quilt?

A: Neither Pat nor I have a serger. I have a friend who finishes the edges of fabric for clothing with a serger, and puts the seams on the outside, and it looks great! If you have a serger, please try it and show us the results. You could be on to something!

## **Satin Stitch Edge Finish Technique**

How much extra thread will I need to do so much satin stitch work?

A: Wendy said that she rarely used more than one spool. Remember, many of her quilts are small. There are 500 yards of thread on the spool.

Is the satin-stitch edge-finish thru the quilt sandwich?

A: Yes it is.

Does the stitch look the same front and back?

A: It does, if you use matching thread in the bobbin.

How do you do the corners?

A: You can just go to the very edge, with the needle on the outside edge, turn the corner, and start stitching again. Wendy may have some other tips on this, too.

Wendy - This is absolutely correct. Always stop on the corner with the needle down, and pivot the quilt or postcard. Start stitching with the stitches landing as close as possible to the "top" edge" of the corner. This is the only tricky part- you'll get the hang of it soon enough.

Tip: If you move the needle up before you start stitching, you'll avoid the occasional needle jerks that happen. Try this with your feed-dogs engaged or free motion quilting too - stop with the needle down, start with the needle up. It really helps prevent those pesky jerky stitches!

Where does the needle hit on the edge of the "postcard" in the satin edge stitching.

A: Wendy - It really falls right along the edge of the postcard. It's off the edge, but right next to it. The needle is sliding along the edge - if it was any closer, it would be stitching through the postcard.

Can the satin stitching technique on the quilt edge replace binding the quilt, or would the batting still sneak through the edge?

A: Wendy - Yes, the satin-stitched edge-finish is instead of binding. I have never seen batting sneaking through the edge, but I've only used Quilters Dream Batting (Cotton, Request Loft) with this technique.

For most projects, stitching around the edge 3 times is perfect. After experimenting with my machine and the Sulky Cotton Blendables® Thread, I have exact settings that I use for each round. But if I got to Round 3 and felt like it didn't look enough like a satin stitch, I would just go around again, with either the same stitch settings or adjusted with the stitch width a bit wider and the length a bit shorter.

Would the satin stitched edges be more for wall hangings and art quilts? I cannot see it holding up long for a bed quilt.

A: I agree with you that the satin stitched edge finish is most likely better for wall hangings and art quilts. I'm not sure how it would hold up to use on a bed quilt, in and out of the wash, but I do know I like bindings on baby, lap and bed quilts. There is something about a beautiful binding that adds the finishing touch to these kinds of quilts.

Note: When our son was very young, he loved Mickey Mouse. He carried a small Mickey Mouse doll around, and he loved touching the satin fabric ears. On his second quilt, I added two satin fabric ears in the binding- he loved this!

I have a 3-thread hemming machine. Do you think that this type of machine can be used for quilting?

Wendy - After an Internet search, I see that these machines do hems. I'm wondering if the thickness of a quilt would make it impossible for the machine...if you have such a machine, make a small sample quilt and try it. Let us know what happens, please!

I find things out by accident, or because something went wrong, or out of curiosity— as Pat says, it's just fabric, and I say, it's just fun. We both keep scrap bags and we'll use these leftover fabrics for experimenting.

## **Batting:**

What type of batting did you use?

A: Wendy gives a lot of options for battings for her little postcard quilts.

Wendy - For the fiber art postcards, I will use Quilters Dream Request Loft Cotton Batting, or plain white flannel, or nothing at all with the *fast2fuse* two-sided fusible material (by (C&T Publishing).

For most quilts, I mostly use Quilters Dream Request Loft Cotton, but I will use bamboo or wool or a cotton/poly blend and so on when the project calls for something different. For quilts that hang on the wall,

you want a batting that doesn't stretch. For bed quilts, you want a cuddly batting. For trapunto methods (flattening the area around a shape with quilting, so the shape puffs up) you might want to layer two battings together, with one being wool. When making baby or kids quilts, consider a batting treated so it won't melt or catch fire, such as such as Dream Angel by Quilters Dream.

Do you use a cotton batting or a blend that changes the texture?

A: We both mostly use cotton batting but we'll use whatever we need to get the effect or result we want. See above.

## **Backing Fabric**

How are the quilts backed? Can they be washed or are they only decorative?

A: Wendy - When we are quilting to batting, there is no backing fabric at that point. Yes, most of our quilts that are quilted to batting first are washable and in fact, get washed & dried.

It all started when I was teaching myself to free-motion quilt, the front looked okay but the back looked hideous. I started quilting to batting first, then adding the fabric backing and some more quilting (to hide my hideous bobbin tension). But then I realized there were other reasons to quilt to batting first- we go into those reasons in our book, Creative Quilt Challenges.

If you are asking about Pat's "Cut Up" quilt, she did the quilting through all of the layers. Yes, she used the Sulky KK 2000™ Temporary Spray Adhesive to create the quilt top composition, with the pieced squares and slivers. But she added the backing fabric before quilting (with the spray basting).

For my quilt "Confluence," in which I quilted to batting first, I washed & dried the quilt top/batting before cutting it into sections. Even though I won't wash it later (it's small and hangs on the wall), I wanted it to shrink and get more textured.

## Interfacing & Stabilizers

When you say put on a facing do you mean a backing?

A: Wendy - No, a facing is a way to finish the edge. There are many ways to finish the outside edge of your quilt. You're familiar with binding already. Most of the time I prefer a wider binding, so it becomes part of the "look" of the quilt.

You've been introduced to finishing the edge with my satin stitch treatment. But what is a faced edge you ask?

If you've ever made your own clothing, you've probably used facing pieces to finish the neck edge and/or the front of a shirt or coat. A facing on a quilt works the same way to make a clean finished edge, sometimes called a "knife-edge". The facing pieces get sewn right sides together with the quilt top, turned to the back, and blind-stitched in place by hand. There is a bit more to it, such as how to treat the corners; you can ask 5 quilters how they face their quilts and probably get 5 different answers. In our book, *Creative Quilt Challenges*, Pat and I show you how we face our quilts, with a trick for getting the batting out of the corners so the corners are at right angles, flat (not lumpy), with a clean knife-edge.

Was there an interfacing behind the batting when you did the Pass It Back and Forth?

A: Wendy - No, it's just the fabric on top and the batting on the back. Since I started using Quilters Dream brand batting, I do not put anything behind the batting when I'm "quilting to batting". With this batting, there is hardly any lint build up and the stitch quality is great.

When I first started using my method of quilting to batting, I did use Sulky Soft 'n Sheer™ on the back of the batting. Besides preventing lint build up, it does have a sort of slippery surface that glides through the machine.

I still use Soft 'n Sheer™ in other ways, such as for foundation piecing or as a base for piecing or collage. Or, you can use it as a stabilizer for appliquéing.

## Videos at [sulky.com](http://sulky.com)

Are there videos on the Sulky site on how to use the stabilizers?

A: There are some videos on the website and we have an “Ask the Expert” section on the too. You can email questions anytime to: [patti.lee@sulky.com](mailto:patti.lee@sulky.com) or [info@sulky.com](mailto:info@sulky.com). We also have couple stabilizer books that are great resources too. *Sew, Craft, Quilt and Embroider Confidently with Sulky Stabilizers* (#900-B19) is our latest book about stabilizers.