



# quilting

## THE QUILT

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## Tying a Quilt by Machine

Not every quilt you make is a candidate for heirloom quilting. Whether it's a "hurry up" project or one that would simply be too difficult to stitch with conventional means, tying is a quick alternative. This method is great for T-shirt quilts, denim quilts, baby quilts, and more.



A

If you haven't experienced tying a quilt by hand, you really can't fully appreciate how exciting and liberating tying quilts by machine can be! Imagine trying to drag two strands of heavy thread through denim fabric, batting, and flannel backing with a giant tapestry needle. Your hands cramp and your fingers ache after only one or two rows of work. When you switch to your machine, you'll be able to "tie" quilts with fibers you never would have considered before—satin ribbon, fabric strips, and even decorative yarn (Photo A).

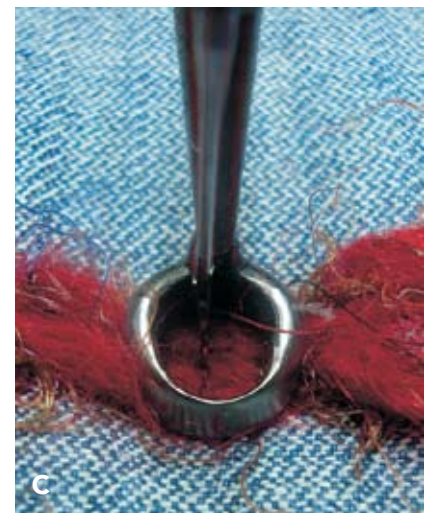
To tie a quilt using your longarm machine, load the quilt as you normally would. It's best to use polyester thread for strong seams. The thread can either match your fabric and yarn, or add contrast. The yarn or ribbon can be very thick, since you won't actually thread it through your needle. Instead, you'll hold the yarn or ribbon in place with one hand and tack it in place with your machine. While the instructions here refer to a longarm machine, you can use the same techniques with your home sewing machine.

Decide where you want to place the "tacks" on your quilt. If you are using batting, space the tacks at the recommended quilting distance for your product. Next, choose the number of strands of your tacking fiber you wish to use. Traditionally, a double fold of yarn was used to tie quilts, resulting in a tuft of four threads at each square knot location, but you can mix it up any way you wish! Working from the freehand side of your machine, secure your thread tails off the quilt surface by wrapping them around a pin or by stitching them in place on the left edge of the quilt (Photo B).



B

Drag your tacking fiber and the sewing head to the first tacking location. Use manual sewing mode and set your motor to a medium speed. Stitch back and forth over your tacking material several times with very small stitches (Photo C). Adjust the speed until you are comfortable controlling the machine and managing the yarn. Do NOT cut your top or bobbin thread at this point. Drag your machine and the tacking fiber to the next tacking location. Repeat the process, stitching over the tacking fiber several times and dragging your machine to each new location (Photo D).



C



D



Your machine's throat size will determine how many rows you can tack in one pass. When you reach the right edge of your quilt, leave enough tacking fiber for tying the last knot, and cut the fiber off and set aside. Snip the tacking fiber and traveling threads between each tacked location (*Photo E*).

Now you can choose how you wish to knot your tying fiber. Technically, a true square knot is not necessary because the machine stitches will keep the tacking fiber in place. However, if you want to duplicate hand tying, tie a square knot with the yarn tails and traveling thread tails. Trim the ends to your

desired length. If you wish to tie actual bows on a quilt, leave extra ribbon or yarn between each tacking space to have long enough to tie. To keep the bows from unraveling, stitch right through the knot of the bow, or stitch around each knot in tiny circles for added pizzazz and security (*Photo F*).

Repeat the process until you reach the bottom of your quilt, snipping and tying as you go. Remove the quilt, turn it over and trim the traveling bobbin threads close to each tacking spot. Since you used many small stitches to secure the tacking material on the quilt's surface, you don't have to worry that they will unravel. Finish

the edges, and then step back and admire your new creation, relishing the pleasure of a speedy project that looks great without leaving you with bruised fingers!

