

Cleaning

Once you've selected the linen for your project, the next step is fabric preparation.

If you have frayed areas or small holes, use *June Taylor's Fray Block*. This works better than Fray Check. I apply the Fray Block to holes, tears or frayed embroidery before washing to further strengthen any deteriorating areas. The Fray Block comes in a tube and the instructions tell you to run it under warm water and shake well...warm water is not necessary. It does come out FAST though so be very careful. You don't want to get little drip marks across your fabric or linen.

A little goes a long way.

I recently found the Fray Block in a small bottle with a nail polish type of applicator...much better and easier to control!

Some linens have small holes that are known as dry rot. Be very careful with these! I thought I could save one such linen by quilting it. I devoted an obscene amount of time quilting it, and the dry rot just

continued on its way...by the time I was done with the quilting I had 10 times

as many holes than I had started with and ended up throwing the piece away. I recommend a small tug test BEFORE devoting any time to quilting...if you have small holes give a small gentle tug on the fabric surrounding the hole. If it runs, creating a larger, hole, do NOT quilt it. If the hole stays as it is, then everything should be fine...just stabilize it with some Fray Block.



One valuable lesson I've learned is to be very careful if I want to wash my linen *prior* to quilting. If I have a sturdy tablecloth or dresser scarf I can wash it like "normal" yardage with no worries. Some linens are very fragile and may deteriorate or wrinkle badly during the washing and drying process. If I have a very delicate piece I may choose to wait until after the quilting is completed to remove any stains as the quilting process will strengthen the linen and it will hold up better to handling. I need to ask myself the question if I can live with the stain should it decide not to come out. I like to have a Plan B in mind...I may need to come up with a creative way to cover up a stain with buttons, lace, embroidery, etc

When I wash my linens, either prior to or after quilting, I recommend hand soaking and washing with *Retro Clean* (www.retroclean.com). This is a fabulous, gentle soap that is highly recommended for linens as well as quilts.

When I remove a wet linen from the kettle or sink I am **very careful** to cup my hands and support the linen underneath as I remove it. If I just reach in and grab it I risk tearing the linen. I RINSE WELL with cool water supporting it the entire time. I gently place the wet linen on a large bath towel, roll it up in the towel cinnamon roll style and then squeeze it to get the extra water out. I then lay it as flat as possible and let it air dry. I gently iron on a low heat. I usually use Niagra Sizing while pressing to add a little stiffness for ease in quilting.



Once your wholecloth linen quilt is finished, it is ready to be washed and blocked. The first thing to do is remove ANY quilt design markings before washing with any type of soap or stain removers. If you used the blue washout Mark-B-Gone quilt marking pen, place your linen quilt in your clean sink or washing machine and fill with clear cold water. (Never add soap to your initial soak). Let your quilt soak for about 10 minutes. Turn your washer to the spin cycle.

It is critical that your first rinse be with clear, cold water with absolutely NO soap or additives. The soap may react with the quilt marking pen and it could leave permanent unremoveable brown stains in your quilt. (This actually happened to one of my students...We put a suicide watch on her).



If you used the Pilot Frixion pen, steam with a steam iron to remove the marks before washing.

Once your initial cold water soak is complete, it is safe to rewash with the soap of your choice. I recommend *Quilt Soap* or *RetroWash* (same company as *RetroClean*).



This is “Cinderella” and I will share her on a future FB Video. I wanted to show a before and after using the RetroClean. This was a very badly damaged and fragile linen that was literally falling apart and full of holes. The RetroClean safely cleaned this without causing further damage.

The Process...In a Nutshell

If your linen has open cutwork areas or open areas including lace, you will need to back your linen with a layer of fabric that I call the “underlayment”. This additional layer of fabric is also useful when you have a fancy edge to your linen that you want to preserve. I use an underlayment probably 90% of the time as it makes things sooo much easier.

Look for a fabric that complements the linen. In other words choose a fabric that shows off the color of the embroidery done by the original maker. I often choose solid fabrics...prints tend to show thru the linen and are a distraction.

You can use any type of fabric you wish. I use cotton, linen, Dupioni silk or anything else that I find interesting. I recommend that you OVER buy...always buy more fabric than you think you need. There have been many times I’ve changed my mind and wanted to add a different border design, etc. and was thankful I had extra underlayment on board. My guide is to buy at least 3 yards of something I love.



You may choose anything you want for your backing. I’ve always used cotton as it’s easy to use. Again, choose a complimentary fabric that goes well with your linen.

A wholecloth linen quilt consists of four layers:



1. The Linen.



2. The Underlayment



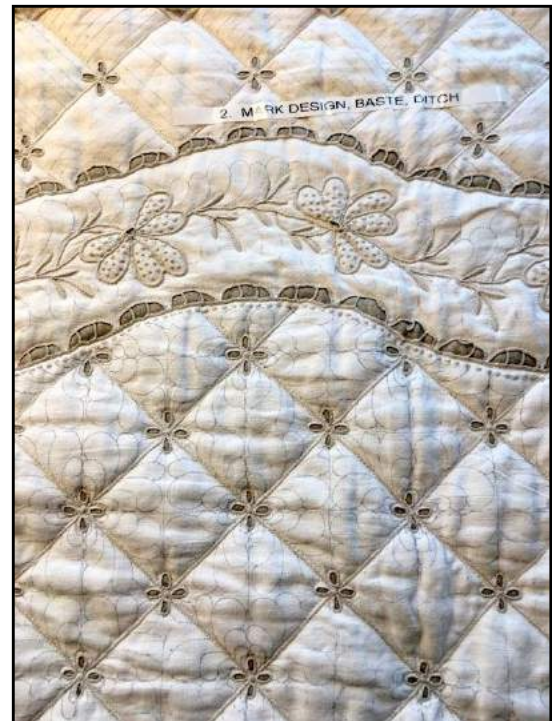
3. The Batting.



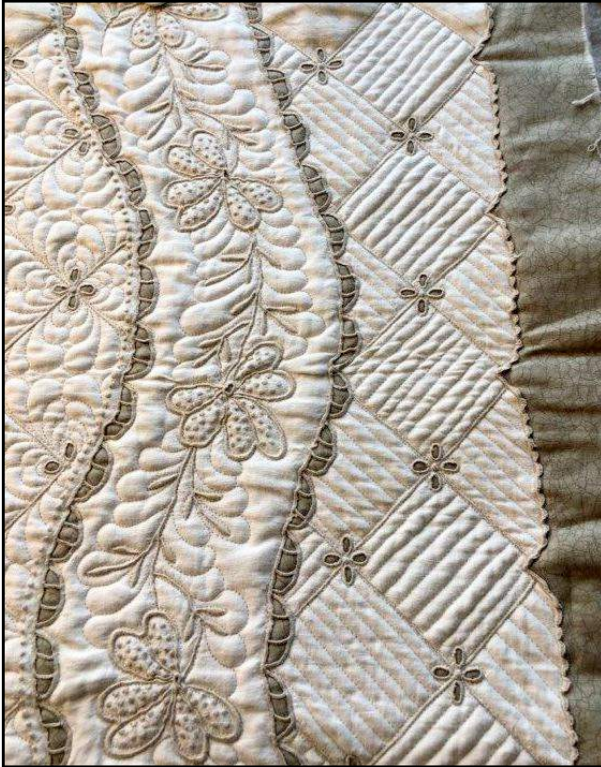
4. The Backing.

All four layers are basted together just like you would a regular pieced quilt top.

You may mark your designs prior to basting which makes it MUCH easier or you can just wing it as you go. I do a little bit of both.



Once the basting is done I put a thin blending thread in my machine and ditch around all the embroidery. This is a very tedious process but it is so worth it in the end. It makes the original maker's work pop and stand out.



Once the ditching is all done, the quilt is stable and isn't going to go anywhere. I then go in and quilt all of my primary designs. I could leave it this way if I wanted but you know me, I love to add background fills and details!



Look at the difference a background fill makes. It gives definition to the feathers and flowers and there's beautiful "sunshine and shadow" to the quilted designs.



Once the inside of the linen is quilted I make a rough mark where I want my finished quilt edge to be. I quilt a dense fill up to and PAST this line by about 1/4". Once the quilting is finished I go back and remark my cutting line and trim.

It's difficult to mark a precise cutting line on loose wiggly fabric. By quilting a bit past my intended edge I've given myself a firm surface to mark and trim. Then I bind the edge like a "normal" quilt.

Here's another example of how I quilted past the linen with a background fill. I will mark my cutting line and trim/bind.



Working with Cutwork

I talked about working with cutwork earlier in this handbook when we were discussing choosing an underlayment for linens with open areas.

As I discussed, these pieces started out as a solid piece of fabric. The original maker drew her design, buttonhole stitched the edges, and then carefully cut out the open areas. She then finished the embroidered edges with tiny bridgework to hold it all together.



When you have a piece of cutwork you need to choose an underlayment that goes underneath it. I prefer to choose an underlayment that blends with the color of the embroidery and bridgework. This makes it much easier to fill in the holes later on.

This photo is showing the corner of a cutwork tablecloth. I have it folded up to show you the open areas and how it looks prior to quilting.

Notice the color of the underlayment fabric. This blends and complements the embroidery work which allows for easier quilting later on.





I “stitch in the ditch” around all the embroidered edges of the cutwork. This makes the embroidery lay down flat and gives it a bit of texture.

Notice how the areas in-between the bridgework poof up? It’s totally personal preference but I like to go in and scribble these little areas down. This is where having your underlayment blend with the embroidery becomes important!

I scribble in every space and travel right along the embroidered edge to get to the next area. Having a quilting thread blend with the

See how nice this comes out???? I love the texture of the scribbling and like the bridgework “floating”.

