

Batting: The Inside Story

Sandy Ross, The Quilted Kittens

"Before a pieced or appliquéd quilt top becomes a quilt, it has to be made into a sandwich which introduces filler between the top and back. This filler is held in place by quilting stitches. Now we have a quilt. Batting, also known as wadding or filling, is one of the most essential parts of a quilt. Without it, there is no 'quilt'."

- Harriet Hargrave, From Fiber to Fabric

This article provides basic information about the types of batting available for quilting and choosing what works best for your quilting project. Suggestions will be provided, but, ultimately, you must decide what works best for your project.

Definitions

Batting	A soft bulky assemblage of fibers, usually carded. Also called wadding or filler, it is used primarily in quilts to give them warmth and body.
Bearding	Fuzz on the surface of an item resulting from loose fibers migrating through the weave to the surface of a fabric. Fiber migration happens when batting fibers work through the top or back of the quilt, often during the quilting process
Scrim	Used during manufacturing, it is a light-weight, non-woven fabric, usually polyester, that is placed on top of a cross-lapped fiber web before the fiber is needle punched. Scrim provides stability to the batting and helps reduce bearding.
Needle punching	Used during manufacturing, it is the process of converting batts or webs of loose fiber into a coherent non-woven fabric on a needle loom. Scrim is needle punched into cotton to provide stability to the cotton.



Needle punching machines at The Warm Company

Types of Batting

- Polyester** A synthetic polymer (polyethylene terephthalate) that is a manmade fiber. It is readily available, reasonably priced, and very warm (it does not allow for air circulation through the fiber). Newer production methods have produced micro-fiber batting. Micro-fiber battings are more stable, allow for some air circulation through the fiber, and are effective for quilting.
- Cotton** A natural fiber grown in many areas of the world including the Central Valley of California. Cotton has been used for wadding or batting as far back as the recorded history of quilting goes. Cotton breathes (good air ventilation/circulation through fiber) and is warm in winter and usually cool in warmer months. Since the 1980s, new production methods have resulted in stronger, more stable cotton battings.
- Wool** A natural fiber (the coat of sheep) which has been used for generations. Newer processes have made wool easy to use. Wool breathes and has tremendous resiliency. It is very soft.
- Silk** A natural fiber from the cocoons of silk worms. It is expensive but very soft and light.
- Bamboo** A natural fiber. It is becoming more readily available, usually used in a blend with cotton batting. It is a bit slippery.



Choosing the Best Batting for your Project

For the best results for your project and for a quilt that will last a long time through years of use and laundering, consider the following when choosing your batting:

- What is the intended use of your quilt project?
- How do you want it to look?
- Does it need to maintain its shape and flatness? Does not bunch, shift, or stretch?
- Can it be safely laundered? This is especially true for quilts that will be used often and for baby and child quilts
- Will it resist bearding?

Sandy's Favorite Battings

These are the battings that Sandy prefers to use especially for long arm quilting. Remember, there are many other options for batting. The choice of batting to use is yours and should be specific to your quilt project.

- Polyester: Quilters Dream Poly - also available in midnight black
- Cotton: Warm and Natural/Warm and White
Quilters' Dream Cotton

Note: For long arm quilted projects, fat bat is **NOT** recommended as it is often too thick for the machine.



The Quilted Kittens
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