

Too Cool T-shirt Quilt's® T-shirt Quilt Buyer's Guide

Information to help you plan your T-shirt Quilt.



**You are more than welcome to
call us here at Too Cool T-shirt Quilts®
with any questions you have
about your T-shirt quilt.**

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There are many T-shirt quilt companies to choose from to create your T-shirt quilt. But to find the right T-shirt quilt maker for your project, you need information.

This guide has been written to give you the information you need to make an informed decision about your quilt and the questions you need to be asking a potential quilt maker.

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What Makes a T-shirt Quilt Great?

Quilt making is an art and art is subjective. So what may look great to one person might look awful to someone else. But there are design principles and details that can make one quilt stand out over another.

Design Principles

The question to ask about any quilt is if it solves all of the challenges that are inherent to T-shirt quilts. There are 3 major problems that have to be solved in order to consider a T-shirt quilt successful.

Problem 1 - The graphics and logos on T-shirts come in many different shapes and sizes.

Think about your own T-shirts. Do you have some shirts with large designs and other designs that are small? This is not just from one T-shirt to another. A lot of T-shirts will have a small design on the front and a large design on the back. And then there is the shirt or sweatpants that have a graphic running vertically down the length of the arm or leg.

To solve this problem, a quilt needs to be designed in such a way that all the blocks are cut according to the design on the T-shirts. So you will have some blocks that are large and some blocks that are small.



Unsuccessful solutions are those that will crop off part of a design to fit the graphic into a one-size-fits-all block. Any graphic that is cut off proves that this solution failed.

Also, a very small graphic that is swimming in a huge block is not a good solution. A small block surrounded by too much blank area, especially if the graphic is in the upper right hand corner of the block, not only wastes space, it also looks silly.

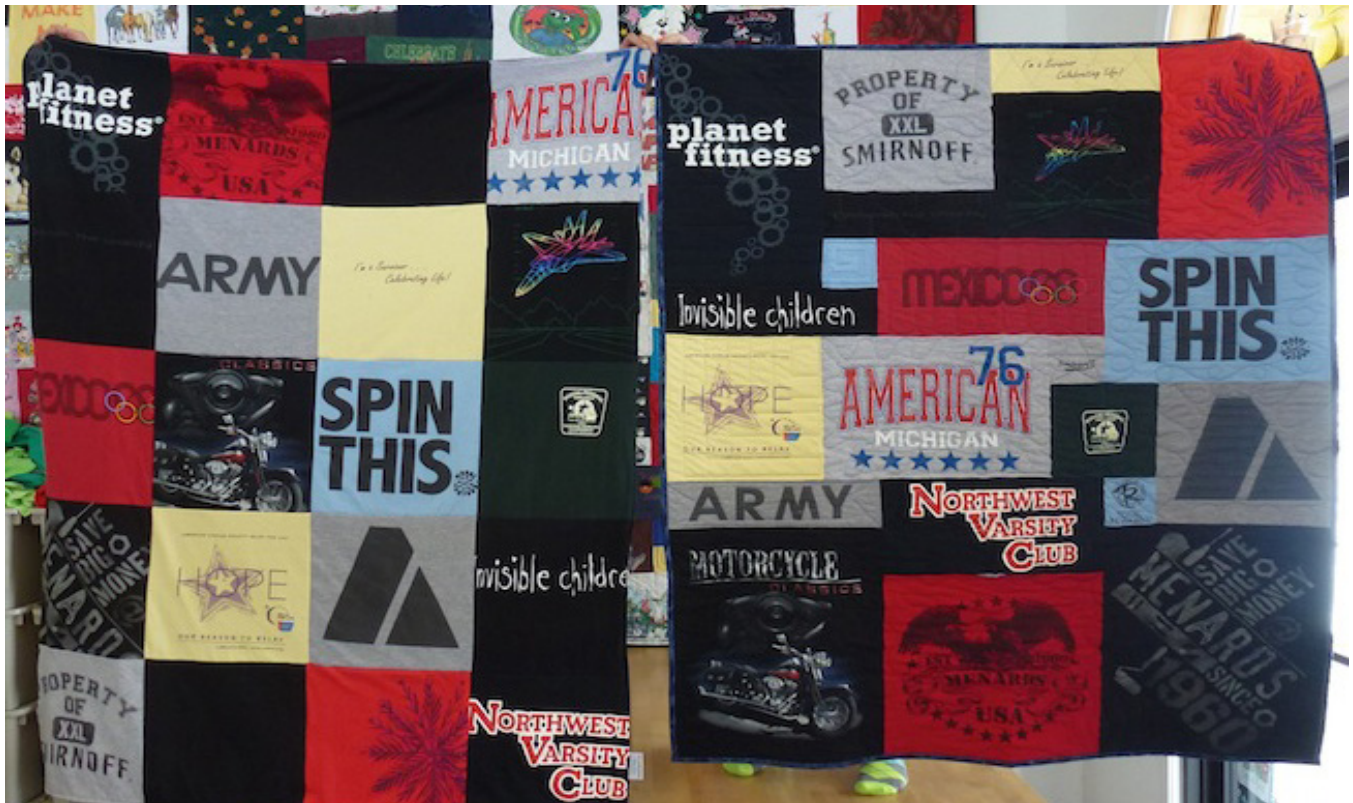


Problem 2 – A quilt must attract and keep a viewer's attention.

This means that the solution has to be interesting and novel enough for your brain to have to stop and figure out the pattern. The human brain can discern patterns easily – that's what we do best. Our brains are constantly surveying our surroundings looking for things out of the ordinary. As long as the pattern is familiar, our subconscious lets the rest of our mind know that it's ok to be doing something else.

If you relate this concept to a quilt, a quilt with a very simple pattern is so easy for us to figure out that we don't spend a lot of time looking at it. So a quilt that is laid out in a grid – say 4 blocks across by 5 blocks tall is such an easy problem for our brains, that we don't pay much attention to it.

A quilt that is built with columns of various width blocks will be a little more interesting to look at. But again, our brain rapidly recognize the columns and moves on.



The best solution is a design that is puzzled together. When we look at this design, we might begin to see a column or a row, but then a block of a different size interrupts it. This makes us stop and have to consider what we are seeing again. As your brain continues to look for the underlying pattern, you will stay actively involved in looking at the quilt. A puzzled together quilt is a great solution because you keep looking at the quilt.

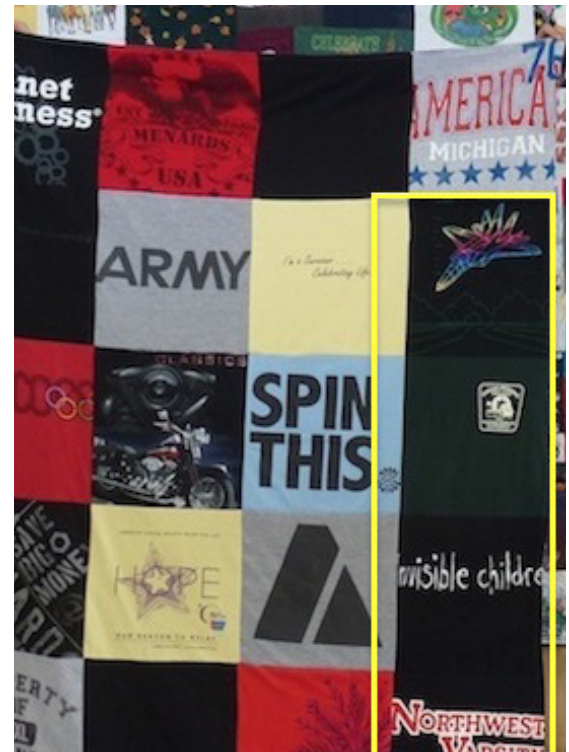
Problem 3 – The different color T-shirt blocks need to be balanced throughout the quilt.

Any design solution, successful or not in other categories, can fail if the colors of the T-shirts are not balanced. For example, if all the red blocks in the quilt are congregated in one area of the quilt, the quilt will be unbalanced.

A quilt maker must be skilled enough to have the various colored T-shirt blocks spread evenly throughout the quilt. Spend some time looking at photos of T-shirt quilts. Squint your eyes and look to see if any globs of colors stick out. If so, the quilt is not as successful as it could have been.

Many quilts that are made of uniform size blocks laid out in rows and columns will not look balanced. You could lay them out in a dark/light checkerboard pattern, but if there are more darks than lights, this pattern won't hold.

When you are looking at T-shirt quilts, look at how these problems are solved.

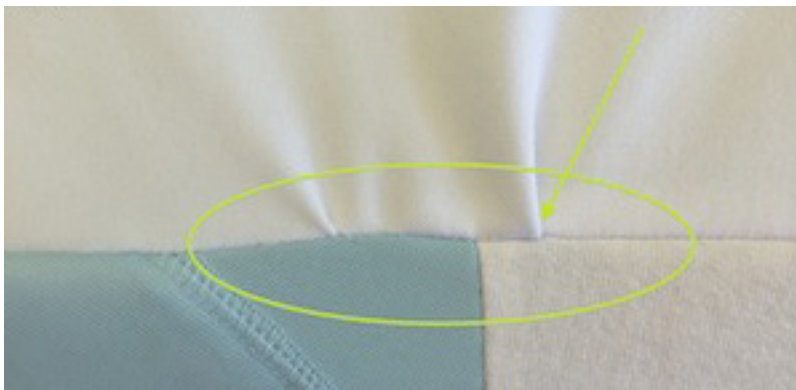


Details

Details are important! Here are some mechanical type details that will affect the quality and look of a T-shirt quilt.

1. The blocks on a quilt are sewn straight and square to one another and have corners that meet.

Look carefully at a quilt and check the width of a block at its top and bottom. This width needs to be equal. For example, if a block is 7½" wide at the top and 8" wide at the bottom, it is out of square and looks bad. This is a very important detail because it shows the quilter's skill. Also watch that when four corners come together they actually match up perfectly. In the example photo on the right, the four corners do not line up.



2. The blocks in the quilt are individually quilted.

T-shirt quilt companies that offer only two choices of quilting styles – say loops and meandering – will quilt your quilt so it is stable and stays together. But that will be it. All the fun and interesting details that keeps you coming back to look at your quilt over and over again, will not exist. Details are important and not having the details that individually quilted blocks give, will not set your quilt apart from any other quilt.

The quilt on the left is quilted in an overall loop pattern. In this photo you see nearly the entire quilt. This means there is not a lot of quilting on the quilt.

The two quilts below are about the same size. The quilt on the right has a lot more quilting than the one on the left. It's much more interesting to look at!



3. The Binding is Well Made

The binding is the fabric that covers the raw edges of a quilt. A little bit of this material is seen from the front and back of the quilt. There are two main details to look at when examining a binding.

The first is the evenness of the binding. The width of the binding should be the same all around the front and back of the quilt. A sloppy binding will widen and narrow. This is a sign of an inexperienced quilter. The second issue is how the binding is finished on the backside of the quilt. If it is hand sewn, the stitches need to be very even and invisible. If it is machine sewn, the stitches need to be straight as opposed to snaking down the binding. [Read more about the different type of bindings used on T-shirt quilts here.](#)



4. The Quilt Feels Soft

The feel of a quilt is a very important detail. Remember, soft is not just a feeling against your hands, but how it moves in your hands. This can be a difficult thing to tell from a photo. But there are clues if you know a little about how the quilt is made and what to look for in a photograph.

If the quilt is made with iron on backing, assume that the quilt will be stiffer than a quilt made without it. Typically, T-shirt quilts that are made with sashing (that's cotton fabric) between the T-shirt blocks are made with iron on backing.



If you see a photo of a T-shirt quilt and it looks smooth and flat, it might be stiff. T-shirt material never looks like a starched shirt – it has body that makes it look more alive.

Just because a T-shirt quilt has flannel or some other fabric on the back that is soft to the touch does not mean that the quilt will be soft. You could glue flannel to a stone and it would feel soft, but it won't be soft.

Everyone wants a quilt that is soft and cozy to cuddle with. Although a T-shirt quilt company claims their T-shirt quilts are soft, this is not always true. A T-shirt quilt that uses iron on backing will have T-shirt quilts that are stiff. Ask the T-shirt quilt company if they use

You will like almost any T-shirt quilt made with your T-shirts, because they are your T-shirts!



Styles of T-shirt Quilts

There are many different styles of T-shirt quilts. Each style can result in a different look and feel. Each style also comes with it's own issues. Here is a look at the five major types of T-shirt quilts.

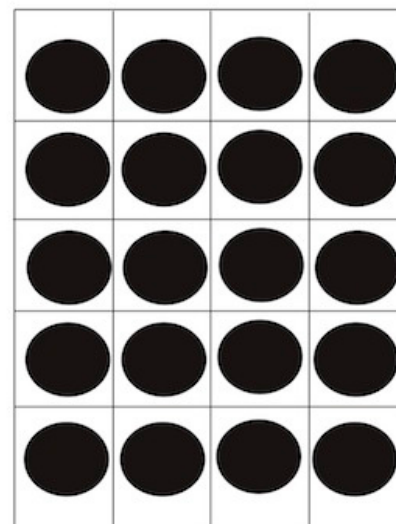
Traditional Block Style With Sashing

What: This was the first type of T-shirt quilt made. All the blocks were cut the same size. Interfacing was applied to the back of the T-shirt block to make it stiff and easy to work with. The blocks are laid out in columns and rows divided by cotton fabric.

Look: This style of quilt is very simplistic because it is laid out in a checker board pattern. You look at it and your brain easily recognizes the pattern and you go on. There is nothing there to grab your attention and keep you looking at the quilt.

Feel: Stiff! The iron-on backing that is applied to the backs of the T-shirts to stiffen them enough so they can be sewn to cotton fabric makes this style of quilt stiff and heavy.

Issues: This style does not take into consideration that T-shirt designs are different sizes. If a design is larger than the block's size, the area outside the block gets cut off. If the design is a lot smaller than the block, there will be a lot of blank space around the design.



Traditional Block Style Without Sashing

What: This style is the same as traditional block style, but it omits the sashing – the fabric dividing the rows and columns. All the blocks are cut the same size and are sewn together in rows and columns.

Look: Again, this is a very simple style of T-shirt quilt. It's easy to quickly look at and move on.

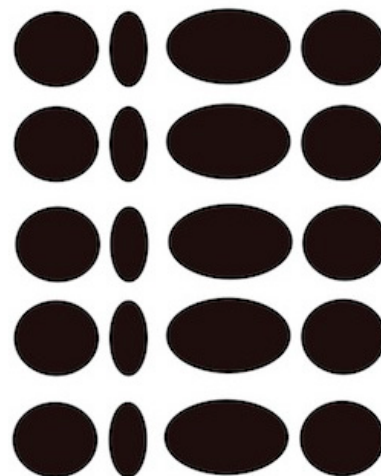
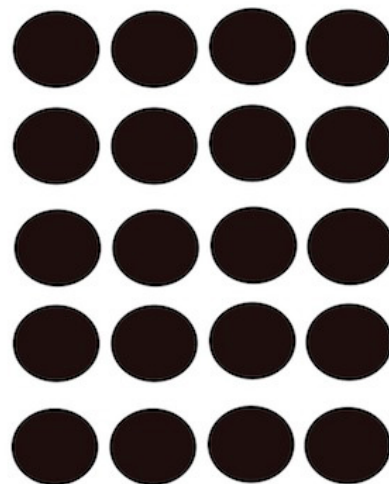
Feel: The feel of this quilt will depend on how it is made. If iron-on-backing/interfacing is used, it will be stiff. It will be less stiff if the quilter does not use interfacing.

Issues: Since this type of quilt is made with just one size block, T-shirts with large designs will have the designs cut off and small designs will have too much blank area around them.

Unequal Rows or Columns

What: Quilters began to recognize that T-shirts have different size designs. To compensate for the size differences, a quilter would choose two or three widths of blocks and cut the designs out with a width that fits the design and cut the block's length to what ever is needed.

When the blocks are sewn together, they are sewn in columns of matching widths. So you would have a wide column, then a narrow column and then a wide column and so on.



Look: This will make for a more interesting quilt than a traditional block style, but the quilt is still made with columns or rows. Your brain can still quickly pick up on the rows or columns and thus it will not hold your interest for very long.

Feel: This will depend on the quilt maker's decision to use iron-on backing or not. If they choose to use iron-on backing to make their job easier, then the quilt will be stiff.

Issues: If the design on a T-shirt is still wider than their largest block width, the design will still be cut off.

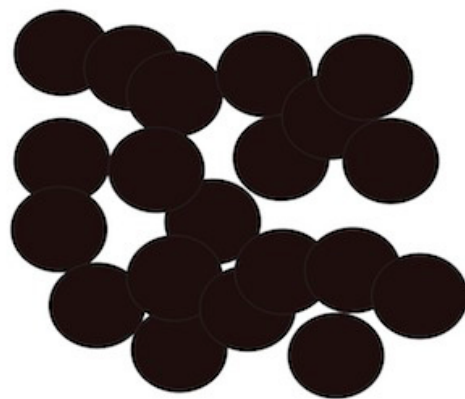
Crazy Quilt

What: All the designs on the T-shirts are cut out willy-nilly. The blocks are then glued to one piece of fabric or bed sheet. The blocks are then zigzagged down.

Look: This will make for an interesting quilt that will hold your attention and make you spend some time looking at the quilt.

Feel: This type of quilt will be heavier due to the added layer of the sheet or fabric. It also might be stiffer depending on what type of glue is used.

Issues: A possible issue is that part of a T-shirt design may be covered up with another design. If this type of quilt is made by an inexperienced sewer or with a machine with poor tension, the durability of the sewn down pieces of T-shirt material might become an issue.



The Too Cool Style AKA: Variable Style or Puzzle

What: Too Cool T-shirt Quilts® created this style of T-shirt quilt in the early 1990's. All the blocks are different sizes and the blocks are puzzled together so that there are neither columns nor rows. Since Too Cool T-shirt Quilts® is trademarked, other companies making this style of quilts must call them something else – most will use the term “variable” or “puzzle”.

Look: Awesome! None of the designs are cut off or left hanging with too much blank T-shirt around them. The puzzle style also makes you work to figure out the pattern. But since the design is random, you end up spending time looking at and appreciating the quilt.

Feel: This style of T-shirt quilt should be made without iron-on backing – so it should be soft.

Issues: This type of quilt is difficult to make and an inexperienced quilter can make a mess of it! For example, the layout might be simplified into columns and rows because it is tough to puzzle all the blocks together. Inexperienced sewers may have problems sewing the blocks together so they fit together well. For example, I have seen a 4” block be stretched to 5” or gathered to 3”. Either way, it will look wrong.



Components of a T-shirt Quilt

If you understand quilt making lingo, you will be able to talk with a potential quilter about what you want in your T-shirt quilt. Here are some of the basics. Any quilt is made up of 5 main components: the quilt top, the batting, the backing fabric, the binding and the quilting.

Quilt Top

The quilt top is the face of the quilt. It's what you see when the quilt is faced right side up. Although a quilt top can be one piece of fabric, they are typically made from a number of pieces of fabric that are sewn together in a pattern. On a T-shirt quilt, the quilt top is made up of T-shirts that are sewn together to create the quilt top.

Batting

Batting is the “stuffing” that is in the middle of a quilt. Typically, this is a thin “low loft” batting that is about $\frac{1}{4}$ ” thick. Thinner batting is used to allow for more quilted. If the batting is “high loft” or very thick, the thickness of the batting prevents the quilt from being quilted to the same degree as a quilt with low loft batting. Thus, the quilting is spread further apart or the quilt is tied. When a quilt is made with thick batting it is typically called a comforter.

If a quilt does not have batting, it's not a quilt. It's a blanket.



Backing Material

The backing material is the fabric that goes on the back of a quilt. The type of fabric depends upon who is making the quilt and the amount of money they are willing to spend. Fabrics typically are either a solid color or a print. A fabric with a printed pattern will be chosen when a quilter wants to hide the quilting or tying because the print will camouflage all the stitching. On the other hand, if a quilter wants to highlight their quilting work, a solid color fabric will be chosen.



Binding

The binding is the material that goes around the outside of the quilt. About ½" of the binding is seen from the top, the side and the back. The binding is used to hide the raw edges of the quilt top, batting and backing materials. There are a number of different methods for putting on a binding – each with its advantages and disadvantages. The most important thing to look for is that the binding is put on consistently and evenly.



A binding can be made from the same material as the backing material or it can be made from a contrasting fabric or a printed fabric. This is a great place to tie-in the look of the quilt on the front with the backing material.

If a quilt does not have a binding, it is most likely a blanket.



Materials Used In T-shirt Quilts

There are two major materials added to your T-shirts to make a quilt. The first is the backing material that is on the back of the quilt and the other is the batting that goes in the middle of the quilt.

Backing Material

Quilters call the fabric that is on the back of a quilt, "the backing." Some quilters consider the back of a quilt as important as the front, while other quilters only care about the front. This difference manifests itself in the choice of material that is chosen for the back of a quilt.

What are some choices available to T-shirt quilt makers?

Like anything, everyone has a different opinion about what fabric makes the best back to a quilt. During my 40+ years of quilt making, I have used most of the fabrics listed below. Each fabric has its positive and negative features.

100% Cotton

This is my preferred fabric choice because it wears well and is easy to work with. But beware; all 100% cotton fabrics are not the same.

50% Polyester/50% Cotton

50/50 fabrics are made so it retains some of the feel of cotton yet has enough polyester



in it that it keeps the fabric from wrinkling. The disadvantage of this fabric is that it will pill. Pilling is the little balls of fiber that ball up on the surface of a fabric.

100% Polyester

This fabric generally is very inexpensive. And it will look and feel inexpensive too. Again, this fabric will pill. Avoid this fabric. It won't make your quilt awesome, just cheap.

Flannel

Like any other fabric, flannel comes in many qualities. If you choose flannel, purchase the highest quality on the market. The appeal of flannel is that it is soft. To make flannel, the fabric is brushed to break surface fibers free. It leaves a layer of soft fuzz. But if you think about it, brushing the surface is just wearing out the fabric.

Minky Fabric

Minky is very, very soft. And it can make an ok backing to a quilt. But it's so messy to work with! If you cut a piece of Minky, you will have fuzz everywhere. We typically don't use it here because you can't see the quilting on the back of a quilt backed with Minky. And we pride ourselves on the cool quilting designs we use on our quilts. Cotton on left and Minky on right.



Polar Fleece

Polar fleece is 100% polyester. It's soft. Depending on the quality of the fleece, it can wear ok. Most fleeces will pill after a number of washes. Some T-shirt blanket makers love fleece because they don't have to use batting or quilt the quilt. Which makes it a blanket and not a quilt! Fleece is not the right fabric for us because we are making quilts, which involves batting and quilting.

Bed Sheets

I cringe when I see a bed sheet used for the backing of a quilt, especially if it is a printed sheet. Basically, a sheet will always look like a sheet. It's not the right choice for a quality quilt.

Fabric is expensive

T-shirt quilt companies who only make a few quilts a year – less than 30 to 40 – will most likely not purchase their fabrics wholesale. This means they will be purchasing their fabric at retail prices and thus have to pay a great deal for high quality material. So, if they aren't charging very much for their quilts, they will typically make it up by purchasing the cheapest material they can.

Batting

Although you don't see the batting in a quilt, the batting used in a quilt is very important. The type and quality directly relates to the longevity of a quilt.

No Batting

Blankets use no batting. Rather they just use a material like polar fleece on one side of the quilt.



100% Polyester Batting

One of the cheapest battings on the market is a 100% polyester batting. Polyester battings have two major issues. First, without close quilting (every 2 to 3 inches), this type of batting will lump up after washing. Second, the polyester fiber will pop through the backing material giving the back of a quilt a slightly hairy look. This is because the polyester fibers are not holding together. They are sharp enough (on a microscopic level) that they are able to poke through the backing material.

80% Cotton/20% Polyester Needle Punched Batting

This is the good stuff. What makes this batting special is that it is needle punched. This means that the batting is run through a roller covered with hot needles. As the needles go into the batting they melt the polyester fibers. As the needle exits the batting, the melted polyester is dragged up through the cotton fibers thereby binding the cotton fibers together. This makes for very stable cotton batting that is difficult to tear and that does not bunch up after repeated washings.



In the photo here, polyester batting is on the left and 80/20 batting is on the right. You can see the tress behind the polyester batting - it's that thin!

100% Cotton Batting

This is so much nicer than polyester batting, but it can be fragile. You can gently pull the fibers apart because there is not a binder holding them together. When a quilt with this type of batting is repeatedly washed, this batting can clump and wad up.

Loft or Batting Thickness

You may equate batting thickness to warmth and assume that a thick batting is warmer than a thin batting. But that is not true. Batting technology has made it so that a thinner cotton or cotton/polyester batting is as warm as a thick polyester batting.

Thicker battings mean that your quilt will not fold and store as well as a quilt with the thinner batting. The thick batting will also bunch up after it is washed. Any skilled quilter would not choose such a batting for their quilt. They know that they are asking for trouble if they do.



Styles of Quilting

A quilt is made up of three layers – the quilt top, the batting and the backing material. These three layers must be connected together to make the quilt. If the layers are not connected or connected sparsely, the middle layer of batting will bunch up and become very lumpy over time. In the quilting world, the lingo used to describe the connecting of these three layers is called quilting.

There are numerous different quilting methods used on T-shirt quilts. Some methods are preferred because they will make the quilt last longer and look better.

Tying

Tying is a technique that uses thread, yarn or embroidery floss to make a single large stitch through the three layers of the quilt. The thread is knotted on the top of the quilt. Although this method will hold a quilt top, batting, and backing together, it is not an enduring method. Over relatively short period of time the batting will sag and bunch over successive washings. The T-shirts may also droop.



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Stitch in the Ditch

This method is done using a home sewing machine. The three layers of the quilt are pinned and then stitched together. The stitches are placed in the ditch, which is where the seams of the pieces come together. This will hold the quilt together, but the areas that are not sewn will be droopy and perhaps sag over time. This is because the batting is not quilted close enough. Most batting manufacturers say that for the best outcome, the stitching will need to be no more than 4" apart. In the ditch quilting may leave large areas unquilted.

So, like the tying method, this is not a long-lasting solution. After several washings, the batting may fall apart and ball up inside the quilt, which can make for a lump-filled quilt.

Computer Guided Long Arm Quilting

A long-arm quilting machine is a very large sewing machine on rails that stitches as it is moved over the three layers of a quilt. A computer or a human can control a long-arm quilting machine. When the quilting is computer controlled, it is typically set to stitch in an overall quilting pattern. The same design is repeated over and over on the quilt.



This quilting method does result in a quilt that will last for a lifetime if quality materials have been used for the backing and thread. However, most companies which use computerized long arm quilting only offer a few patterns. As a result, you may have a limited choice of designs to choose from. If you do choose a company which uses computerized long-arm quilting, be sure you like the pattern they use because this pattern is going to be over the entire quilt. Also, if the computer is doing all the work, the person making the quilt is less likely to pay attention. This could result in many bad things such as batting lumps, or wrinkles in the backing.

Non-Computer Guided Long Arm Quilting

This method uses the same long-arm quilting machine but a human operates it from either the front or back of the machine.

Operated from the Back of the Machine – The long-arm machine is operated from the back of the machine, the quilter stands or sits behind the long arm machine and follows

a repetitive printed paper pattern on the bed of the sewing machine with a laser pointer. The quilter is also behind the quilt and can't see the entire work.

Operated from the Front of the Machine – The long-arm machine is operated from the front of the machine, the designs being quilted can be exclusively tailored to the particular block that is being worked on rather than in an overall pattern.



The result can be a quilting design that is exciting and different on each block of the quilt. Bonus – the back of the quilt is as fun as the front. The long-arm quilting artist can choose to outline or trace the designs on the T-shirts or freehand designs as they work.

Types of Bindings Used on T-shirt Quilts

On a quilt, a binding is used to cover the raw edges of the quilt's three layers. There are three typical types of bindings used on T-shirt quilts: no binding, half binding, and strip binding. Not all bindings are equal and if you are looking for a high quality T-shirt quilt, you need to know what's good, bad and just ugly!

No Binding

The ugly method is a birthing or inside out method. What the quilter does is lay the front of the quilt face down onto the good side of the backing material. The front and back are then sewn together around the outside edge of the material. A 4 to 8 inch wide hole is left unsewn so that the quilt can be turned right side out. After the quilt is turned right side out, the opening is stitched closed.

A quilt or blanket made this way will not be quilted because the quilting would deform the shape of the quilt. So a quilter will either use a decorative stitch, embroidery floss ties, yarn or buttons to attach the front of the quilt to the back.

Half Binding

This method of binding brings excess backing material to the front of the quilt. A quilter cuts the backing fabric a few inches larger than the face of the quilt on all four sides of the quilt. This fabric is then folded around to the front of the quilt and then stitched down. This is a step up from no binding.



Full Binding

This is the most sophisticated style of binding. This binding is sewn onto the quilt in two steps. A strip of binding fabric is cut and then folded in half. It is first sewn on the quilt from the topside of the quilt. In the second step, the binding is folded around to the back of the quilt and then sewn down in one of two ways. The first way is to sew the strip down onto the back of the quilt by hand. Working from the back, the chief difficulty is neat and even hand sewn stitches. The other method is to sew the strip to the back by sewing from the front of the quilt. This is a blind seam and takes years of practice to perfect.

If you are looking to have a high quality T-shirt quilt made with your T-shirts, be sure to look at how a quilter binds his or her quilts. If they are not strip binding their quilts, they are either not skilled quilters or they are trying to save time so they have a higher profit margin.



How Much Does a T-shirt Quilt Cost?

On the Internet you can find T-shirt quilts that range in price from \$50 to over \$1,000. If your grandmother makes your quilt, it might even be free. Why such a large price range? There are a number of factors that go into the cost of making a T-shirt quilt; taking that free grandmother-made T-shirt quilt out of the equation, here are a number of cost factors that go into the pricing of a T-shirt quilt.

Materials

There are four to five basic materials that go into all T-shirt quilts. There is a quality range for each type of material. The higher quality materials cost more and will be reflected in the price of your quilt.

Fabric

Fabric comes in many different qualities. An inexpensive fabric will add less to the cost of a quilt than an expensive high quality fabric.



Batting

Batting comes in a variety of grades – from thin 100% polyester, to high quality needle punched 80%cotton/20%polyester batting. Polyester battings cost the least and needle punched 80%cotton/20%polyester batting will cost a lot more.

Thread

All quilts use thread for sewing the blocks together and quilting. There are cheap threads that won't withstand time and use. The more expensive the thread that is used in your quilt, the more the quilt will cost. But your quilt will also last longer.

Interfacing/Iron on Backing

Some quilters iron on interfacing to the back of their T-shirts to make them easier to work with. This will increase the cost of the quilt because of labor and material cost.



Labor

Another cost that is calculated into the price of a quilt is labor. Minimum wage is \$9 to \$13 an hour. Typically, minimum wage is reserved for entry level and unskilled workers. High quality T-shirt quilt makers are not unskilled. Usually, they should have over five years of quilt making experience – the more the better.

It takes skill to make a T-shirt quilt. If it didn't take any skill or experience, you would be making it yourself. Highly skilled and talented quilters make the best T-shirt quilts. This means that their hourly rate will be much higher than minimum wage. If you want to only pay mini-

mum wage to a quilter, expect an entry-level unskilled quilter to attempt to make your quilt. If you value your T-shirts, an inexpensive T-shirt quilt should scare you!

Time

How long does it take to make a T-shirt quilt? This depends on a number of factors including quilt style, complexity and craftsmanship. An inexpensive quilt will take less time than a more expensive quilt. An inexpensive quilt will be made with a simple style, there will be no complexity anywhere in the process and the craftsmanship will be questionable.



A traditional style T-shirt quilt made from one size block stacked in columns and/or rows makes the project very easy, especially if you, the customer, arrange the blocks ahead of time. The quilter can move directly from cutting to sewing.

On the other hand, a “Too Cool” Style quilt is made from many different sizes and shapes of blocks. The entire process takes 5 to 6 times as long as making a traditional T-shirt quilt. It takes 20 times longer than it does to make a T-shirt blanket. Complex quilts take time that will make the quilt more expensive.

The Value a Quilter Puts on Her Work

If a quilter underprices her work, she is telling you up front that she does not think that her time and skills are good enough to charge more. Think about what this tells you; if someone does not find value in her work, will you?

How to Interview a Quilt Maker

After you have learned about the different styles and quality levels of T-shirt quilts and have found a quilt maker, take time to either interview her and/or get the answers to these questions from her website. Know ahead of time what you can expect so you don't end up with a T-shirt quilt that will break your heart.

What style of quilt do you make?

First, know what style you are looking to have made. [Read more about the 5 styles of T-shirt quilts here](#). Is this quilt maker experienced and skilled in making the type of quilt you want?

Are you making quilts or blankets?

Blankets are two layers and quilts are three layers. Read more about that here. If you want a high quality product, be sure to choose a quilter that is making quilts.

Are your quilts machine long-arm quilted?



This is industry standard for quality T-shirt quilt makers. If a quilt is not long-armed quilted, you probably should continue your search for a quilter elsewhere. The best T-shirt quilts are those in which each block is quilted with a unique pattern.

What materials do you use in your quilts?

Hopefully high quality materials! [Read more about that on page 19](#).

What is your turn around time?

4 to 6 weeks is industry standard. It may take a little longer around spring graduation and Christmas. A quilter that says 3 months or more might have more quilts than she can get to or have other obligations. Try to find a professional quilter that can balance her time and workload.

How many quilts have you made in the style I want?

The more quilts someone has made in the style you want, the better. You probably want to shy away from a novice and perhaps an intermediate quilter. I still run into hurdles and I have made over 6,000 quilts!

Novice Quilter: 1 – 30

Intermediate Quilter: 30 to 200

The Advanced Quilter: 200 to 1000

The Expert Quilter: Over 1000

Are you making the entire quilt?

Some quilters will only make the quilt top and send the completed quilt top to someone else to finish. This means that you will have no idea who is working on your quilt or where it will be sent. If someone is only making part of your quilt, this is a sign that the quilter is not a professional quilter. She does not have all the equipment needed to make your quilt or the skill to use rented equipment. You might want to avoid a quilter like this.



Are you a smoker?

If you are not a smoker, you won't want to send your T-shirts to a smoker.

Are you a professional quilt maker or a hobbyist?

A professional earns a living making quilts. They are devoted to making T-shirt quilts full time. And most importantly, she has a reputation at stake with every quilt she makes. The outcome of your quilt is important to her and her livelihood.

The hobbyist on the other hand, makes quilts because she likes to make quilts. But it's not her livelihood. And if your quilt doesn't go well, it doesn't impact her income. A hobbyist also is not making as many quilts as a professional.



Can I see your work and/or can I see photos of your quilt?

The answer should be yes. If you can't see the quilts in person, study the photographs of a number of different quilts. If you are not sure what to look for in a photograph of a quilt, [click here to read about how to judge a quilt from a photograph.](#)

What's the Next Step?

We hope that this guide has helped you think about what you want in a T-shirt quilt. What's your next step? Below are a number of links for you.

Learn How to Have a Quilt Made

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Too Cool T-shirt Quilts®

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