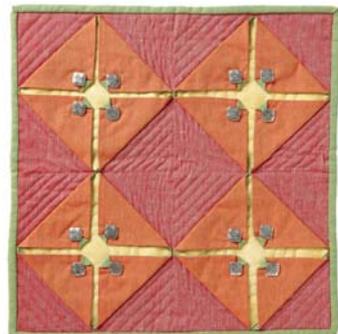


FRESH, FUN PATTERNS TO QUILT IN A SNAP

MINI QUILTS



JODIE DAVIS & JAYNE DAVIS

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The Taunton Press

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DEDICATION

To the Quilt Alliance for providing an enormous source of inspiration by preserving the stories of quilts and quiltmakers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to every quilter—past, contemporary, and yet to be born—for contributing to the universal body of work, the unique sharing of ourselves that is quilting.

It's an honor to work with Taunton. For years I have admired the top-notch quality and leading edge design of everything they do. I was a charter subscriber to *Threads*, and when I bought and renovated my house, I devoured every issue of their home magazines.

Special thanks to the Taunton Press books staff, specifically: Shawna Mullen for her enthusiasm when first we met. Renee Neiger and Ashley Little for red inking with loving hands. Rosalind Wanke and Laura Palese for creating a wonderful interior and cover design. Erin Giunta for prettying up our photos. Amy Griffin and Laura Palese for skillfully laying out the book.

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INTRODUCTION

How many times have you said to yourself, “So many quilts, so little time?” It’s a blast to try new patterns, cut into another fat quarter of fabric from your favorite company, or delve into a new technique. But invariably that time factor creeps in. Have no fear, mini quilts are here!



What Is a Mini Quilt?

Mini quilts may be small, but they have big personalities. They are a snap to make, and many take only a few evenings to finish. The mini quilts in this book are 16 in. square, and if bound, they measure 16½ in. square. (The only exceptions are Frayed Star (p. 44) and Swedish Folk Art in Felt (p. 72), which are 16 in. square after binding.)

I discovered the magic of a mini quilt when I became involved with the Quilt Alliance, a nonprofit that's devoted to archiving the stories of quilts and their makers. Each year the alliance holds a mini quilt contest as a fund-raiser. A few years ago, Luke Haynes, one of the board members, said he sees the contest as an opportunity to try a new technique. And I feel that mini quilts are also a great way to teach new techniques. After all, it's what I do as a quilting instructor and as one of the faces of QNNtv.com, an online quilting television website. It's why I like to call myself a "quilt enabler."

My stepmom, Jayne, is also an avid quilter, so I didn't have to twist her arm to help me design and make projects for this book. We had a great time sharing our favorite quilting tools and techniques with each other, and we are thrilled to have the opportunity to bring it all to you.

Making the Most Out of Minis

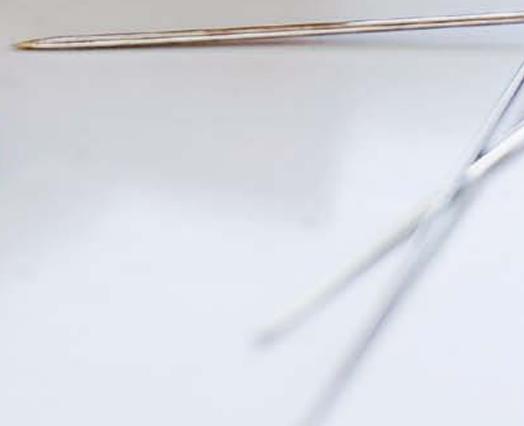
Each mini quilt is a great punctuation point on its own, but as I discovered when I began making and collecting them, one quilt can soon turn into a large collection. Making them is rather addictive. Rather than hide all these minis in storage, I've provided a few projects that allow you to show off your bounty, fitting the quilts into your lifestyle. You'll find instructions for turning minis into pillows, totes, table runners, and more. Of course, if you fall head over heels for a particular technique, feel free to let those minis multiply and stitch them into a standard quilt.

Most of the quilts are designed for those with basic sewing skills. A few, such as the Seminole Patchwork (p. 38), require precision sewing skills, which means going slowly. Look for the skill level assigned to each project and choose those that are comfortable for you. As you gain skills, work your way up to more advanced projects.

To make the mini quilts, you will need common sewing gadgets, including a well-tuned sewing machine and cutting tools. If you're not familiar with the basics, review Part 1 (p. 4) to find out what types of tools you'll need to complete the minis. When something special is required to complete a quilt, I note that in the instructions.

Good things do come in small packages, even in quilting! I hope that you have as much fun creating a flock of minis as Jayne and I have had.

— Jodie Davis





1

THE BASICS



What You Need to Know

For most of the mini quilt patterns in this book, you'll need only basic sewing and quilting skills. In this chapter, I provide information on some of the techniques we use most frequently. Some of these may be new to you, while the descriptions of others may serve as more of a refresher course. One of the things I love about quilting is that there are always new things to learn. It's fun to hone our skills.

Prepare to Quilt

You've decided to make a mini quilt. What's the next step? You'll need thread, basic quilting tools, and other equipment on hand so that making the quilt goes smoothly without last-minute trips to the store for this or that.

BASIC QUILTING TOOLS

All the quilts and projects I share with you require basic quilting tools. If you have sewing experience, you may already own most of them. If you don't, make a list of the tools you need and pay a visit to your local craft store to get them. As you continue quilting you'll add more gadgets, but the following will get you started.

ROTARY CUTTER

The rotary cutter revolutionized quilting. It made labor-intensive, hand cutting with scissors a task of the past. Be sure your cutter has a safety lock as it is extremely sharp. Also, always keep an extra blade on hand.

Tip When you replace your rotary cutter blade, put the dull one in a another rotary cutter and use it to cut only paper. Never cut paper with your sharp blade as it will dull it very quickly.

SELF-HEALING CUTTING MAT

Mats come in a variety of sizes. Buy the largest one that is usable in your work space and can easily be stored in your storage area. They come as large as 24 in. by 36 in., and most feature a 1-in. grid.

SEE-THROUGH ACRYLIC RULER

See-through grid rulers come in several sizes. I use the 6 in. or 8 in. by 24 in. Other sizes can be useful, but either of these will suffice in all cases.

SCISSORS

You'll find plenty of uses for a well-sharpened pair of scissors, from cutting out templates to trimming corners. They are always good to have around.

PINS

Pins temporarily join fabrics and hold the pieces in place until you can permanently seam them together. Just remember: Never machine-stitch over pins because it can damage your needle, your machine, and even your fabric. Remove pins as you sew a seam. Glass-headed pins are a good choice because plastic heads can melt from an iron's heat when you're pressing.

HAND-SEWING NEEDLES

Sharps needles—a type of hand-sewing needle—are a good multipurpose choice. There are specific needles for hand quilting and appliqué; they are noted in the instructions when needed.

Tip Want to save yourself a lot of aggravation and squinty eyes when hand sewing? A fabulous tool is the Ultimate Needle Threader by Clover. Just pop in your needle, place your thread in the slot, and press the lever; you'll have a threaded needle almost instantly.

IRON

An iron that can be used both dry and with steam works best for making quilts. Iron your fabric before quilting to remove wrinkles and prepare for accurate cutting. Wrinkled fabrics can result in pieces that do not measure correctly, throwing off the measurements of the entire quilt. You will also use an iron to press sewn seams, which gives your finished project a polished, professional look. An important quilting rule is to press as you go. The result is worth the extra effort.

Tip Proper pressing is not the same as ironing. When ironing, you move the iron back and forth continuously on the fabric. When pressing, you set the iron down, then lift up and move to the next spot.

PRESSING SURFACE

A sturdy movable ironing board is a must have. It's handy to be able to set up a pressing station next to your sewing machine so you can press as you go.

MARKING TOOLS

There is no perfect fabric-marking technique that works in every circumstance. I've used dressmaker's carbon, purple disappearing pens, and chalk; finding just the right marking tool is an ongoing quest.

To make placement lines for the Hawaiian Gone Modern Stenciled Quilt (p. 54), I simply folded the square in half and in half again and pressed. For the In the Jungle Crayon Painting project (p. 58), Jayne used light pencil marks. The project

To Wash or Not to Wash?

Whether to wash your fabric is an age-old question. Some quilters habitually wash every piece of fabric that walks in the door. Others wash selectively. So is it always necessary to wash your quilting fabrics?

It depends on how you are going to use the finished quilt. For a bed quilt or baby quilt that will be laundered over the years, wash and iron the fabric before beginning the project to avoid that dreaded puckered look after the first washing. On the other hand, if you want the look of a not-new quilt, leave your fabrics unwashed until the project is done. It's always a good idea to wash a swatch of any reds or dark colors in some hot water to see if the dye bleeds. If your project is a wall quilt that will never be laundered, why bother prewashing? Choose your comfort level and wash accordingly!

instructions will generally tell you the best technique to use.

My go-to marking tool of choice these days is the Pilot FriXion® erasable pen. This pen works like a regular pen, but the ink totally disappears when exposed to the heat of an iron. Experiment with different marking tools to find which one works best for you.

KNOW YOUR SEWING MACHINE'S LITTLE HELPERS

Did you know your sewing machine may have some features that will help you sew more efficiently? Be sure to check out the manual to discover how to use the settings that quilters use all the time.

NEEDLE DOWN

Most machines sold today have a button or screen icon that sets the needle to be either up or down in the fabric when you stop stitching. Setting the machine to needle down is incredibly helpful when turning corners, for appliqué, and in many other instances. Alternatively, if you turn the needle down setting to off, when you stop stitching, the needle will be up, allowing you to pull your fabric right out of the machine.

PIVOT

Pivot is similar to the needle down, but with one big difference. When you finish stitching, the needle will remain down, plus the presser foot will rise. (You may even be able to control exactly how much it rises, depending on your machine.) This is pure pleasure when sewing curved seams and corners because it helps avoid continually moving the presser foot up and putting it down again.

FASTENING STITCH

You may be familiar with the backstitch or back tacking. Today's machines offer an alternative function, the fastening stitch, that makes a few short stitches, thereby locking the threads. The benefit is that it's not as obvious as a backstitch.

AUTOMATIC THREADER

The automatic threader? Best invention ever. Period! Ever tried to thread your sewing machine and failed again and again? This built-in gadget is a real time and irritation saver.

Sewing Machine Maintenance

It's important to clean and maintain your sewing machine between projects to keep it working at its best. Follow the directions in the machine's manual to clean lint from the bobbin chase and feed dogs. Don't forget to remove threads and remnants that collect under the stitch plate and hook. Oil your machine, again following the manufacturer's instructions, and insert a new needle.

WALKING FOOT

A walking foot "walks" over the fabric and prevents the upper fabric from sliding over the lower one by feeding fabric through the machine easily. It is also helpful when matching plaids and working with slippery fabrics like silk.

TRACING PATTERNS

Sometimes quilters need to trace a pattern onto fabric (the In the Jungle Crayon Painting project, on p. 58, is one example). Here are two simple methods that I like to use.

THE WINDOW METHOD

If you're working on a bright sunny day, tape your pattern to a window pane using masking or painters' tape—something that can be easily removed. Tape the fabric over the template and trace. It's so easy and no special equipment is required.

THE LIGHT TABLE METHOD

If you have a light table, tracing patterns is a snap. Place the template and then fabric on the table, turn on the light, and trace. If you

don't have a light table, you can improvise by using a glass-topped table. Place a small lamp under the table, tape the pattern and fabric on the glass, and trace. I have a clear extension table for my sewing machine and a mini fluorescent light that I use for tracing patterns.

CUTTING FABRICS

Careful cutting is important for accurate results. You'll use a cutting mat, see-through ruler, and rotary cutter. Both the mat and the ruler have measurements printed on them. Once your fabric is squared up, decide which set of measurements you will use when cutting. Don't use the mat for one cut and the ruler for another. If there is even the tiniest variance between the two, it can cause real problems with stitching accuracy.

Making the Quilt

There are many techniques used in quilting. In this section, I summarize a few of those I used most often in the patterns in this book. Some are done by machine and others are done by hand. Sometimes, we quilters do need to step away from the machine! In those instances, I let you know in the pattern if something must be hand-sewn.

SQUARE KNOT

In quilting, a square knot is used to tie off two threads. Tie an overhand knot, passing the right-hand thread over and then under the thread in the left hand. Next, tie another overhand knot, passing the thread in your left hand over the thread in your right hand. Pull taut.

After tying the square knot a few times, it should come naturally to you. Simply remember: Right over left; left over right.

THE SCANT ¼-IN. SEAM ALLOWANCE

A seam allowance is the width of fabric between the stitched line and the raw edge. Traditionally, a seam allowance in quilting is ¼ in. since a wider seam allowance in piecing would just create unnecessary bulk.

Your machine has a ¼-in. presser foot and a line on the throat plate, so why worry about the ¼ in.? Because, as famous quilting instructor Mary Ellen Hopkins used to say, we all have our own personal ¼-in. seam allowance.

The ¼-in. is different, depending on the way we sew and the tools we use. This fact may be the reason our quilt blocks turn out a little short or a bit too large. Even a slightly off ¼ in. seam allowance can become substantial when magnified over all of the blocks in a quilt.

What we try to achieve in our piecing is a scant ¼-in. seam. The scant part of the equation is what makes up for the turn in the fabric when you press your seam allowances to one side or press them open. If we sew a perfect ¼ in., it becomes more than ¼ in. when we press.

SEWING A ¼-IN. SEAM

PIECING PRESSER FOOT METHOD

If you're using a presser foot made for piecing, you can adjust how you are aligning your fabric as you sew. As you stitch, align the fabric just a hair to the left of the right edge of the ¼-in. foot. This will give the pieces you are joining that scant breathing room.