



Choosing the Best Batting For Your Quilt

Picking a good batting is more important than you think. Nothing does more to determine the comfort and cuddliness of your quilt than the batting you use in it.

When you're just starting out in quilting, it can be very hard on your budget to have invested in all the tools and supplies you need, fabric for your first quilt, and then spend even more money for your batting. Because of this, many quilters will choose to skimp on batting. But this is not always the best thing to do!

Hopefully the information tips below will help you make sense of all this so that you can make an informed decision about getting the right batting for your project.



Is there good or bad batting?

There's no real "good" or "bad" batting. You just have to try it out for yourself. You need to decide what you like and what you dislike. Choice of batting can be entirely subjective.

How much will I need to spend?

This really depends on how big a quilt you're making! The price for high quality polyester batting will range from \$20/m and up, but this price will change depending on how thick the batting is that you choose.

There is such a thing as too cheap batting. Beware of some 100% polyester battings sold at some furnishing / home décor shops. These battings are made very cheaply and will beard almost instantly inside your quilt. Or they could be of too high a loft so are not suitable for quilts. Unless you want a ruined project, don't make the price tag your #1 reason for buying it.

What is bearding?

You know the fuzz your husband gets on his chin after a day or two of not shaving? Bad battings will create the same effect on both sides of your quilt. Bearding means that the fibres in the batting have pulled apart and are migrating through the fabric weave of your quilt.

What you will see at first is little wisps of batting poking through the material. After you wash the quilt you may notice that the surface has started to get lint balls all over it like a fuzzy sweater.

Once this happens, there's not much you can do other than rip out all your quilting stitches, scrap the batting and quilt the whole thing over again. This is a good reason to go with a trusted brand of quilters batting, or at least the advice of an experienced quilter.

What is drape?

Go into your bedroom and look at your bedspread. When you pick it up and lay it over your arm does it drape over you in a nice, soft, comforting way? Or does it sit stiffly against your skin like stale bread?

This is what drape means, the way your quilt will feel after you've quilted it. Your batting choice, combined with how much quilting you do, will largely determine how your quilt drapes when it's done. Higher quality battings are able to take more quilting stitches and still retain their soft, cozy feel, whereas cheaper battings will just turn into cardboard.



What is loft?

Loft is another word for thickness. Older sources of batting from 20+ years ago were very thick but modern batting is often of a smaller loft.

While loft might have lost some of its loft (thickness), it still basically means the same thing: the higher the loft, the thicker your quilt. The thicker your quilt is, the warmer it will be.

You don't have to have the thickest batting to get the warmest quilt. New wool battings have come out that are very thin, but are still super warm.

Bear in mind that the thicker your batting, the more trouble it will be to baste or to quilt on a Long Arm Quilting machine leading to inconsistent results on some combinations of quilt fabric, batting and backings.

What is the difference between Cotton and Polyester Battings?

Cotton battings are made from grown plant fibre that has been needle punched into place. Most cotton battings will shrink when they are washed, and some will not. Cotton battings usually have a lower loft.

Polyester battings are made from synthetic fibres that are also needle punched into place. They typically don't shrink and can have a really beautiful drape in the finished quilt. The new polyester battings breathe easily and make very comfortable quilts.

How your Batting Determines Your Quilting

It's also important to note that most battings specify an amount of space you can leave un-quilted (between stitches).

Some battings may indicate that they are strong enough to stitch up to 8" apart without worrying about the batting shifting or bunching after you wash it. However, I recommend that you have no more than 4 - 5" spacing on your quilt between stitches to give it a more even effect overall.

Final tips for picking the perfect batting - Ask yourself the following:

1 What will this quilt be primarily used for? Wall hangings can use any batting, but thicker usually means it will hang better. Bedspreads can also use any batting, but keep in mind the season.

2 Are you planning to use any special techniques? Do not use cotton battings with any whitework, or trapunto quilt! The seed pods will show through white fabric.

3 How much quilting do you want to do? Polyester battings allow you to go 8" or more between quilting stitches. The more quilting you do, the stiffer your quilt will be. Some battings are better at staying flexible even with a million stitches!

4 What's your budget? Plan to put \$20 - \$40/m into your quilting batting. Buying a bigger batting than you need is a good idea so you can use the leftover pieces for small quilts or wall hangings.