

Alternate Materials in Quilts

Artists of interest FYI

[Pamela Wiley](#)

[Wynde Dyer](#) [An interview with Wynde](#)

[Quilter's of Gee's Bend](#)

Suzy of [suzyquilts.com](#) has a multi-part series of blog posts describing how to sew with different fabrics. Links are provided below.

Cotton lawn or voile

<https://suzyquilts.com/quilty-adventure-part-vii-sew-lawn/>

Lawn is a plain weave of fine, high-count yarns. Think Liberty of London.

- Prewash by hand, gentle fine fabric detergent or baby shampoo, dry flat
- Starch it before cutting
- Pinking shears are a good idea but not necessary
- Tiny needles: 60/8 universal or microtex sewing lawn to lawn; 70/10 universal to join lawn to quilting cotton
- Silk pins
- Fine 50wt cotton thread
- Fresh rotary blade
- If combining with quilting cotton, press seams toward the quilting cotton to keep seams from showing through

Cotton flannel

<https://suzyquilts.com/quilting-flannel-tips-trade/>

- Low-quality flannel has a low thread count and will pill. Prints (plaids!) can be distorted
- Flannel shrinks. Prewash in mild detergent, hot water. Consider washing twice. Use a lingerie bag. Dry on hottest setting. Dry with a large bath towel.
- Press to avoid stretching. Use starch.
- Cut with scissors or a large blade (2") rotary cutter
- Needle: new 80/12 or 90/14
- Increase stitch length
- Use walking foot
- Clean machine and bobbin area afterwards, because flannel makes lint

Velvet or velveteen

This is often a dry-clean-only fabric. Try pre-washing a small piece. First, straight stitch or zig-zag along the edges to stabilize. Treat it the way you will treat the quilt. Cotton velvet will be the easiest to work.

- Cut with wrong side up, through one thickness at a time
- Cut with nap going in the same direction unless you are going for shine differences
- Use lots of pins, then hand baste away from the seam allowance
- Use a sharp needle

- Increase stitch length
- Decrease presser foot pressure
- Decrease needle tension
- Try a walking foot if the velvet still slips
- DO NOT IRON! Place velvet nap-side-down on a towel and steam from above, keeping iron ¼" above the fabric.
- Use a wider seam allowance

Wool

<https://suzyquilts.com/quilty-adventure-part-iii-sew-wool/>

- High-quality thread (poly, cotton, or silk)
- Strong needle, 90/14 or 100/16
- Pinking shears or pinking rotary to reduce bulk in seams
- Wool press cloth
- Pre-shrink: warm water, wool cycle, use a wool detergent
- Cutting is easy
- Walking foot
- Longer stitch length (2.5-3mm)
- Take your time
- Press seams open

Denim

<https://suzyquilts.com/quilty-adventure-part-sew-denim/>

- Prewash alone (color run-off is common)
- Extra sharp scissors or rotary blade
- Heavy duty denim needles 80/20
- Heavy duty thread like upholstery thread
- Increase stitch length and check tension
- Iron seams flat OR be sure they go opposite directions when joining
- Go slowly, holding denim firmly while feeding through
- Keep presser foot high or use a walking foot

Linen or linen metallic

<https://suzyquilts.com/quilty-adventure-part-vi-sew-linen/>

Linen is made from the flax plant. Linen shrinks, bleeds, and unravels.

- Easily cut with a rotary
- Texture makes it harder than average to mark
- Use typical quilting thread
- Universal needle okay
- Prewash to preshrink; dry as you will the finished quilt. Warm temps okay.
- Don't iron too much unless you want it shiny. Use a press cloth on the right side.
- Shorten the stitch length to prevent puckering (test on scraps)
- Use a generous seam allowance because it unravels. A generous ¼" should be the minimum.

- Consider using linen for a textured binding

Silk

http://lizzyhouse.typepad.com/cherry_house_quilts/2010/12/quilting-with-silk.html

<https://www.thaisilks.com/images/sales/WashSilk.pdf>

- Check Silk Road Fabrics for washing and preshrinking tips
- Tends to unravel so use ½" seam allowances
- Sharp rotary blade to avoid fraying; pinking blade is great
- For patchwork, stabilize first with fusible interfacing, as lightweight as possible, or zigzag the seam allowances after sewing the seams
- Lengthen stitch length slightly
- Iron temp at silk setting
- Sharp #60 needle
- Pay attention to direction (warp and weft) when cutting
- Silk is a protein fiber. Wash it like hair (lukewarm water, pure soap, no detergents, air dry)
- Strong colors are not colorfast, so dry clean those

Corduroy

<http://www.sewmamasew.com/2014/01/quilting-with-different-fabrics-quiltessential-giveaway/>

<http://www.minneapolismqg.com/2012/09/quilting-with-corduroy.html>

- Small wale adds less bulk
- Tends to creep when sewing, so use pins and a walking foot
- Think about nap when piecing (directional fabric)
- Prewash to control shrinkage
- Use a rotary and carefully cut between the wales for fine results
- Reduce presser foot pressure
- Heavily pin or baste seams before sewing
- Keep fabric taught front to back as it feeds through machine
- Try a walking foot
- Use a minimum ½" seam allowance
- Consider reducing stitch length slightly to control unraveling
- Finger press seams open, then press with right side down on a fluffy towel
- Use lots of steam and only the tip of the iron
- See above reference from Minneapolis MQG for several possible patchwork techniques

Tarps (plastics)

<https://backpackinglight.com/forums/topic/90093/>

<http://www.rayjardine.com/ray-way/About/Sewing-Tips/index.htm>

- Gutermann thread, sew all polyester
- 8 to 9 stitches per inch (3mm)
- 90/14 or 80/12 needle

Canvas

<https://suzyquilts.com/a-quilty-adventure-part-viii-how-to-sew-with-canvas/>

- Usually made from cotton or linen, but once made with hemp
- Denim is a twill weave, but canvas is a plain weave
- Strong, durable, sometimes treated to be waterproof
- Thread: strong, 40wt cotton. For outdoor use, choose water-resistant bonded poly thread. Check to see how much your machine can handle; try using in top, bobbin, and both and choose what works best.
- Strong 90/14 universal or 100/16 jeans needle
- Sharp rotary cutter blade
- Prewash to preshrink
- Lengthen stitch to between 3 and 4 mm.
- Get seams as flat as possible with a tailor's clapper
- Hold firmly and sew slowly
- Try wonder clips instead of pins
- Get presser foot high to handle the thick layers (reduce foot pressure)
- Roll, don't fold, to store

Jersey Knit

<https://suzyquilts.com/quilty-adventure-part-iv-sew-jersey/>

- Looped, not woven
- Can be sewn with twin needles (straight stitch rows on top, zigzag below)
- Can be sewn with ballpoint needles (rounded tips slip between loops)
- Use a walking foot
- Can use interfacing (Pellon Shape-Flex) and a regular needle
- Easy to sew with cover stitch machine or serger
- Use a stretch stitch (lightning bolt)

Double Gauze

<https://suzyquilts.com/quilty-adventure-part-ii-sew-double-gauze/>

- Prewash, low heat, mild detergent
- Dry on low heat 5-10 minutes, then air dry flat
- Starch, then press, because it stretches and warps
- Standard needle, size 80, super sharp
- Increase stitch length
- Be careful because double gauze looks terrible after seam ripping
- Serge edges before binding if possible
- Excellent for embroidery