

QUILT CARE

With quilting increasing in popularity, questions arise as to how to handle those quilts in use and care. Here are some tips on hanging, cleaning, and storing quilts.

HANGING A QUILT

Before hanging, sew a lining to the back side of the quilt. The lining will protect the quilt from dust and add support. Unbleached muslin that's been washed several times makes a good lining.

Don't hang the quilt in sunlight. Even indirect sunlight over time will fade a quilt.

Don't hang the quilt where extreme temperature changes will occur, such as near a duct or window.

Distribute the quilt's weight evenly. This helps prevent sagging and tearing. If possible, occasionally hang the quilt upside down.

Take the quilt down for an occasional rest. Old quilts should not hang for long periods because they may tear or stretch.

WAYS TO HANG A QUILT

HOOK AND LOOP METHOD

Cut a one-quarter-inch wide lattice strip so it's long enough to stretch completely across the top of the quilt. Finish the lattice strip with a plastic wood finish.

Cut a strip of hook and loop tape such as Velcro, the same length as the lattice strip.

Peel the hook and loop tape and hand stitch the soft, looped piece of tape to the quilt lining or to the back side of an unlined quilt.

Staple and glue the other half of the tape (the toothed side) to the lattice strip.

Attach the lattice strip to the wall in several places.

Hang the quilt by pressing the two pieces of hook and loop tape together.

Hook and loop tape along the bottom of the quilt will allow you to hang the quilt upside down occasionally.

CASING METHOD

Obtain a dowel that's about 4 inches longer than the top of the quilt. Use an acrylic dowel or finish a wood dowel with plastic wood finish.

Stitch a fabric casing across the top back side of the quilt. This casing can be made separately or as part of a muslin lining for the quilt.

Slip the dowel into the casing.

Hang the dowel on drapery brackets mounted on the wall.

A second casing along the quilt bottom will allow the quilt to be hung upside down occasionally.

AIRING QUILTS

Freshen a musty quilt outside. Either spread it on clean grass or drape it over two clotheslines. White quilts may face the sun, but turn dark colors away from the sun.

To get rid of persistent odors, store the quilt with a bag of cedar shavings or activated charcoal wrapped in tissue. (Some barbecue briquettes contain activated charcoal. Check the label.)

Another way to remove odors is to put the quilt in a closet with an air purifier.

CLEANING QUILTS

You can vacuum dust from a quilt, but take these precautions. Put a section of fiberglass screen over the quilt and vacuum through the screen. Also, turn the vacuum on low suction or use a small, portable vacuum, such as a car vacuum.

Don't wash or dry-clean an old quilt unless you're absolutely sure of the fiber content of the quilt, lining, and batting.

Cotton quilts can be washed in cool or lukewarm water with a low sudsing detergent. Before washing, test for colorfastness. Mix some of the cleaning solution and dab it on the quilt with a clean, white cloth.

Hand soaking quilts in a bathtub is easier on the quilt stitches than machine washing. Never machine wash a comforter. The wet comforter will get too heavy and stitches may tear.

Some quilted clothing and everyday quilts may be machine-washed. Wash on low agitation and don't use the washer spin cycle. Smaller items can be dried in the dryer on the "low" or "delicate" setting. Dry larger items on a sling made out of a sheet on the clothesline.

To remove dark spots in quilts and antique linens try Vintage Textile soak, made by Star Spangled Sampler 1-888-451-1414 starspangledsamplers@yahoo.com.

STORING QUILTS

Fold the quilt with the right side, or top side, in to prevent strain on the stitches.

Wrap the folded quilt in white, acid-free tissue or a washed, unbleached cotton sheet. Refold occasionally to avoid permanent creases. You also can prevent creases by putting clean white tissue inside the folds.

Don't store a quilt in a plastic bag or cardboard box. A quilt needs to breathe and plastic blocks the flow of air and moisture. Cardboard boxes contain acids that can damage the quilt.

Store the quilt where there is little humidity and little change in temperatures. Avoid storing quilts in attics and basements.

Use mothballs only for a few weeks at a time---if at all. Never let mothballs contact the quilt. Hang a sack of mothballs above the quilt. The mothball fumes will drop because they are heavier than air.

REF: "About Quilts: Tips on Hanging, Cleaning, and Storing Quilts", ISP-34e JaneAnn Stout, art and design specialist, Iowa State University, March 1985.

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