

## ❖ 5: MATCHING FABRICS AND COLOURS

Today's quilters are lucky when it comes to the choices of fabric available. The range of prints and solids is vast – there really is something for everyone. Mixing and matching these fabrics into a quilt top is part of the fun. After all – what quilter doesn't like playing with fabric?



# MATCHING SOLID COLOURS AND PRINTS

Choosing beautiful fabrics for a quilt project is one of the most satisfying parts of the process. For some, creating a visually balanced and interesting assortment of prints and solids is second nature. For others, though, it's downright terrifying. Whichever camp you belong in, if you keep a few simple things in mind, matching solids and prints will be fun and easy.

If you are working with a large-scale print, it's likely that it will contain many colours. Take a look at the fabric's selvedge. Those little numbered dots of colour represent all the colours present in the print. Probably the simplest way to find a solid colour that will match a printed fabric is to compare the solids with the dye marker dots. The colours do not need to be a perfect match, but they should blend and look pleasing to your eye. Some small-scale prints read as solids. These basic geometric, floral, and tone-on-tone prints will look like solid-coloured fabric from a few steps away and can be used accordingly in your quilt.

Simple prints that contain only two or three colours will work well with any solid that will highlight the print. You can choose a lighter or darker value of one of the colours to complement the print. Don't forget about contrasting colours, too. Sometimes the best match is a colour that isn't in the print, but one that contrasts with it. Try matching warm and cool colours for interesting combinations, or keep everything in the same temperature family – warm with warm and cool with cool – for a subtle effect.

Finally, remember the neutrals. Whites, off-whites, greys and browns come in many different shades. There's black, too. With the number of choices available, you should be able to find one or more neutrals that will work well with your prints and help to create a visually stimulating quilt.



Linen and Liberty baby quilt by Siobhan Rogers.

## ASSESSING MATCHES

Place fabrics next to each other and take a few steps back. Sometimes putting a little distance between your eyes and the fabrics will help you determine whether they match or not.

## COMBINING DIFFERENT PRINTS

A visually interesting quilt begins with a good selection of fabrics. Although it can be overwhelming to pull together a cohesive group of prints to use in your project, it is easily achieved if you keep a few things in mind.



### LEARN FROM THE PROS

Look at a full line of designer quilting cottons. These fabrics are designed to work with one another and will cover a range of sizes and styles of prints in the same colour family. When combining fabrics for your quilt, you'll want to do the same thing: choose fabrics in a mix of patterns and colours with varying scales that all work well together.



### START WITH A FOCUS FABRIC

When selecting prints, it is easiest to begin with a focus fabric. The focus fabric will give you a colour palette to work with and its style will help determine what other prints to pair with it.



## DEFINE THE PALETTE

Select colours from the focus print and use these as a guideline for picking out other fabrics. Having a defined palette will help you keep the right balance between the colours in the quilt. Prints that share two of the colours in your quilt's palette will help carry the colour scheme across your project.

## VARY THE PRINT STYLES

A good mix of pattern styles is what you are looking for. If the focus print is a large-scale, floral design, choosing some dots, checks, smaller florals and stripes to accompany it will add movement and interest to your quilt.

## INCLUDE DIFFERENT SCALES

It's also important to vary the scale of the prints. Including various large-, medium- and small-scale patterns among the fabrics you choose will give the quilt more depth.

**Opposite left:** Lark patchwork by Meredith Daniel.

**Opposite right:** Pink linen quilt by Siobhan Rogers, long-arm quilted by Kim Bradley.

**Above left:** Warm Values quilt by Andi Herman.

**Above right:** Quilt for Maybelle by Andi Herman.



## REPEAT MOTIFS

Look for some prints that are similar in style, but different in scale. The repetition of motifs in the same colour palette, but at different scales, helps create continuity and cohesion among your fabric choices.

## ADD SOLIDS

Throwing a solid or two into your fabric mix will give your eyes a place to rest. You can also include tone-on-tone prints or other patterns that read as solids. These can be a neutral that will complement your other fabrics, such as white or grey, or a colour straight from the quilt's palette.

## TRUST YOURSELF

It's easy to be overwhelmed when faced with multiple fabric choices. Sometimes it's best to walk away and come back to look at the fabrics with fresh eyes. Trust your intuition – you know what you like.

## ✦ USING DIFFERENT TEXTURES

The easiest way to bring texture into a quilt is to use a variety of fabrics. With the myriad textiles available to contemporary quilters, it is not uncommon to combine different types of fabrics in a single quilt project. Doing this can create visual and tactile interest.



You can use different substrates of the same fibre to create texture in your project. For example, if you combine quilting cotton with silky smooth voile it will give parts of the quilt a 'toothier' feel than the rest. Using corduroy or cotton velveteen adds a soft, plush feeling that you cannot get from regular woven cotton. Another way to add texture to a quilt is to use fabrics made from different fibres. For example, pairing wool with linen would make for a cosy, soft quilt. Certainly, the options are as endless as the fabrics.



Using various fabrics as design elements is another way to incorporate texture into a quilt. Sprinkle the various textiles throughout the entire quilt or use them in a certain part of the design, such as in the sashing or borders. Make the quilt top from one kind of fabric, but the back from another. By carefully choosing how and where to use the different fabrics, you will have a unique, touchable quilt.