

How to tie a HeartStrings Quilt

At the Nebraska sew-in on May 2nd Jay showed me how to tie a quilt as he was taught by his grandmother. As with all quilting, we know there is more than one way to do things but I hope these photos and links at the end will help YOU on your way to tying a HeartStrings quilt of your own!

First, Jay trimmed an old cotton blanket to size for us to use as a batting for our quilt.



We started in the center of the quilt (no basting!), taped the backing down to the table and layered the blanket and quilt on top.



Here you can see all 3 layers are in place and ready to be tied.

(Don't worry about that blanket edge — when we pulled that part of the quilt up on the table and smoothed the layers it was outside of our *quilt sandwich*.)



For this quilt, we used Perle Cotton in size 3. You may also use perle cotton size 5, crochet thread size 10, or wool yarn (it will felt with washing and the ties won't come undone). Make sure that whatever fiber you use for tying WON'T come undone...no slippery ones!



My favorite is Crochet Thread in size 10 and it comes in lots of fun colors.

Jay starts with a doubled piece of perle cotton about 2 yards total (stretch the thread out both arms length twice) and uses a sharp Yarn Darner needle. Needle size doesn't really matter — just make sure your thread you've chosen will go through the eye and that the needle is sharp so it passes through all your layers without too much effort.

Curved needles would work well too but remember — if your surface can be damaged by the needle, protect it with something (a rotary cutting mat would work).



We started in the center of a block and took a *bite* or stitch through through all 3 layers. I noticed that Jay's stitches were about a 1/4 of an inch in case you're wondering how big a stitch to make.



Jay *tied* (made a knot) in that first stitch as taught by his grandmother .

To make the tie — you'll pass the thread once right over left and pull down, then right over left and pull down, and a third time that goes left over right and pull tight.

I've been researching and experimenting with knots as I tie more quilts and my current favorite is a surgeon's knot which is similar to the square knot above only it starts with a double twist. [Here's an example \(page down for photo\)](#) and I do add that 3rd throw they mention.

Without cutting the thread, Jay moved over about 4.5 inches and took another stitch through all layers and continued on down the line until he was out of thread.



Cut midway between the stitches and tie off all sections in that same knot described above — trim the tails to about 1 inch after tying them off.



Can you see our progress here? We're placing our ties about a fist width apart which on a HeartStrings quilt means the center of the block and all 4 corners ...make sure if you're using batting that you follow the manufacturer's recommendations for how close the ties need to be.

Another thing to note is that along the edges of the quilt where the binding would be sewn, we did NOT place ties.

When all the ties were placed on the center section of the quilt, we moved on to the sides – readjusting the layers and taping down the backing to keep it smooth.



In this photo you can see we've done the center, and the side showing at the front of the table....just that last side to go!



Once your quilt is completely tied, it's time to bind it. You can always use a regular binding but we decided to bring the backing around to the front and stitch it down. Jay led me through the steps.

First with scissors, we trimmed our blanket even with the edge of the top.



Then we used a ruler and a pen to mark a cutting line 1.5 inches beyond the edge of the quilt on the backing and trimmed the backing with scissors on that line.



Jay folded the edge in half, and then turned it up over the top and pinned in place.



We squared off the edges rather than mitering them.



For this quilt, we used a straight stitch just inside the folded edge but a decorative stitch works even better if your machine has one. A simple wavy line or zig zag with matching thread is invisible but holds the binding well.

I'll admit I had a hard time keeping that straight stitch even so next time, I'll try one of the above options.

