

How to Get the Most from Your Quilting Class Experience

A Student Guide

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You're signed up for your first (or hundredth) quilting class. You are excited to learn some new techniques; to socialize with other quilting enthusiasts; to spend time with a new or former teacher. How can you maximize your learning and productivity and minimize problems and delays? How can you get the most from your quilting class experience? This guide will show you how!

I. Before Class: Preparation, Preparation, Preparation!

A. Read the Supply List

1. Read the supply list **carefully**. It should list both materials **and** equipment needed for a successful class experience. Read it in advance, not the night before class!
2. If you have questions about anything on the supply list, contact the teacher for clarification well before the class.

B. Gather Materials (fabric, thread, interfacing, ribbon, zippers, beads, template plastic, etc.)

1. Gather the materials **in the sizes and quantities listed**. If fat quarters are listed and you bring scraps, understand your progress will be slower as you fussy-cut pieces from odd-shaped scraps.
2. Note what, if anything, the teacher will provide or have available for purchase.

C. Organize Equipment (sewing machines, rulers, mat, cutter, scissors, pins, etc., and **odd things**)

1. Mark your name permanently on all pieces of equipment to avoid loss or mix-ups in class!
2. Sewing machine with **new needle installed** and all needed parts with you. **(Please read information about sewing machines on page 3.)**
3. Rulers and cutting mat, in the sizes specified if possible.
4. Rotary cutter with **new sharp blade** installed. **(Please read information about rotary cutters on page 3.)**
5. General sewing supplies – scissors, pins, needles, bobbins, seam ripper, etc.
6. Odd things – design wall, beading or curved needles, special tools like chopsticks. Bring what is listed. Ask at your local shop or contact the teacher if you can't find or don't understand what the item is.

D. Do the Homework – if recommended, do what you can at home to maximize productivity in class.

II. During Class: Positive Attitude, Ask Questions, Don't Teach, Class Etiquette

A. Positive Attitude – Towards Yourself and Others

1. Come to class believing that you will enjoy it, learn new things, and be happy at the end of the day. Be gentle with yourself. It's okay if you are a slow sewer, if you have an older machine, if – whatever you are worried about with regards to the class. Try to let it go and enjoy the day.
2. Support your fellow students – you have much in common with them! Encourage, compliment, and treat them in a “golden rule” manner.

B. Ask Questions

1. You are taking the class to learn. Ask questions if you do not understand something. Continue asking until you do understand.
2. No question is stupid. If you don't understand, then someone else who is shyer may not either. Be brave and ask the question – others will be grateful, and so will the teacher!

C. Don't Teach

1. Teaching the other students is the teacher's job, not yours. Enjoy the class – you are not responsible for another's learning in it.
2. It is always best to refer questions to the teacher, who may have good reasons for doing things in a specific way. (Many teachers welcome private discussions about techniques during breaks or after class.)

D. Class Etiquette: Rules for Communal Sewing During Set-Up, Class Time, and Break Down

1. **Be on time.** Classes **start** at the stated time. Set-up is done (generally) half an hour before class. If you know you are going to be late, contact the teacher so class is not delayed waiting for you.
2. **Wait patiently.** While the teacher is setting up for class, save questions which require more than yes or no answers until their set-up is complete.
3. **Respect boundaries.** Stay within the bounds of your assigned space. If sharing a table, you are entitled to half, both above and below.
4. **Store stuff safely.** Make sure all fabric bins, machine cases, purses, bags, etc., are both within your assigned space **and** out of pathways so they do not pose tripping hazards.
5. **Listen.** When the teacher speaks to the class, stop sewing, winding bobbins, and conversing with your neighbors. Some quilters have hearing issues exacerbated by background noise.
6. **Share the teacher.** Whether there are many students in class or just a few, it is important that all students get teacher time. In large classes, that means long conversations with the teacher are not possible.

7. **Share the equipment.** Irons in particular are bottlenecks. If you have a large pressing job, let someone in to press a small seam occasionally. (Golden rule!)
8. **Leave quietly** if you must leave early. Tell the teacher, and pack and go as quietly as possible.
9. **Pack stuff safely.** During break-down, move carefully and avoid creating tripping hazards.
10. **Leave on time.** Classes end on time, unless otherwise announced. The teacher may be able to stay and chat awhile, or may need to pack and go quickly. Be sensitive to the situation at hand.

Sewing Machines in Quilt Classes – Please Read!

Note: The information below applies to a personal sewing machine that a student brings to class, not to a sewing machine supplied by a quilt show or shop.

The largest cause of reduced productivity for students in a quilt class is a sewing machine in poor working order or one missing parts needed in class. When this happens, a student is frustrated, nearby students are affected, and the class as a whole is not served well as the teacher is drawn into trying to solve the issue with the machine. To avoid this problem, read the following statements carefully and take appropriate action as needed for any machine you bring to a quilt class.

1. If you **do not** sew with this machine regularly, set it up and sew something to make sure everything works properly. If something doesn't work or parts are missing or you can't find parts (power cord, foot pedal, presser feet, bobbins), **do not bring this machine to class.**
2. If you **do** sew with this machine regularly **and have not** sewed anything in the last week, sew something to make sure everything works properly **before bringing it to class.**
3. If you **do** sew with this machine regularly **and** have sewed anything in the last week **and** something **didn't** work, **get it fixed before you bring it to class, or do not bring it.**
4. If you **do** sew with this machine regularly **and** have sewed anything in the last week **and** everything worked properly, **bring it to class with a new needle installed.**

Don't forget the foot pedal, power cord, bobbins and all attachments. An extra needle is a good idea too.

Rotary Cutters in Quilt Classes - Please Read!

One of the best timesaving tools in quilt classes is the rotary cutter, when in good order and used properly. Used carelessly, it is the most likely to send a student to the emergency room. Perform a rotary cutter “tune-up” and blade replacement prior to bringing yours to class.

Rotary Cutter Tune-Up and Blade Replacement

1. First, watch (only watch) the following youtube demonstration of how to change the blade on a rotary cutter.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hz0Q2GVSM48>

Your rotary cutter may be different than the one shown, but the general directions are similar for most cutters. The important thing is to keep all the parts in order as you remove and replace them.

2. Several steps of a “tune-up” were left out of this very good video. The first: After disassembling the rotary cutter, wipe off both sides of the plastic circular area where the blade rests. There is often a great deal of oily lint there that was previously trapped beneath the blade.
3. The second step: Place the used blade in the plastic case the new blade came in, or, if not available, find a sturdy piece of thin cardboard and fold it around all the sharp edges of the used blade and tape in place. Do not discard a used blade in the trash without providing protection from the sharp edges.
4. The third step: Make sure you install only **one** new blade, not two! This is a problem specific to those who buy blades in multiples. Multiple blades are oiled and packed together, and they stick to each other. Separating two oiled blades is tricky, and you should be exceedingly careful when doing so. A rotary cutter with two blades installed makes a fuzzy, slightly ragged cut (because it is cutting twice very close together). It is very annoying to use.
5. **For lefties only: If you cut left-handed** and you have a bent-handle cutter like the one shown in the video, you need to install the blade on the opposite side from that shown, with all other parts mirror-imaged as well. If your cutter has a straight handle, this does not apply, as straight-handled cutters can be used left or right-handed.