

Educational Tidbit for May 2022

A Method for Starching Pre-Cut Fabrics

There is a song that tells us April showers bring May flowers. In my neighborhood in Laguna Woods Village, May marks the time when the two magnolia trees in the front yard fill with huge white magnolia blossoms. Magnolias are so lovely when they bloom, and I enjoy them so very much. Currently, the trees are covered in buds, and they should bloom any day now. However, as I write this, my thoughts move directly to the celebration of Cinco de Mayo with all the great food and beverages it offers. Happy May to you, however you “may” celebrate. Enchiladas and margaritas anyone?

During the last couple of years, I have been watching various YouTube videos on quilting topics. I really love learning new techniques. Kimberly Jolly from the Fat Quarter Shop introduced me to the idea of starching precuts. At first, I poo-pooed the idea because in my mind it meant spraying on starch and pressing dry each individual precut; a hot and boring exercise with the potential of messing up my iron and scorching the fabric. In Kimberly’s video on starching, she shows that you starch each piece and then hang each piece dry, without spending time pressing each piece dry. Once the fabric is dry, you can press it, cut it, and use it in your quilt. I have had great success with this process.

By the way, and to provide equal billing, just like Jordan Fabrics, I really love the Fat Quarter Shop. But I must caution you, visiting their website (fatquartershop.com) and watching their YouTube videos, can be just as addictive as Jordan Fabrics.

You may be asking why should we even bother starching fabric, much less starching precuts? Rather than coming up with a list of good reasons, I found this simple explanation online from Oxford and Wells at oxfordwell.com:

“Starching is an easy way to tame your fabric when you are quilting. It keeps your fabric from wobbling and stretching which allows patches and blocks to keep their shape.”

Kimberly Jolly is based in Texas and seems to have a nice big house with a great sewing studio, and in her video, she mentions “my starching room”. I live in a condo, a Laguna Woods Village Manor. All rooms are used for multiple purposes, I do not have a space that I can set aside just for starching. Using Kimberly Jolly’s video as my guide, I have come up with a process to get my starching done which allows my pieces to dry in my much smaller space. This tidbit shares my process with you.



Kimberly Jolly recommends the use of non-flaking premium starch.

I chose this premium, non-flaking, smooth finish Niagara. I am extremely satisfied with the results.



One thing I discovered early on about spray starch is that it can make a huge mess. The overspray goes on the floor, coats other items in the surrounding area, and saturates the ironing board with wet sticky starch.

I solved these issues by using some waterproof, washable bed pads purchased from Amazon. You can spread them under the ironing board and on top of the ironing board. These pads work very well keeping the ironing board and the floor dry. As I spray, I can lift the edge of the pad to create a barrier to the spray going off in all directions.

After you finish starching, the pads are easily to washed and dried.



Where and how to hang wet starched pieces to dry was another challenge.

I solved the problem by purchasing a clothes drying rack from Amazon.

The rack folds up flat and can be stored by my dresser, against the wall; out of the way.



The drying rack has lots of room to hang wet items.

It begins flat, opens out to an A-frame, and then opens out into 2 levels.

I place 2 of the waterproof pads under the rack to catch starch drips.

Wet starched items hung to dry in the morning are dry by midafternoon.



This picture shows 4 strips laid out and starched on the ironing board.

By laying the strips close to one another, the overspray is used to help saturate the whole group.

You can also stack strips atop one another.



This picture shows 2 ½-inch starched strips and 1 ½-inch starched strips hanging to dry.



Here are fat quarters starched and hanging to dry with some starched 2 1/2-inch strips.

I use clips to fasten the fat quarters to the rack, hanging them from the selvage side of the fabric.

No need for clips for the strips, I simply lay them across the bars on the drying rack and let the tails hang down.



For the smaller bars on the drying rack, I use metal clips.

For the larger bars, I use plastic chip clips.



I store the clips in a lined zippered bag that I made for this purpose.

If you are interested in making this bag for yourself, you can obtain the pattern entitled "Easy Zippered Boxed Pouch" on the Crazy Quilters website.



This picture shows the kaleidoscope of 12 butterflies I made for this quilt top. The pattern, with my modifications, is an MSQC pattern called "Strip Butterflies".

The blocks will be set together with white sashing and navy cornerstones.

The inner border for the quilt top will feature all the strips used in the blocks, cut into 2 1/2-inch squares, and sewn together in a piano style border. The top will be finished off with a strip of white fabric and a wider outer border of turquoise.

These crisp starched strips were so pleasant to work with and I have really enjoyed sewing this quilt top.

I hope you have a great May and a wonderful summer. I am going to take a break and plan to be back with a new tidbit in September. May God bless you and your family.