

# TOP 10 HABITS OF OUTSTANDING QUILTERS

BY MARIA PEAGLER

Ever wonder about those quilters who consistently produce amazing work? Quilts that are original, colorful, creative, and well executed? I've met lots of quilters over the years and these are the habits of outstanding quilters.

**1 Master the basics.** Learn to cut accurately, piece consistently, baste extensively, and quilt beautifully. No amount of creativity can cover up a poor job. If you don't know how to do any of these things, take a class and practice.

**2 Take care of your body.** Quilting is tough on the body. Get tested for new eye-glasses every one to two years. Don't do too much quilting in one session; switch between hand and machine quilting. Be careful with that rotary cutter. Use tools that make the entire process easier.

**3 Take care of your machine.** Your machine is an investment. Learn how to use it properly. Read the manual and take the classes your dealer offers. Get your machine serviced annually—it's penny-wise and pound-foolish to put it off.

**4 Learn and delight in your style.** Take the time to understand what you truly love in a quilt. You can learn more about your style from looking at quilts in magazines and books than you can by looking at your own. What do the quilts you like have in common? Do you own multiple books by the same author? What parts of the process do you love?

Hate? Can you do those parts differently?

**5 Learn something new.** Take a class, even outside the quilting world. My color choices improved phenomenally after taking watercolor classes. You'll bring an entirely new perspective to your quilting after seeing the process through a different medium.

**6 Keep improving.** Challenge your quilting repertoire by improving upon what you already know. Take an advanced class. You'll challenge your brain and your body, and you'll develop a new set of skills that will enable you to create differently.


**7 Go on a quilting adventure.** Travel to a quilting conference, class, or show. Going somewhere new forces you to focus more keenly. I once attended the International Quilt Festival in Houston, Texas, where I took classes not available to me at home. The conference was too large for me, and my senses were on overload by the end of the week, so I learned that smaller conferences are better for me and have traveled to those ever since.

**8 Don't hand over your creativity.** Your work should not be a cookie-cutter

version of someone else's. Trust your instincts. Make your own creative decisions and make your own mistakes. You'll better appreciate your successes, learn more from your failures, and build your creative muscles in the process. Make every decision a creative one. Ask yourself, "Is this the way I really want to do it?"

**9 Get involved in a guild or bee.** Quilters are generous, funny, creative people. Make connections with them and you'll enjoy not only their quilts, but their support and ideas as well.

**10 Kick the perfectionist habit.** Aim for fun. Gwen Marston once said, "You don't have to suffer to make a beautiful quilt." If it's not fun, I don't do it—life is too short not to enjoy my hobbies. Learn how to make the quilts you love in a way you enjoy.

These habits will enable you to become a better quilter—even an outstanding one. Practice them slowly until you do them automatically. What will be your first habit to try? 

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