
Sew a Puff Quilt with Faith Hale

Chapter 1 - Sew a Puff Quilt

Overview

- There are an infinite number of quilting patterns in the universe, but I challenge you to find one that is more snuggly, more cuddly than a puff quilt, also known as a biscuit quilt. This is a vintage inspired quilt pattern that is at least 60 years old, and it is formed unusually by adding stuffing to the back of three dimensional puffs. (light upbeat music) I'm Faith Hale. I'm a professional crafter and a quilt enthusiast. There are several ways to put this quilt together and I've tried them all. I'm bringing you my favorite version that is the simplest to perform and has the loveliest results. I'll show you how to construct, assemble, and stuff your puffs. Then we'll cover three different versions of quilting and how to finish it off using a self-binding method. This is the most irresistible quilt you will ever make. Sometimes when you're finished with a big quilting project, you need it out of your sight for a minute, but this will not leave your side because you'll be squeezing it too hard.

Materials

- For this project, you'll need your standard quilting setup. You'll need a sewing machine loaded with a neutral color polyester thread. I would recommend highly using a quilting foot that has both 1/8 of an inch and 1/4 of an inch marking. I find this really helpful. A standard foot works just fine too. You'll need 16 4 1/2-inch squares, 16 four-inch squares. For the quilting, we'll be using a tapestry needle and some tapestry wool, or this is a sock-weight yarn. I really liked this color. Quilting clips will help us with the binding. You'll need a rotary cutter and some sharp scissors. I'm using a clear ruler to trim my edges, but whatever you usually do to trim your edges will work just fine. For our 14-inch square piece, we will need 3.5 ounces of Poly-fil. You can also use fiberfill, but I prefer Poly-fil 'cause it's a little bit fluffier and lighter. We'll need a 16-inch square of lightweight batting and an 18-inch square of backing fabric. I'm using this quilting cotton. Curved quilting pins will be helpful for basting. If you have a zipper foot, it's really helpful for sewing on the binding. If you don't, that's totally fine. We can work without it.

Sew the puffs

- This style of quilt has been around for at least 60 years, so there's a bunch of different ways to put them together. I have tried most of them, and here is the one I have found easiest. We're going to begin by cutting a slit in our base fabric. This can be no larger than an inch and a half. Once you begin stuffing your puffs, you'll see exactly what size works best, but you can't make your slit any smaller. So I would suggest starting small and you can always make it a little bit larger. So start with about an inch and a half, and I like to make it close to the edge within an inch of the edge and make a slit that's about an inch and a half. It'll need to fit at least a finger to stuff in the stuffing. You can also use your rotary cutter to just stab down and make all these slits. But I like to pre-cut for all 16 pieces of my backing fabric. And then we will make our first puff. I have seen people pin their puffs. I prefer not to, and we'll line up our base fabric with our top fabric. You want the edges matching as closely as possible. But if you have to air on a side of one fabric being slightly closer to the edge, make it be your base fabric. If your top fabric goes over the edge, we'll trim that off later. We'll line up one corner and we're sewing this with 1/8 of an inch seam. You'll sew about five stitches, and then we'll make a pleat. So we bring the bottom of the fabric up to the corner, push it into a pleat,

and we'll sew to the end. (machine whirrs) When we have gotten 1/8 of an inch to the end, leave your needle down, pivot, and we're going to repeat that on all four sides. I'm folding my pleat down, but that's just what's comfortable for me. (machine whirrs) And if it feels like your needle is landing somewhere that isn't exactly 1/8 of an inch, like you turn it and there's a bit of an edge off there, you can shorten your stitch length to two and that might give you a better chance of getting close enough to the edge without going over it. (machine whirrs) (machine continues to whirl) And sew all the way to the end, trim off your threads, and we'll take a look at the back to see if we have any overhanging edges. This might not look like a lot, but it might make a difference in the final piece. So just take a look at each of your squares and trim off anything that hangs over. Don't trim your white piece, your base piece. We've sewn all the way around with 1/8 of an inch seam, we have our slit cut on the back so we can stuff it later, and our tails are trimmed. I'm going to make 15 more of these so that I can do my four by four square. You might be tempted to just make a whole bunch so that you could put them together as a quilt. I implore you to stick with our four by four block. You'll learn some things along the way that you wanna be sure that you include or don't include in a full-size quilt project. Four by four, 14 inches will work just fine for our purposes.

Assemble the quilt top

- Arrange your puffs how you'd like so that you have a nice even distribution of colors. We'll be sewing row by row, and we'll be using a quarter of an inch seam allowance. So our eighth of an inch seam allowance should be completely hidden. So, put your two blocks together. The pleats might nest and they might not. That's not really important. They'll kind of get hidden once we stuff them anyway, and you'll wanna make sure that you're lining up the edges as precisely as possible. And we wanna run the side of our fabric along the side of the presser foot. It's tempting to use this line as our guiding line, but it's not as precise as using the edge of the fabric. (sewing machine grinding) And then we'll repeat all the way across the row. (sewing machine grinding) (sewing machine clicking) (sewing machine grinding) (sewing machine clicking) And then when we have all of our rows sewn together, we'll assemble it exactly like we would a conventional quilt. So row to row. I'm not too concerned about nesting my seams. Again, this will be hidden once we've stuffed our puffs. You can use pins at this point. I generally don't, but we'll sew using our quarter inch seam all the way down until all the rows are assembled. (sewing machine grinding) (sewing machine grinding continues) (sewing machine grinding continues) (playful upbeat music) (playful upbeat music continues) So far, this is pretty standard patchwork stuff. The magic happens in the next step.

Stuff puffs and make a quilt sandwich

- I prefer to do my stuffing all at once. If you're making a big quilt, this is going to be a put on a movie kind of project. For this, we're going to start from the bottom and work our way up. And we're going to stuff them one at a time. You'll want a tangerine sized ball of stuffing and we'll just poke it in. So this is where you can see about the size of the slit mattering. Now the more you stuff it, the more difficult it will be to quilt. This is about enough, so it might look a little anemic. You might be tempted to stuff it more. But once you finally get to the quilting part, this will seem perfectly sufficient. This is again, why I urge you to make a smaller sample before working on your big quilt, because it's really tempting to overstuff your puffs and then it gets very difficult towards the end. We can do a little bit more than this. And also ergonomically, if you want to set it up so all your slits are going in the same direction, so you're repeating the same movement, you're welcome to do so. I don't really have the attention span, so I just let my slits fall randomly. You don't need to

concern yourself with pushing it into the corners. Really we just want this mound in the center. Another name for this quilt is the biscuit quilt. So think about little fluffy biscuits. I think it's more biscuity than ravioli. You also don't need to concern yourself with getting stuffing underneath the side portion. As long as it's concentrated in one clump in the middle, it'll be fine. And if your slit seems a little bit too small, just open it up a tiny bit. Oh, my gosh. It's irresistible. It's the most fun. (upbeat music) Once you're happy with your stuffing, we'll make our quilt sandwich. Lay your backing fabric face down on your table. As a reminder, it should be about two inches wider on each side. And then on top of that, you'll lay your batting. The batting should be about one inch larger all the way around. And smooth it out before laying your puffs right in the middle. And if you're making a larger quilt, you'll want to pin baste it every four blocks. So I'm gonna put one in the middle and one on each corner. Because this is so puffy, it's going to have a tendency to pull in. We can work with that. That's totally fine. Split the difference between pulling it all the way straight and letting it suck in as much as it wants to. (upbeat music) There are three different methods for quilting. We're going to stitch in the ditch, make some bar tacks with our machine, or hand stitch. I'm gonna show you all three.

Three methods of quilting

- I've made samples of each of the three methods we'll be using. You can see from the top, they look pretty similar. Here's our machine-quilted version, our machine bar tack version, and our hand sewed version. The real difference comes into how it looks on the back and how it feels when you're working it. The machine-quilted version looks the most different on the back. I don't really love how it gets bunched in here, and truth be told, I find this the most difficult to work. Your mileage may vary. You might have more stamina for it, but I found pushing this through the machine to be pretty arduous and definitely not something that I'd wanna do on a larger quilt. But again, you might be a stronger quilter than I. Here, we used sewn bar tacks with the machine. It was a little less stressful than pushing this through the machine, but it still took a bit of endurance. I had to roll it up and toss it over my shoulder if I was doing a larger quilt. But I like how it looks and it is a little bit simpler than this version. And finally, hand tying it. I am super pro hand tying it. I love how the little threads look on the back after it's been washed a bunch of times. They kind of felt up. I like that it's an opportunity to use a pop of color, but if you are not into the idea of hand tying or hand quilting, this might seem like the most arduous to you. This felt like a happy medium. This is my preference. This is definitely an option I've changed to my zipper foot because the prongs on my other foot might get caught in the pleats. Make sure you move your stitches over so that your needle isn't hitting your foot and we're just going to stitch in the ditch. (sewing machine whirring) (sewing machine whirring) You might find yourself having to squash down the stuffing. (sewing machine whirring) You just take your time. (sewing machine whirring) In terms of the front of the quilt, this is very forgiving. You can barely even see the line. And on the back, it's difficult to get it super straight, but once you wash it, as we saw with our sample, it kind of puffs in and hides it. To do a bar tack, we'll need a standard foot. If your machine has a bar tack preset, you can use that and just shorten the length of it. I'm going to use a zigzag and I'm going to make my stitches really narrow. I'm setting it at a two, and I'm setting the length at a one. It's as small as I can get. And I'm going to do it at every intersection for probably eight to 10 times. (sewing machine whirring) If you have done it 10, lift it up and move it forward. Make sure to get any pins out of the way. (sewing machine whirring) (sewing machine whirring) So you can see a lot less pushing, a lot less effort. Oh, this is almost invisible, and then you'll just snip very closely to each of your spots. And then make sure you snip all

the threads on the front. I found that these stitches can unravel, if you don't do them closely together enough, so be aware of that. And then finally, if we're hand tying it, this is my favorite. I like the color pop it provides. I like that I don't have to push a big quilt through my machine. Sometimes it can be a little hard to get it through the layers. You might want grips to help you, or even a pair of needle nose pliers. Do not use your teeth. I have chipped a tooth quilting. I'll usually use an arm's length of thread and make a double knot about an inch away from the end. And if you're doing a large quilt, I like to do it in rows to lay it out on a table and to move it down until I can't move it down any more. We're just doing a row here, but you'll feel from the bottom, go up in one of the corners and go back down a half an inch away. Maybe not even a half inch. A quarter of an inch would be fine too. And I'm just crossing over a seam. If you're struggling to pull the needle through a thimble, a gripper can be helpful. You're gonna cross over about a quarter of an inch, maybe even half an inch. You wanna try to not sew through all those layers of fabric. It'll just make it a lot harder to tug it through. And then keeping the thread attached, we're going to go all the way up. We're going to go until we have no more thread left, and then we will snip and tie. This should give us exactly the amount of thread we need. If you were quilting, hand tying something closer together, then this three and a half inches we have here, we would be pretty tight on thread, but this will give us just enough to make a knot. We're not even pulling it tightly. We're just keeping it pretty loose on the back. I'll make our final tie on the back. If it looks like there's a really big space between where you went in and came out, you're gonna wanna redo that. This is closer to an inch and it really needs to be a half an inch or less. This is perfect. This is perfect. We'll redo this one. We'll clip our thread in the middle. (scissors snipping) And make a double overhand knot. I would suggest making all your knots and then clipping them a little bit closer to the surface. I'm cutting these down to about an inch. (scissors snipping) So we have our machine-quilted line, our barely visible machine bar tacks, and our hand tied quilting. People have really strong opinions on how they think a puff quilt should be quilted. I think you should go with the method that feels the best for your body, and keep in mind that it will look different after it's been washed, so don't make up your mind just yet.

Bind the edges

- We have one final step before binding the edges, and that is sewing around the perimeter of our quilt. We're going to use our machine loaded with the zipper foot and use 1/8 of an inch seam allowance. I'm not using pins on this because the puffs are so three-dimensional. It's hard to get the pin to catch appropriately. So I'm just gonna press it down with my hands. And also, we're using this seam allowance that we already sewed with as our guide. Make sure your needle is over enough so that it won't hit the center bar of your zipper foot. For me, that's two. And we'll just sew all the way around. When you get to the center portion, just flatten it down. (machine whirring) This is, of course, kinda fiddly, so just take your time. Be patient with yourself. And if the fabric seems like it wants to pleat up at the intersections, that's fine. You can just make that pleat. (machine whirring) Continue all the way around. You might notice that your edge looks a little bit wobbly. That's totally fine. It's inevitable with this kind of quilt. Now we're going to trim our batting to 1/4 of an inch past our seam allowance. You're gonna wanna tuck this under really well so that you don't accidentally trim off your backing fabric. We're using that for our binding. If you need to pin this down to the back, that can be helpful. And I'm using my rotary cutter to get a really nice straight line. Oopsy. (cutter whooshing) And the edge is a little bit wavy, so just curve your ruler when you need to. We're gonna repeat that on all four sides. (light music) Now that we have trimmed all of our batting, we're going to trim our backing. It's going to be trimmed to an inch and away from our sewing line

or 3/4 of an inch away from our batting. (cutter whooshing) (light music) Because we're going to be folding over our binding once and then again and stitching it down with the machine, I'd like to reduce the bulk at the corners by cutting out a little. So you'll fold up your backing fabric at the point where it meets your batting and make a little crease with your finger. Then we're going to fold the edge to the edge of the batting and make a little crease with your fingernail. We're going to repeat that process on the other side. So folding it up at the corner, folding it to the edge. And then we're going to be cutting out (scissors thumping) I guess it's a V, this shape. (scissors clicking) And that'll just reduce some of the bulk when we do fold it over. At this point in time, we'll get our clips and clip around our first side. I like to start in the center, do one corner, and continue on before I cut the next center. So I'll do my fold again. Fold it, fold over, clip into place. Then I'll miter that corner, right? So here's where we cut out the bulk. I'll fold it over. Fold it to the batting. And roll it over. This takes a little bit of finagling, finessing. Ideally, we want our miter to run from the point to our edge here. So keep gently working it out and pressing it as you need to until you can achieve that effect. This is one of those parts of the quilting process that will happen at the first try when you least expect it, and other times, will take substantial amount of effort. Fold it in. Fold it in. Fold it up. There we go. (clips clinking) (clips clinking) (clips clinking) (clips clinking) When you begin sewing this, it'll be probably 1/8 of an inch from the edge. This part requires a lot of muscling and maneuvering the fabric out of the way. Take your time. Be patient with yourself and sew slowly around those miters. (clip clinking) (machine whirring) (clip clinking) (machine whirring) (clip clinking) (machine whirring) (clip clinking) (machine whirring) (clip clinking) (machine whirring) This is working exactly how I want it to, so I'm going to continue with the other three corners. You're welcome to bind it however you choose. If you wanna use bias tape or if you wanna hand stitch it down. I find this way works best for me, but that's one of the glories of it being a tiny, tiny quilt is you can experiment and see what works out for you. Now, of course, you can make this much, much bigger. The biggest I've attempted is a 49-inch quilt, and that worked great for me. It fits perfectly on my toddler's bed. And it is the most squishy, squashy, touchable quilt you will ever make. As stressful as it is to push these things through machines, I've never made a quilt that has been so touchable before. When people see it, they just need to rub their hands on it. It's so warm. It's so cozy. And it has a really big impact. This was made the same way using the ties and with the binding put on by machine. This is almost about three pounds, so it's pretty heavy, and I used the same amount of stuffing that I did for our smaller quilt. If you want to put this to use, you could add bias ties to it and make it a cushion. If you have a pet in your house and you put this within reach of (laughing) their bodies, they will lie down on it and make it theirs instantly. This is utterly irresistible to pets. I've also tried making a teeny size. These are two-inch squares instead of four-inch squares. This is for my daughter's doll bed. And you can see how just it's like bubble wrap. You just wanna push every (laughing) single one of them. You can also go slightly bigger, but because of how we had the slits cut open in the back, we don't want the stuffing to migrate. So I do think that keeping it as close to this size as possible will be best for the longevity of your quilt. This will change shape when you put it in the washing machine and the dryer. My suggestion for putting it in the dryer is to add dryer balls or something that'll really fluff up your puffs.