

T-Shirt Quilts of Texas™

T-Shirt Quilt Buyer's Guide

All About T-Shirt Quilts

A guide to help you through the process

There are so many t-shirt companies out there. How do you decide who to pick to turn your treasured t-shirts into a quilt that you will treasure for a lifetime?

Hopefully, we can give you all the information that you need to determine the best t-shirt quilt maker for you. We will detail the materials we use and the process used to make your quilts.

This guide provides answers to the questions you should be asking before sending your t-shirts to your quilt maker.

Please call or email us with any questions you might have about your T-Shirt Quilt.

(832) 559-1190

Info@TShirtQuiltsTX.com



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How Do I Choose A T-Shirt Quilt Company?

You want to have a t-shirt quilt made from your shirts. How do you select from what seems like hundreds of tee-shirt or t-shirt quilt makers?

First of all, lets figure out what kind of quilt you want, how you want it to feel, and how you want to use it.

This guide provides answers to the questions we are asked most often from others searching for someone to make their quilt. Each section will discuss different aspects of the entire quilt process. The materials

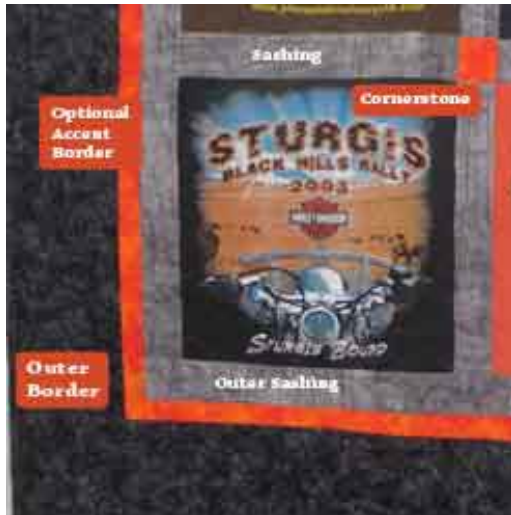
used, the process, customer service and getting you the perfect quilt.



Parts Of A T-Shirt Quilt

There several terms that your quilt maker might toss around.

Check out the info-graphic below to visually match with the terms.



- **Binding** – The outermost part of the quilt. This is the fabric that encloses the raw edges of the quilt.
- **Cornerstones** – The square of fabric where the sashings intersect. This can be the same color as the Outer Border, Accent Border or sashing
- **Optional Accent Border** – This 1 inch border adds a bright touch to this Harley Davidson Quilt.
- **Outer Border** – The widest border. This border gives the quilt a finished look.
- **Outer Sashing** – Same fabric as Sashing, an important part of the total design.
- **Sashing** – The fabric that goes between the t-shirts. Integral part of making a quilt that will last a lifetime.
- **Stabilizer/Interfacing** – This goes on the back of the t-shirt. This strengthens the shirt, and becomes part of the quilt.



NOTE: The shirt in RED is using a 100% cotton woven stabilizer, still is soft and has plenty of drape. The white shirt is using a 'stiff' stabilizer.

What Is The Difference Between A Blanket And A Quilt?

First of all, you need to understand the difference between a QUILT and a BLANKET. According to the dictionary:

quilt

kwilt/*noun*:**quilt**; a warm bed covering made of padding enclosed between layers of fabric and kept in place by lines of stitching, typically applied in a decorative design.

blan·ket

blaNGkət/ cover completely with a thick layer of something.

That is interesting - '*A layer of something*' - that is what you need to be on the lookout for. Read the details on any website and if they bother to tell you what they put on the back, you'll see things like "*a brand new sheet*" or "*fleece*".

In the quilting world the definition is that a quilt is three layers of material, held together by stitching. The preferred method of stitching is quilting. Quilts will have the three layers, blankets only consist of two layers. Be on the lookout for products being marketed as 'quilts' that are really blankets.

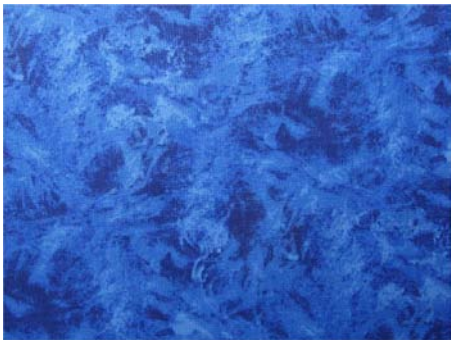
- Top** – the top layer of fabric in a quilt or blanket. In this case, your t-shirts no matter how they are connected together.
- Padding/Batting /Wadding** – Terms for the layer in between your t-shirts and the backing.
- Backing** – What is on the bottom layer of the quilt. Best choices are 100% cotton fabrics, or 100% cotton flannel. Steer clear of the bed sheets, fleece, duck cloth or other miscellaneous fabrics.

What Kind of Materials Are Used In A T-Shirt Quilt



There are all types of fabric than might be used to create your t-shirt quilt. There are cheap and poor quality fabrics that won't hold up over time. Fabric bought at a box store is cheaper, but is also a lesser quality. Ask your quilter what type of fabrics are being used. Look for 100% cotton *'Quilt Shop Quality'* fabrics.

Solid Color Fabrics – Lots of color choices. Watch out if you have pets or a dusty house. You will see every speck of lint or pet hair. However, quilting (if any) will show up nicely on the back.



'Tone on Tone' These are printed fabrics that are designed by combining different shades and tones of the same color. **Tone on Tone** fabrics often appear to be solid colors when viewed from a distance, but their printed motifs become visible when you look at them closely.

Fabric Types

There are two main types of fabrics: natural and synthetic.

- **100% polyester material** –Polyester fabric is man-made from a petroleum-based by-product called ethylene. Polyester feels thin and will pill over time. It is useful in batting because it light and holds it loft well.
- **50% cotton/50% polyester**–Also feels thin and will pill* with continued use.
- **100% cotton** - Cotton feels heavier, does not pill and lasts through years of use, laundering and loving. The higher the thread count of the fabric, the better it will wear. There are so many grades of 100% cotton. Best to ask if fabric is “Quilt Shop Quality”.
- **Flannel** – There are MANY qualities of flannel. Make sure the flannel is a high thread count, high quality 100% cotton. Again, there are ‘cheap’ flannels and high quality flannels.
- **Fleece** – This is a thicker, fluffier POLYESTER fabric. Some of the ‘cheapest’ t-shirt quilt makers use fleece as a cost cutting method. It can be quilted, but more than likely, anyone using this is not quilting it, or they are doing minimal quilting.
- **Bed Sheets** – Remember those cheap sheets you had when you were first on your own that made those little nubbies? At least ask them what the thread count is for the sheets.

Keep in mind that professional quilters will have a wholesale account with one or more fabric distributors. They should provide quilt shop quality fabrics, batting and other supplies needed to complete your custom t-shirt quilt.

**Pilling – A characteristic of any man-made fibers. Abrasion from normal wear and cleaning causes the fibers to unravel and the loose ends ball up on the fabric surface. Natural fibers like cotton, linen, or wool may also pill at times, but the balls of fibers are usually removed during laundering.*

Can I Add A Photo To My Quilt?

Yes you can! But if your quilter offers this service, ask them for details on how it's done.

Often, they will print your e-photo on fabric with an ordinary home printer. We, too, tried this method, but over the years we found that the images printed with an inkjet printer on fabric just do not last like the manufacturer indicates on the instructions.

Since we can not control how the quilt is cared for or laundered after the quilt is delivered we feel very strongly that it is important to have the images professionally printed like your other t-shirts were printed.

We suggest that you use a company like [VistaPrint](#), [CustomInk](#), Walgreens or any other company that prints photos. Recently, we started using online services to print photos on t-shirts. We think this gives you a more professional finished image that will blend in with the rest of your t-shirts, making your quilt last a lifetime.



Can I Add A Photo To My Quilt? *Cont ...*

Consider using items like a photo, graduation announcement, invitation, school logos or any other highlight that you would like to feature. Don't forget that when ordering shirts online to print an image on both the front and back. Usually, the charge is minimal for printing on the back of the t-shirt.

VistaPrint only offers white, black or gray t-shirts, so if you want other colors then consider using CustomInk or another online service.

Note: *Image below was printed on an orange t-shirt at CustomInk.*



What Holds The Quilt Layers Together?

There are several ways to hold the layers of your quilt together. This is very important to ask your quilt maker and understand which method they offer and what you prefer.

None

What? No quilting? That is right, some companies do not add any quilting. They do what is called 'birthing'. They literally just sew around the edges of the top and whatever they used for backing, then turn it right sides out. They 'might' add some stitching around the outside edge to 'stabilize' it.

Tying

The blanket in the photo is "tied". Basically they used embroidery thread or yarn and made a knot at each intersection of the shirts. This does not add any stability to the "blanket" and after this blanket gets laundered a few times, the batting will be a jumbled mess. IF (big if) the blanket/quilt is tied, the ties should be no more than about 4 inches apart. In the photo, it is more like 12 inches.



What Holds The Quilt Layers Together? *Cont*

Stitch In The Ditch

The maker only sews around the edge of the blocks in the seam line. That is where the name *'stitch in the ditch'* comes from. This type of stitching is normally done by home crafters. Crafters generally do not have the equipment to complete the job in a professional manner. After several launderings, the batting may jumble as the stitching is not close enough. *(Most batting companies suggest that quilting stitches (or ties) be no further apart than 'fist' size.)*

Longarm Quilting, Non-Computerized

Depending on the skill of the quilter, you can get anything from 'scribbles' to creative quilting in each area of the t-shirt squares that reflects what is in the square. If the quilter is using a Pantograph as a pattern to quilt the quilt, keep in mind that they are working from the backside of the machine and cannot see what is going on with the quilting. Stitch length can be all over the place, teensy tiny stitches to giant stitches *(lovingly called 'toe catchers' as you catch your toenails in the stitches)* Most longarm quilters will still give you a better quilting job than quilting on a domestic sewing machine.

What Holds The Quilt Layers Together? *Cont*

Longarm Quilting, Computerized

This is the premier method used to hold your t-shirt quilt together. The computer creates even consistent stitches and patterns creating an all over design making the t-shirts the star of the quilt, not the quilting. Most quilters with computers have LOTS of quilt patterns. What is nice about the computer is that the patterns are digital and can be scaled to the size of the quilt. There are several patterns that we think work best on t-shirt quilts, but we have **hundreds** of quilt patterns to choose from. Quilting that is too dense can make the quilt feel stiff. We like a pattern that is a regular and even design. These are some of the most popular designs.



***Pantograph/Pantos** - Continuous line quilting designs, the quilting pattern is stitched from one side of the quilt to other side. Gives a pleasing overall look to a quilt.

****Domestic Machine** – This is the sewing machine that you or your mom have at home for general sewing.

Quilt Finishing (*Binding*)

Binding is the piece of material that finishes the raw edges of the quilt. There are several methods of finishing the raw edges of a quilt. Don't let your quilter scrimp on the finishing touches.

Birthing Method - Inexperienced quilters and other t-shirt quilt makers use this method. It is quick and easy. All you do is lay the top and backing right sides together. Sew around the edges.



Turn it right-side-out. Top stitch around the edges and call the quilt done. Note the corners are not square, and the look is not very appealing.

Wrap From The Back Method - The really inexperienced quilter will use this method to finish the raw edges. This is where the backing fabric is cut larger than



the top fabric. They take the excess fabric and wrap it around to the front. It is then top stitched down. As you can see in this photo, there is no batting and it was wrapped to the front and hand stitched down. The hand stitching is coming out.

Quilt Finishing (*Binding*) Cont....

Double-Fold Binding -This is a separate piece of fabric that is cut (*either on the bias or straight of grain*) and ironed in half. Raw edges are lined up and sewn to the quilt top. Second step is to flip the folded edge of the binding to the front and is stitched close to the folded edge.

There are companies that do the doubled folded method of binding, but they don't do it very well. Again, experience is key to getting a quality quilt. [See Who Is Making Your Quilt](#) for a little more information about the types of t-shirt quilt makers available on the web.

In the photo, you can see lots of borders, binding with mitered corners, quilting, and a very pleasing overall stitched pattern. This is a quality t-shirt quilt that the owner is going to enjoy for a lifetime.



Why Does A T-Shirt Quilt Cost So Much?

Sometimes I get an email or phone call, and they want to know why our quilts cost so much. You can find someone on the internet who will make a quilt/blanket for anywhere from \$50 to \$1,000. There are many, many details and costs that go into the production of a T-Shirt Quilt. A professional t-shirt quilt maker will have these defined and should be able to give you a reasonable price.

The four major cost categories can be broken down to **MATERIALS, LABOR, STYLE** and **OVERHEAD.**

Materials:

All quilts require a certain amount of materials: fabric, batting, interfacing, and thread. Ask for and expect the highest quality materials.

Fabric – We use the 100% cotton quilt shop quality fabrics. We have over 700 bolts of quality fabric in a wide variety of colors.



Why Does A T-Shirt Quilt Cost So Much? *Cont....*

Batting – Hobbs 80/20. This a quality batting; 80% cotton, 20% polyester which gives the quilt stability and warmth.

Interfacing – 100% woven cotton. Very soft drape. It is just as soft as your t-shirt.

Thread - Professional thread specifically made for longarm quilting. Lots of colors, but mostly use a gray or tan colored thread that blends with most fabrics. We want your t-shirts to be the highlight of the quilt, not the thread choice.



Why Does A T-Shirt Quilt Cost So Much? *Cont....*

Labor:

Time – It takes many hours to complete your custom quilt. As professionals, we have created procedures that make our time more efficient. We have processes for receiving the shirts, order processing, prepping the shirts, quilt top assembly, quilting and binding all designed to control and reduce these labor costs.

Skill – Professionals cost more than amateurs. We have over 35 years quilting experience, 15 years of quilting for others, and over 10 years creating t-shirt quilts.

Style - While we do several styles of quilts, our signature style is the Traditional Quilt with sashings and cornerstones, which are obviously more complex than simply sewing t-shirts together, slapping a sheet on the back, and calling it a "quilt". Projects that are out of the norm take more time and will cost more.

Overhead:

Our overhead costs include; quilting machines, iron press, miscellaneous equipment, industrial sewing machines, computers, software, marketing, building, wages, utilities and all the other costs required to run a business. We strive to keep our prices competitive and still produce a quality quilt for you. This is our full time business, and we take it seriously.

Ready To Order Your T-Shirt Quilt?

T-Shirt Quilts of Texas would love to make your T-Shirt quilt. If you are ready to proceed with your quilt, you might be asking “What’s next?”.

Getting Your Order Ready

- Gather up those t-shirts, sweatshirts and jerseys.
- Please pre-wash t-shirts. Smelly shirts result in a smelly quilt!
- Fold the shirts with the side you want us to use facing out. Any additional instructions, mark with blue painters tape.
- Pack clean shirts in a plastic bag, place in a sturdy shipping box.
- Include Order Form, t-shirts and deposit.
- Ship the box via USPS, UPS or Fed-Ex.
(No signature required please)
- Let us know your shirts are on the way.

