

"Baskets – new ones, old ones, perfectly gorgeous ones, absolutely original ones – all a joy to behold. Baskets have always been a favorite pattern and there are many varieties from the simple pieced ones to the more elaborate appliqued flower baskets..." "The Romance of the Patchwork Quilt" ¹



The Historic Charm of Basket Quilts

The above quote is from the book, "The Romance of the Patchwork Quilt", first published in 1935. It reflects the romanticism of the Colonial Revival that blossomed in the 1920s and 30s. Women wanted to make the quilts that were made in earlier times and baskets brought to mind images of charming Colonial women in bonnets carrying bread or flowers in a basket. Our child's basket quilt will reflect of this period in history.

Many of the quilts during this period were pieced and quilted by hand. The Colonial Revival idealized handmade products from furniture to quilts. I will leave it up to you whether you want to do your piecing and quilting by hand or by machine. My example is made by machine.

Depression Era Reproduction Fabric

Although the quilt patterns used were typical of the 1800s the fabrics were new. Bright pastels were popular often with floral or geometric prints on them. Charming prints showing animals, children and characters from stories were produced. Many of these delightful prints were also found on flour and feed sacks. These cheerful fabrics gave quilter's spirits a lift during the depression era. What we often call 30s or depression era fabrics are still a delight to sew with today. Almost every quilt store carries them so it will be easy to find fabric for this project.

The solid fabrics were slightly different tones than we find today. Take a look at [Solids of the Depression Era](#) to see examples of solid fabric in 1930s and 40s colors.

Baby and Doll Basket Quilt Pattern

This basket quilt pattern is made up of easily pieced blocks. My goal was to give you a opportunity to show off the delightful fabrics of the time. It also gives you a chance to use templates to mark your fabric for cutting. It would not be until 40 or so years later that the first rotary cutter would be developed for quilter!



One way templates were made during this period was to trace the pattern on sandpaper. In an interview one old-time quilter recalled how she cut a pattern. "Out of newspaper. And then sandpaper. See the material sticks to the sandpaper – fine sandpaper." ² Cardboard and paper were also used.

A Basket Like Border

I chose a border with a woven look at the corners that brings to mind the weaving of a basket. The doll quilt border is made with three strips of fabric while the baby quilt has five. A quilt by Marie Webster published in a 1912 "Ladies Home Journal" ³ is framed by a border of seven strips all interlocked in the corners. I'm sure this inspired many future quilters to use this sort of border.

The border not only frames the quilt but is also a way to use some of the solids of this period. Solids and prints were often mixed. The solids seem to calm down the active look of the printed fabrics so popular at the time.

Quilting Your Basket Quilt

Our first inclination might be to quilt in the ditch. But quilting in the ditch was rare until the 1970s. More likely this basket quilt would have been quilted about ¼ inches from the seams. This was a common way of quilting utilitarian quilts during the middle years of the 20th century. In this case the quilting is done just inside the pieces. Another way this pattern could have been quilted is with a 1 inch or so overall grid. ⁴ Either would be true to the period so choose which way you prefer quilting your quilt.

Use a thin cotton or mostly cotton batting to replicate quilting of this era. Off white thread was usually used for quilting.

Binding With Bias Tape

In her article, "Bias Tape - The Great Sewing Room Labor Saver", Joan Kiplinger wrote, "Bias tape was an indispensable sewing need during the 1920s-40s". In an interview old-timer, Viola Sanders Webb, of Tennessee, recalled her quilting from this period. When asked if a quilt she had made was finished with a bias binding she replied, "Yes, the bindings are on the bias. That's the only way you can bind a quilt. You got to be careful—if you do it by machine, the binding walks. For me, I did it all by hand." ⁵

Diane Shink is a quilt appraiser and an expert in the area of historical bindings. She suggested using single fold bias tape to represent bindings of this period. Although quilters still bound quilts with binding cut on grain, according to Barbara Brackman, bias binding for quilts became popular after 1925 while it was rarely used before that time. ⁶ So bias binding gives your quilt an added historic touch. But take your choice as you will be historically correct binding your basket quilt either way.

The doll quilt shown above is done with 1/2 inch bias tape but wider bindings were more typical. Especially for the baby quilt, I suggest using the 7/8 inch bias tape. Quilters of the 30s had a much larger selection of tape widths available than we do today.

You just might find it fun to use bias tape for your basket quilt binding. There is no doubt quilters during the thirties favored it. Bias tape can easily be done by machine. If you choose to do it all by hand, enjoy knowing that Viola Sanders Webb would certainly have approved. 😊

Templates and Instructions for the Basket Quilt

Now that you have the background you need to make your reproduction quilt go to the [Pattern for the Doll & Baby Basket Quilts](#) for cutting, layout & sewing instructions.

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References:

¹ p127 "[The Romance of the Patchwork Quilt](#)", by Carrie A. Hall and Rose G. Kretsinger

² p73 & ⁵ p74 "[Soft Covers for Hard Times: Quiltmaking & The Great Depression](#)", by Merikay Waldvogal

³ p24 "[A Joy Forever: Marie Webster's Quilt Patterns](#)", by Rosalind Webster Perry and Marty Frolli

⁴"Plain Quilting" digital newsletter #4 and ⁶ Bias Binding #38 , "Barbara Brackman, The Quilt Detective: Clues in the Needlework, 2005

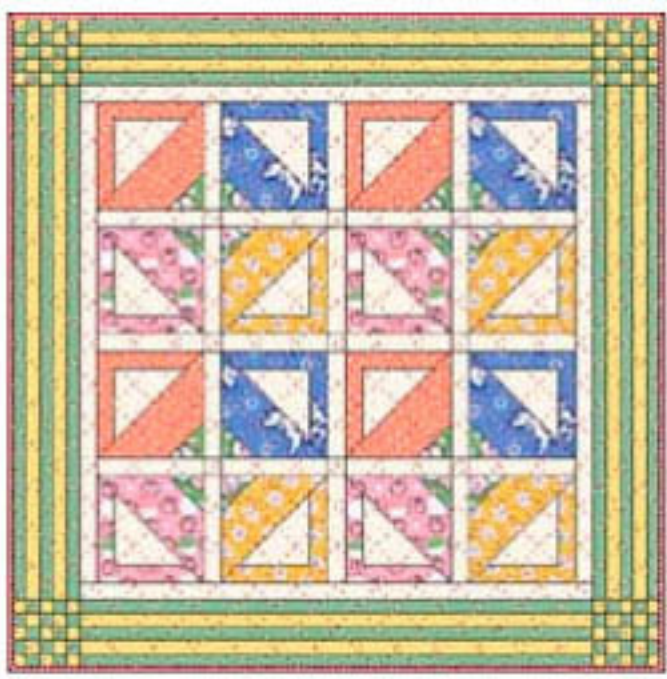
Related Websites:

[The Basket Quilt: A Daily Presence](#) More detailed basket quilt history.

[Depression Era Quilts \(1930s\): Cheer in Fabric and Color](#)

This page gives the detailed cutting and assembling instructions for the doll and baby basket quilts. **If you didn't come from [Doll & Baby Scottie Dog Quilts](#) go there for the introduction** to this pattern including history and techniques that were used for this quilt during the 1930s.

To the right you will see an example of the pieced basket doll quilt along with quilting done 1/4 inch from the seams. The basket blocks are 6 inches square and both the white sashing and the border strips are 1/2 inch wide. The finished doll quilt will be about 17 inches square. I did the border with three strips and interwoven corners but you could do five if you wish. The sample also shows what the quilt looks like with quilting 1/4 inch from the seams.



To the left is the layout of the pieced basket baby quilt. The basket blocks are also 6 inches square and the white sashing is one inch wide while the alternating border strips are 3/4 inch wide. The finished baby quilt will be about 37" square. You would probably want to do this border with the 5 strips and interlocking corners as the quilt is much larger but three would be fine if you are short of time. To really give the border the woven basket look you could reduce the width to 1/2 inch and use seven strips. The baby quilt picture shows what the quilt would look like if you quilted it with a diagonal grid.

Cutting Out the Pieces for the Basket Blocks

Below is the estimated yardage for the baby quilt. For the doll quilt get a fat quarter of each fabric.

Fabric key	Number of patches	Yardage estimate	Fabric key	Number of patches	Yardage estimate
	8	3/8		16	1/4
	8	3/8		8	3/8
	8	3/8		4	1 + 1/8
	60	1 + 1/8		60	1 + 1/8
	53	1 + 3/8			

*The pink is for the binding and won't take that much if you piece it. If you bind with bias tape you won't need the pink fabric.

The pattern for the basket block templates is on the [Basket Templates PDF](#). It is VERY IMPORTANT that you set your "PAGE SCALING" to "NONE" before you print out the template page. Otherwise the sizes won't be right.

If you are unable to get a PDF on your computer you can draw this pattern on a 6 inch square then cut the pieces out. In this case be sure to add the 1/4 inch seam allowances. Your basket doesn't have to be exactly like mine, just use my block as a guide.

I used sand paper templates like some quilters used during the depression years. It really worked well as the templates didn't slip at all. It was fun to try but if you prefer, just use plastic template material. I cut out the paper templates then traced them onto the sandpaper as shown in the picture to the right. Be sure to use old scissors to cut the sandpaper templates out. Next trace the templates on the fabric and cut them out. Cut the basket bottom piece with the longest seam on the grain. Also cut the basket handles with the long edges on grain. That will assure you will always have an edge on grain sewn to any bias edges which will prevent stretched seams.



Sewing Together the Quilt Top



To sew together the basket first sew the short part of the basket handle (A) onto the white triangles (E). Then sew on the longer part of the basket handle (B). Next sew the basket body (C) to the small triangle of grass (D). As you can see from the picture to the left you can then sew the bottom and the top of the triangle together.

Next cut the strips for your sashing on grain. The doll quilt has 1/2 inch sashing so cut it 1 inch wide and the baby quilt has 1 inch sashing so cut it 1 1/2 inches wide. Next cut enough strips 6 1/2 inches to sew on the top and bottoms of the blocks except for the very top and bottom. For the sides I sewed the sashing on the entire length from top to bottom. Measure your strip lengths to be sure they match the sides of the rows of blocks. Last of all sew the sashing across the top and bottom.

Now cut the border strips and sew them together in alternate colors for the side sections. You will need two sets of strips for the corners with opposite colors. See in the picture how I made strips then cut them the opposite way but the same width. These can then be sewn together to make the woven look of the corners.

Next attach the corner pieces on each end of two of your side borders. Then sew the side borders that don't have the corners onto your quilt. Last sew the sides with the corners on the other two sides. This takes some careful seam matching. Your quilt top is then complete.

Quilting and Binding the Basket Quilt

For ideas on quilting & binding the basket quilt look back at my suggestions at [Doll & Baby Pieced Basket Quilts](#). You will find choices for the quilting design and suggestions for batting and thread color. Below I have some information on how to attach the 7/8 inch bias binding.



sew on bias tape sew in ditch from front back will be stitched down