

## How to Wash an Antique or New Cotton Quilt

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It must be understood that there is always a risk in washing an antique quilt. The fabrics are not as strong as on a new quilt, the colors may run, and we do not know what chemicals, if any have been applied to the quilt. With proper care, a quilt may be washed safely. Use common sense. If the fabrics look like they are about to break, or if some are already torn, then more damage will probably occur. Anyone using these directions does so knowing that there is always a risk in washing a quilt and does so with this understanding.

**Don't expect any miracles.** We are discussing here how to clean the quilt, not getting out stains from long ago.

**New quilts** should also be washed with care. If washed often and in heavy-duty detergents such as Tide, they will fade and often the colors will bleed even if the maker has pre-washed the fabrics. Use the same care and washing method as you would use for an antique quilt and chances are your quilt will survive to become a family heirloom and cherished antique.

- Test a small area first to make sure that there is no color run, if there is the quilt should not be washed.
- Fill your washing machine with warm water. Add a detergent made for washing quilts such as Quilt Care or Quilt Soap which is Orvus soap, both available at Bayside Quilting. I do not recommend anything designed for fine delicate washables such as Woolite. (For very sturdy quilts made in the 1930s or later, a half scoop of Biz can also be added, and stains can be pre-treated with SprayNWash or similar product.)
- Dissolve and mix the detergent in the machine and add your quilt. Swish the quilt around with your hands and then let it soak for about a half-hour or more. During this time, swish the quilt about every 5 minutes.
- Advance your machine to let the water out and then spin on "gentle".
- Advance your timer to the rinse cycle (You do not let it agitate on the wash cycle). Swish it around with your hands to rinse. (Again, do not let it agitate) and then let it continue through the spin dry and shut off.
- Rinse, as above, for a second time.
- Dry your quilt by laying it flat, this could be outdoors on bath towels or on your carpet.
- I suggest that "usually" it is better to wash a top after it is quilted, as it will be stronger.
- Wash blocks before putting them together in the sink using Biz and Orvus in a sink. After drying, trim them to size before using.

For more advice about care of about a quilt appraisal, please contact me. It is good to consider an appraisal for any quilt that is to be in a contest, is to be shipped or is antique that is in good condition. Keep in mind that insurance companies value quilts as blankets unless appraised.

In addition, advice is often needed when you donate a quilt, it is part of an estate or you are considering selling it. As an appraiser certified by the American Quilting Society I am qualified to appraise and evaluate both new and antique quilts.