

Cleaning Quilts – the Dos and DO NOTs

First, let's go over the DO NOTs – there are not too many!

- Do not pick at it, pull loose threads or pluck away at the top.
- Do not pack it away and be afraid to love it, as it was meant to be loved.
- Do not leave it full of stains and dirt, they do need to be washed from time to time...but not every day!

How to Wash and Love your Quilt

- To come back to Point 1 in the DO NOTs, don't pull at loose threads. If the seam is stable and not pulling apart just trim at the top of the quilt and leave it. Better yet, if you are wanting to get really fancy and can manage it, pop a needle onto it and slide the needle between the layers to hide it and then forget it.
- As per Point 2 in the DO NOTs, don't just pack it away. Depending on the season or the theme of your quilt they can be rotated. No one necessarily wants to have a Holiday quilt on the couch year-round (unless you do! Then who am I to judge!) but they can be cleaned in between and packed away safely until the next season. Hanging art quilts can also be rotated. Be sure to keep them out of direct sunlight as they can age quickly over a short time in direct sunlight.
- Just like Point 3 says above - Wash them. Quilts do need to be washed periodically. Before you wash it make sure that none of the fabric has been pulled from the stitches. If there is a seam letting go, tack it back down by hand stitching or machine stitching a seam over it. Make sure to use a coordinating or neutral thread choice so it still blends in with the overall vibe of the quilt top. This step must not be skipped as the washing and drying may completely pull the seam apart and expose the batting layer in between the top and backing. Quilts however, do not need to be washed every day. Spot cleaning is a great way to extend the time between washings if needed. Prevention can go a long way as well. If you have pets, a top sheet is a great way to ensure that your quilt is pet hair free. Who can deny a good snuggle at night...just pop the sheet back to the bottom when you want to show that work or art off or see it yourself.

Hand washing VS Machine washing

- Machine washing will be enough for most quilts. I like washing just enough to get it clean. A gentle cycle goes a long way. Cold water and a gentle detergent is enough to do a nice job. Shout Color Catchers also in the wash is a great addition. They do catch a surprising amount of colour from the water. They are easily found in the laundry area of any box store.
- Hand washing should be considered for vintage, hand appliqued and delicate quilts with additional embellishments like crystal beadwork, sequins etc. Using a clean and large enough tub or sink is key to getting the whole quilt cleaned. Add cold water and a gentle detergent. Make sure your quilt is fully under water and start to move it around...the wax on, wax off mindset will work well here. Warm up those muscles as you may be at it for 10 or 15 minutes depending on quilt size. Drain the water and repeat filling with cold. If wanted, add a little bit (a cap to a splash of vinegar) to help clear out any residue and it will help retain the bright colours. Rinse again until the water is clear and there are no soap suds remaining in the quilt top.

Machine Drying vs Air Drying

- To Machine Dry - Heat needs to be considered for different quilts. The lowest heat option is the best option! If you are in a warm and dry basement you may even get away with no heat at all. Tumble until it is almost dry and then let it air dry flat, on a bed or safe space with no pets, until completely dry. It is a good time to "square" it up as well while it is air drying.
- To Air Dry - All vintage quilts, and delicate quilts with embellishments should be air dried. When transporting the quilt to your flat spot to dry it, ensure the weight of the quilt is supported evenly. If the quilt is very wet, it can be laid upon a bed of towels to wick the moisture away. Roll it up like a cinnamon roll and squeeze the water out of the quilt and into the dry towels. Replace the wet towels with dry ones underneath and lay the quilt back down on top to dry. An oscillating fan is also helpful to dry the quilt evenly.