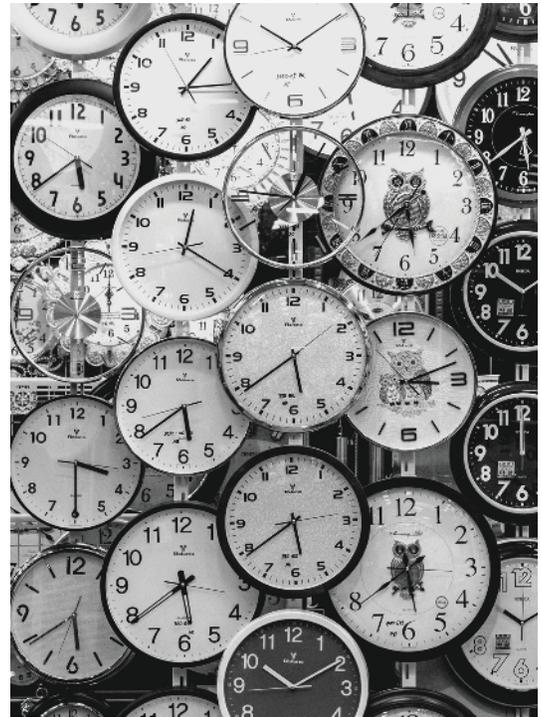


# A BUSY GIRL'S GUIDE TO QUILTING IN THE MIDST OF AN ALREADY FULL LIFE.

THIS IS AN INTERACTIVE PDF. ANY LINKS YOU CLICK  
WILL TAKE YOU DIRECTLY TO THE PAGES ON [MY BLOG](#)

Let's face it. The world is cra-zy busy and so are we.

We're always running, and on the move. Some nights, I feel like my head just hits the pillow before it's time to get up and do it all over again. I feel like my to-do list can't handle even one more thing and yet I find myself writing another line on it... Adding one more thing I'll have to play catch up on later or transfer to tomorrow's incredible list.



I run to take the kids to school in the morning. Then, try to get as much done as I possibly can during the day so by the time I pick them up in the afternoon I'll be able to spend some quality time with them and my husband. As soon as they are in bed, the race is on again with housework and dishes and a furious pace of trying to cross items off my list...

Maybe this is what your day looks like too? Or perhaps it's filled with a crazy busy job on top of a social schedule that you feel like you have to keep as well? Maybe you're in the middle of a massive life change or on the cusp of another crazy busy season in life.... It's enough to make you feel like your hands are too full to hold anything else.

I certainly don't see my to-do list getting any shorter anytime soon, or a see a block of 'free time' anywhere in sight. *Do you?*

Years ago, I had reached a bit of a crossroads in my life where I felt like I was going to run myself into the ground and into a position I wasn't sure I could come back from... (That was a terrifying thought for me.) Or the alternative was that something seriously had to change. But I had no idea what it was or where to even begin.

I had two young kids and a steady freelance career. I had a husband who loves me even when my sanity is hanging by a thread. But I didn't feel the least bit creatively fulfilled even though I was a freelance artist... go figure. Creating art that pleased other people wasn't enough for me.

There had to be a way where I could be a good wife, a good mom AND not lose myself in the process. (*I know this is something that every single mom struggles with at some point... so if this is you, you are entirely not alone! And I'm telling you that your feelings are entirely valid*) There had to be a way to have the best of both worlds.

I spent time reading and trying to unlock the secrets of all the self-help books on time management, prioritizing and learning to say no... Trust me, I am pretty sure I've read almost all of them.

So let me save you some time. Not one single one of them gave me the formula for unlocking + 2 hours in your day. Disappointing, I know.

Do you want to know the secret that I did discover?

*I have to continually remind myself that I matter.*

*In the midst of this crazy full life, I do matter.*

I should point out that I didn't have low self-esteem at the time or think of my-

self as insignificant in this world. I've always been a go-getter and a problem solver. What I merely really needed was the permission to put myself on the priority list just like I do every other member of my family. And to know that it was entirely ok that I was the one to give myself that permission.

*(Don't misquote me here and tell your family that I gave you permission to dive off the deep end and take a single week's vacation in Spain. That's not what I'm saying at all.)*

The thought of starting a quilt project back then was as crazy as deciding I wanted to fly to the moon. There wasn't any way I could ever finish an entire quilt for my family when I wasn't even sure I could finish my lunch without someone needing something from me.

But you know what? I started it... and it did take a while to finish, but I did finish it. And then I started another one and another one after that.

How did I finally manage to do it? What changes did I make?

## **BEGIN.**

The best thing you can do is start. Decide that this is something you can and will do. Give yourself 20 minutes to make a game plan and find a pattern online that you like. *Hint:* I have a free pattern on my website if you [click here](#). You can also search Pinterest or look for a full tutorial on [Craftsy](#). You may pay a little more on craftsy but the value in video tutorials is unmatched.

Decide what you're comfortable with size wise and go from there. If this is one of your first quilts, you may choose a baby quilt size until you feel comfortable enough to move up to a throw size.

*I'm going to give you a little parenting tip.* My first quilt was one I made for my daughter. If you have young kids at home, make them feel like they are a part of the project. “Do you like the blue? Or the red? Or should we do polka-dots?” That way when you want to work... you may be able to buy yourself some extra time because they feel like you are doing this for them. Make them feel like this is their idea to an extent. Just my two cents... it worked really well for me.

## **PREP.**

This step may look a little different for you depending on what you can make time for... but DO make the time for it!

If going to the fabric store and choosing your fabrics makes your head spin and brings up feelings where you just can't even... just stop.

Not everything in the world is all good, but we do live in a time where I can order something I need and have it show up at my door two days later so yeah... Its kind of like a dream world at the same time.

Check out [Fabric.com](http://Fabric.com) or [ShopDarlingRose.com](http://ShopDarlingRose.com) They are my two favorite places to shop for fabric online.

If matching fabrics or trying to decipher how much of each material you will need gives you a headache... Look for fabric bundles.

Fabric bundles are groups of fabrics that have been put together because they coordinate well. The matching and colors are all done for you.

I can't say enough how much I adore Darling Rose for this. Jessica has a gift that I can't match. Every single bundle I have bought from her has made a fantastic quilt. I may very

well be funding her kid's education... just saying.

One step further in simplifying the prep stage is to look for a quilt kit. Absolutely everything you need for your quilt will be included. The pattern + the right amount of fabric for the job. You'll know exactly what you're getting and know what the finished result will be.



*I wrote a whole post on Darling Rose if you would like to read it [here](#).*

Take a look at [this post](#) and [this post](#) to get a good idea of any other tools you should buy while you're shopping on-line. You don't have to spend a fortune or buy top of the line items. I will tell you, however, that a good pair of scissors is an absolute must.

Remember how mom never let you use her "good craft scissors"? Yeah? Ok, prepare yourself. You're about to be **that** woman, hiding your scissors so no one else can use them.

## FINDING THE TIME.

Now it is time for the real work. Hopefully, this isn't the step where you decide you just can't anymore.

*You have your supplies. You've got your plan in place. Chin up, sister. This is happening.*

Take a look at your schedule and see if you can fit in 1-3 'holes' of time over the next week. Seek a minimum of 20-30 minutes at a time. (5-10 minutes at a time if that's all you can do!)

I'll be honest in telling you that I wasn't willing to give up what little sleep I was getting in the beginning. So, "get up earlier!" wasn't going to fly with me.

I wasn't willing to give up quality time with my family or cut back on my work so I could play... So what was I willing to give up?

At first, I gave up on perfectly clean kitchen once or twice a week. That's something that I struggled with anyways and never felt like I accomplished.

I gave up keeping up with all my TV shows. Did I really need to watch cake wars or whatever other kitchen challenge show with my husband every night? No. – I picked three that I knew I couldn't live without. I felt that was reasonable for me.

Trade favors. Ask a friend or relative to watch your kids for 2 hours or have a young teenager come over to be a 'mommy's helper' while you're working.

Another way to make time for yourself is to cancel plans. Do you really NEED to go to that playdate? Do you really HAVE to go out this Thursday after work? Would the whole world fall apart if you didn't go? – Don't make it a habit to be flakey and cancel every plan you make... but just this once. Do it and see if the walls and floors crumble around you. I bet you'll find that they don't and the next get-together is just like you never left.

Continue to whittle down your schedule and create more time for yourself. But BEWARE – DO NOT fill that time with more crossing off your to-do list priorities! Keep that time blocked off and fill it with bits and pieces of sewing time!

## THE QUILTING

The first few stages of your quilt should be done in a little bit more significant chunks of time if you can. At least, I find it easier that way, so you don't lose focus or forget measurements.

1. Take out your pattern and your fabrics as well as your cutting supplies. Give your pat-

tern a good once over and in your head make a game plan.

Cut your fabric to the size requirements given by the pattern.

Try to cut all your pieces in one-two sittings. It's much more efficient to work repetitively than to start and stop and start and stop again.

2. Label all of your pieces/stacks of similar pieces.

Sticky notes are your friend. If you know that you're not going to remember anything you did the next time you pick up these pieces... write yourself notes and pin it to the fabric.

It could be something as simple as the cut measurements of the piece to divide up your stacks, or it could be a "this is the first row of the quilt" note.

I even put sticky notes on my pattern, so I know where I left off.

If you can't work on your quilt all day (hardly any of us can) Leave yourself a trail of breadcrumbs/sticky notes to come back to. You'll waste less time next time trying to remember how far along you were and what you were doing.

3. Use a bin or container to organize your project. Sometimes it takes a really long time to finish a quilt because life gets in the way. You can't take up the dining table or floor for weeks at a time.

You need a system to be able to clean up real quick and then pull it all out to get right back to work the next time.

I've been using this bin system for a while, and I love it. It's essentially the same system I use for my kids in the playroom. I can't expect them to be perfectly organized all the time, so I settle for everything at least up and out of the way.

My Sewing room changed when I applied this 'quick clean-up' technique for myself. It may not be a huge breakthrough discovery. I'm not claiming to have all my ducks in a row by any means.... But when you find something that is so simple and works... I think you've got yourself a winner and we should all share our small wins in life with each other, right?

4. When it comes to time to piece/sew your pieces together, I like to lay out my whole quilt and then gather the pieces in columns taking extra care to not get them out of order. Now you have beautiful, neat little stacks to piece together.

Use a 1.8 stitch length in piecing to make sure your quilt stays together. I get that the 3.0 stitch length goes way faster and time is indeed a rare luxury when you have so many other things going on, but too big of stitches and you're looking at a quilt that could fall apart later.

When piecing your quilt, I don't have any tips or tricks to make it go faster, unfortunately. No magic wand or secret spells here. Just consistently keep working on your pieces and keeping them in order according to the pattern.

I can tell you that once you get into a routine of stealing bits of time here and there, you will make progress... even if it feels like its slow. You can do this. I promise. The more progress you see on your quilt, the more you'll feel invested in it and not just want to abandon it when things get busier than you can handle.

*Keep your end goal in mind.*

An athlete doesn't train harder by picturing the progress they'll make by tomorrow. They always imagine the end goal. Keep picturing yourself all wrapped up in a beautiful quilt that YOU made.

Picture the person that you want to give the quilt to receiving it and how much they'll love and enjoy it.

Persistence is the most prominent hurdle to tackle... but once you do... you'll be living that dream of creating an excellent piece of art for you and your loved ones.

So, lets quit dreaming about it happening and make it happen. What do you say? Let's get to work!

If you have any questions, you're welcome to contact me. I would love to hear from you.  
[christen@iseestarsquilting.com](mailto:christen@iseestarsquilting.com)

Happy Quilting!

--Christen