

## MAKING THE BEST USE OF YOUR STASH

If you've been quilting for any length of time, we think we can safely assume that you have started your very own stash. You see fabrics that you must have, so you buy them and stash them away for future use. However, we all get to the point in our stash-building endeavors, where we feel we must use the fabrics that we have collected. What is the best way to do this, you ask? We've come up with some great ideas for using the fabrics in your stash, showcasing pieces that you adore, and making more quilts—what a great plan!

In previous issues we've discussed great ways to organize your fabrics. If you haven't tackled this project yet, here are a few quick ways to get organized, so that you know exactly what is in your stash. Organize all of your fabrics by color so that you know what you have, and you know what you're missing. Many quilters keep their theme/category fabrics separate (such as batiks, florals, novelties, Christmas, etc.). If necessary, purchase organizational totes and bins to store your fabrics. This will make it easier to access and use the fabrics you own.

Now that you have a firm handle on what you actually have in your stash you can start looking for patterns/projects that compliment your fabrics. Perhaps you have a plethora of red fabrics in varying shades. Look for a pattern that utilizes one color theme, but requires different textures and shades. Keep an eye out for patterns that use scraps, fat quarters, or strips. With these patterns it will be easy to pull directly from your stash.

Perhaps you already have a pattern in mind that you've wanted to complete. If so, assign colors to each part of the block (for example in a simple star the background could be white, star points red, and star center blue). Go to your stash and pull all of the red, white and blue fabrics that are approximately the color and value that you want to use. For each block in the quilt use a different red, white or blue than in the other blocks. This uses up many small pieces and/or fat quarters, and can give your quilt a very unique look.

If you have large pieces of fabric in multi-colored prints or large designs, these fabrics can serve as a great jumping off point for a large border. Pick the colors from fabric that you want to highlight, and choose these fabrics from your stash. These will be the fabrics that you use to create the patches inside of the border.

Need some specific pattern ideas that will help you to make the best of your stash? Look to our Super Simple series of books, which use fat quarters, 6 1/2" squares, or 6 1/2" strips. Also, *Easy Stash Quilts* by Carol Doak is a great resource. Again, any pattern that is designed to be a scrap quilt will really help you maximize the fabrics in your stash.

As you can see there are really two ways to go about reducing your stash. You will either purchase patterns that can use the pieces that you have in your stash, or you will purchase patterns that will showcase a particular fabric from your stash. Either way, once your fabrics are organized in a way that makes sense to you, it will be easy to see what you have so that you can start using it. (And once you use up some of this fabric, you won't feel guilty about adding more to the stash!)

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