

## QUILTING SOFTWARE

Quilting is an art form that has been passed through the generations, yet quilting has also found its way into the modern-era by way of technology. Quilt designing software is readily available these days, so if you're feeling ambitious to design your own quilt there are options for you. Many people, however, feel a bit overwhelmed at the choices. For the purpose of this article, we are going to concentrate on full-quilt designing software. Please keep in mind that we realize there are many software programs to choose from, we're just giving you some of our advice based on our experience.

So, where to start? There are some great companies with wonderful products, but you want to choose the one that will suit your needs. A few questions to ask yourself before purchasing software are 1) how comfortable do I feel experimenting with the computer, and 2) do I need ready-made block designs or am I ready to start designing from scratch?

If you have a basic comfort level with a computer, but you aren't sure how well you will do at designing your own quilts we might recommend PC Quilt. PC Quilt offers an extensive library of blocks, borders, and fabric patterns. You can navigate through the software in the same way that you use your computer every day (similar keystrokes and mouse capabilities). Create quilts quickly and easily, print your yardage requirements, then print your pattern. It's that easy!

If you're ready to branch out and experiment check out Quilt Pro 5 and Electric Quilt 5 (EQ5). These incredibly powerful programs are very detailed, but if you have the time to learn the functions, you will be able to create unique and exciting quilts. Both of these programs allow you to use existing block libraries or create your own blocks, fill blocks with fabric swatches, create cutting charts and patterns, and so much more. You can use either of these programs to create traditional quilt patterns, or design innovative, one-of-a-kind quilts. The custom design capabilities with these programs are incredible, and the only limit is your imagination. Each software package supports your program by creating fabric swatch CDs that can be loaded in to work with your existing program.

There are two additional points that are worth mentioning. First, most quilt design programs are compatible on both Windows and Macintosh platforms. Do remember to check the packaging, however, to ensure that the software will run on your computer. Secondly, most reputable designing programs will have a thorough and comprehensive guide book, and we recommend purchasing the one that goes with your program. The books are typically full of tutorials and information that you'll need to get the most out of your program.

Keep in mind that what you will create in these software programs isn't permanent, and you won't waste fabric by just playing around. That's the beauty of creating on the computer. Get creative and branch out, stretch your limits and see what you're capable of. You might end up creating something amazing and fantastic, and it will look even better once you make it with fabric.

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