

# 1. Choose Fabrics for your 2018 RCQG Mystery Quilt

BY JANET WICKELL (Ask Dawn Bugher for more info about this quilts' origins)

## Mystery Quilt Advice for Beginning Quilters

*It's important to understand the techniques below before you make any quilt. Follow the links to read more about the skills you'll need to sew the mystery quilt.*

- The quilt is beginner friendly, and honestly, if you are a beginner I recommend working with shorter strips of fabric (for strip piecing) than you'll see within the instructions, even if you are sewing a more color controlled quilt. Why? Because shorter strips are very often easier for beginners to sew more accurately. I've made quilts for decades, but still prefer to work with shorter strips.
- Another tip -- slow down. If your sewing machine has a speed control, turn it to it's slowest setting. Sewing too fast is one reason beginners sometimes see less-than-accurate results when piecing quilts. Quilt making is not a race, and I openly admit that I always sew slowly. Accuracy the first time is more important to me than speed.
- Use pins to secure your patchwork. My tutorial, [Pinning Tips for Quilters](#), might help you secure adjoining pieces in a way that improves accuracy.
- Cut with care. I'll release cutting instructions next, but unless you are certain your cutting accuracy is correct, only cut a portion of the fabric that's needed until you've had time to test some of the sewing instructions. Two of my tutorials can help. See: [How to Rotary Cut Fabric Strips](#) and [How to Cut Patchwork Shapes](#).
- Sew with an accurate quarter inch seam allowance. My [seam allowance tutorial](#) walks you through methods that can be used to check the accuracy of your seams.
- Press carefully, and that includes [pressing to set a seam](#) before [pressing seam allowances to one side](#). Pressing to set a seam is often overlooked, but is an important accuracy-enhancing step, because it flattens little puckers that can occur when a seam is sewn.
- Remember to press -- don't iron! Move slowly to avoid stretch, and let the heat and weight of the iron do most of the work.
- Always [square up one end of a strip set](#) before cutting segments from the set, and always check the leading edge after several cuts to make sure it is still at a 90-degree angle to the top and bottom strips.
- Pay attention to the measurements given after each step in the pattern. If your patchwork is correct after every step, your quilt should go together with ease.

## Mystery Quilt Fabrics and Yardages

The quilt finishes at 60" x 84". Borders are optional, and not included in yardage.

Binding fabric will depend on the method you choose for the edges of your quilt. If using [continuous binding strips](#), you'll need about 315 running inches to sew mitered double fold binding to the quilt (more if you add borders).

Backing and batting should measure about 80" x 94" each, or as required for the type of quilting that's planned.

I know that many try to use fabrics from a stash to create mysteries, and this pattern should make that an easy task (depending on your stash). You can work with a controlled color scheme or take it scrappy -- your choice.

Instructions are written for a fairly controlled theme. To take the quilt in a full scrappy direction, simply work with shorter (but more) strip sets for strip pieced areas. The total length of strips increases somewhat when working with shorter strip sets, to allow for squaring up, but it doesn't involve a huge addition to yardage.

Your darkest fabric may be much lighter than the darkest fabric chosen by others. What's important is contrast among your own fabrics, and you are the one to set the dark-to-light progression.

This quilt looks good as a 2-color quilt (the light/neutral background does not count as a color), but remember to follow the same contrast guidelines. A quick look at a [basic color wheel](#) can help you decide which colors might work best with each other. Not into color wheels? Go with your gut instincts. [How to Choose Fabrics for Quilts](#) might help, too.

Except for Fabric A, large scale prints are not suitable for the quilt but could be useful if you choose to create borders. If sewing plain borders, you could repeat Fabric A, but I have not added border yardage.

One more thing -- you might choose to flip-flop my suggestions, replacing dark fabrics with light and light fabrics with dark.

Yardages are fairly generous.

**Fabric A: Large Scale Print Focal Fabric**

- 1-3/8 yards
- This doesn't necessarily have to be large scale, but I personally think that's a good choice. Use the fabric to set the theme if you like, and choose other colors that work with (but don't necessarily 'match') its colors.
- If you choose something bright, balance it by using at least a few very dark or vivid colors in other areas, even if just an inner framing border or binding.
- If you do not want to use a large scale focal, you could repeat Fabric F, the very light fabric (remember to add yardages together).

**Fabric B. Dark Fabric(s)**

- 2-1/8 yards
- It's best if this fabric is very dark, but perhaps not a terribly bright fabric. Darkest purple, deepest maroon, navy blue, darkest forest green, and black are examples of good choices.
- Go for tone on tone or solid fabrics. If you choose a print, stick with something small in scale. This fabric should contrast with Fabric A, and the contrast can be either high or medium (best not to blend).

**Fabric C: Medium Fabric(s)**

- 1-1/2 yards
- Choose any fabric(s) you like for this slot. If you do not like overly colorful quilts, select something a bit subdued. It could be darker than Fabric A but must contrast with Fabric B (could be a warm color that contrasts with A and B).

**Fabric D: Medium Light Fabric(s)**

- 1-1/2 yards
- Choose something that contrasts with Fabric B and Fabrics E and F.

**Fabric E Medium Light Fabric(s)**

- 1-1/8 yards
- This can be the same color as Fabric D but doesn't have to contrast highly with that fabric.

**Fabric F: Very Light Fabric**

- 2-1/4 yards
- White or white on a solid white fabric works here, and so do very light neutral fabrics such as ivory or a pastel version of one of your darker fabrics.
- Solids or tone on tone fabrics work best, and a very small print would probably be okay, too, as long as it contrasts quite a bit with Fabrics A and D.

**Fabric G: Light Fabric(s)**

- 1-1/4 yard
- This looks nice if it's a lighter variation of Fabric C, but that's not a must. Choose something that contrasts with Fabric B, but is a little lighter than D and E, and you'll be fine.

If the choices seem confusing, just think of the seven fabrics as dark to light and factor-in warm colors that pop (yellow, orange and red are a few examples). I don't think you'd like a very bright Fabric A unless some of your other choices are equally as bright.

## Fabric shopping cheat sheet

A Focal Fabric	1 3/8	(large scale, fussy cut?)
B Dark	2 1/8	(very dark, contrast with A)
C Medium	1 1/2	(must contrast with B)
D Medium Light	1 1/2	(contrasts with B, E & F)
E Medium Light	1 1/8	(can be same color as D, doesn't have to contrast with D)
F Very Light	2 1/4	(background neutral)
G Light	1 1/4	(lighter variation of C)