



What is  
*Zero Waste Quilting?*

A guide to introduce you to Zero Waste Quilting and help you create a more sustainable studio.



# Hi! Nice to meet you! I'm Patty Murphy.

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I'm a three times published quilt book author, a quilt pattern designer, and teacher.

I have been sewing my entire life and I never planned to write books and become a published author, or design patterns and teach...but here I am...doing it!

Textiles, quilting, and sewing are my passion!

However, that passion comes with a cost to the environment.

Textiles are dirty. Making fabric requires a lot of water and it generates a lot of pollution. While pollution isn't new, I decided that I wanted to pivot my work in an actionable way. When I changed my buying habits and the scope of my work

*Zero Waste Quilting* was born.

2026 

Yep! That's  
me!

QuiltCon 2026  
signing copies of  
my book!



# What is *Zero Waste Quilting*?



When we make quilts we always have scrap fabric remaining. Those scraps usually land in:

- ✔ a scrap bin
- ✔ a de-stash
- ✔ a landfill
- ✔ given away

What *do* we do with the copious amounts of scraps we have?  
That is a perpetual challenge.

The idea behind ***Zero Waste Quilting*** is that you make a quilt and all the leftover fabric becomes another quilt, small project, or some combination thereof until all the fabric is used.

You create what I call a capsule collection and have beginning to end use of goods.



Fermenting woad, a plant that yields a blue dye, was so smelly that Queen Elizabeth I issued a proclamation banning it from being fermented within an 8-mile radius of any of her palaces.

# You Can Still Buy New Fabric



In fact, I *WANT* you to buy new fabric. We want the industry to thrive but I want you to be more mindful about what you buy and how much you buy.

With ***Zero Waste Quilting*** there is no shame in buying new fabric.

The key is that you use it all.

***Zero Waste Quilting*** takes us back to the roots of quilting because we use what we have. It invites us to sit in our discomfort as we figure out what to make with a finite set of materials. That discomfort gives us the freedom to get creative and *that* is where we grow as artists.

# What's the BIG Idea?

We all know reduce, reuse, recycle and repurpose but we can also refuse and redesign.



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*Zero Waste Quilting is rooted in the concepts of refuse and redesign.*

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## REFUSE

Look to your stash first  
Refuse to buy excess  
Refuse to buy materials you dont need

## REDESIGN

Consider how we use our scraps after a quilt has been made  
Look at the shape of our scraps to consider new design ideas  
Commit to the idea that all materials you use when you make a quilt will be used start to finish

# How to Create a Zero Waste Studio

## Organize Your Stash

One of the most important things you can do to create a Zero Waste studio is getting organized. How you organize your studio will depend on size, space and a myriad of other constraints. It might take you several attempts to get your space curated exactly how you'd like. Be patient. The work will be rewarded.

An organized studio allows you to look to your stash first when you begin a project.

There is a **HUGE** power in your stash if you can see it.

I wrap larger pieces of fabric around acid free comic book boards and secure them with a rubber band. Smaller pieces and fat quarters are folded and placed on a shelf below yardage.

My fabric is organized:

- By Size
- By Color
- By Substrate



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# Organize Your Scraps

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Organize your scraps.

I keep scraps in clear bins I bought at IKEA. Each bin is organized by color and substrate (quilting cotton or batik).

Keep scrap bindings in a separate bin. They're great to keep around for small projects.



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# Organize Your Notions and Tools

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Organize your notions and tools.

Boxes, bins, and clear containers keep like items together.

Label storage containers so you can easily find what is in them.

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## Other Ideas for a Sustainable Studio

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There are a lot of things you can do to create a more sustainable studio.  
The following are just a few ideas.

1. Host a fabric and/or craft exchange with local creatives.
2. Cut leftover fabric into rectangles, squares, or triangles and store in bins. Keep the pieces uniform (1 1/2" squares, 2" squares, 3" x 6" rectangles, etc.)
3. Keep leftover binding to use on small or scrappy projects.
4. Make a boro quilt.
5. Keep very small scraps to fill pillow forms, or use as filling in stuffed animals.
6. As a last resort, put natural materials in a compost bin.

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## Batting and Quilt Back Substitutes

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1. Flannel yardage or flannel sheets
2. Wool or wool blankets
3. Pieced cotton or wool batting
4. An old cotton quilt or cotton blanket
5. Ticking
6. You can make a summer quilt by omitting the batting—perfect for warm weather!



# Commit to the Process



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The Zero Waste Quilting process is not linear.

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The hardest part of ***Zero Waste Quilting*** is committing to the process.

Changing your buying habits is hard.

It's not linear to create within a set of constraints.

Allow yourself to fail.

Allow yourself to put a project aside for a little while

Show yourself grace as you step into something new.

But if you commit to the process, you'll be amazed at not only your creativity and growth but how far your fabric can take you.