



How to sew a fidget quilt

People with dementia often find comfort in having something for their hands to do, especially those that are staying in an unfamiliar hospital or care home. Fidget quilts can help those with dementia feel calm while also keeping them occupied.

As part of the NFWI's *Carers Welcome* campaign, we're encouraging WI members to sew fidget quilts and donate them to their local hospital ward for use by patients with dementia. We're asking that WI members use the donation as an opportunity to ask hospital officials

about the care they provide for those with dementia.

Since these interactive textiles are meant to stimulate memory, it is important that fidget quilts trigger the senses by using different textures and embellishments as much as possible. They also provide a nice opportunity for you to try your hand at different sewing techniques. You can create your own original fidget quilts or you can use the patterns and ideas created by Jan White, a former costume designer and member of Haywards Heath WI, West Sussex Federation.

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Things to Consider:

- You can sew this quilt on your own, with fellow WI members, or your knit and natter group.
- The quilt must be completely washable.
- All embellishments should be strong and securely fastened.
- Don't include anything that can make a loud noise as it may disturb other patients.

- Think carefully about colour, contrast, and texture.
- Each square should have something to do, move, or feel. Variety is the aim.
- You can also add a scent to the quilt. A small fabric parcel attached with a popper so that it can be changed/washed is a good idea; you can insert lavender or scented rice if you wish.

To make the fidget quilt squares

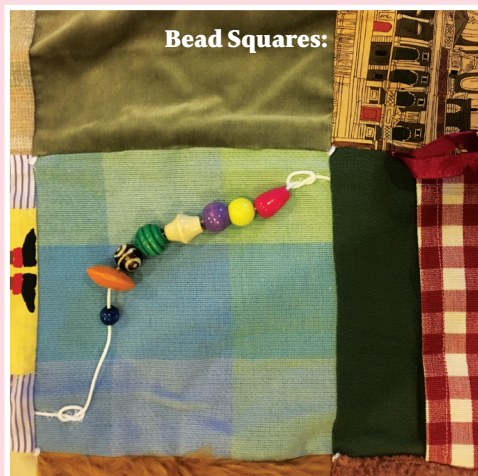
Cutting squares: Please cut squares 6 ½ inches/ 16.5 cm square. They must be cut on grain (in line with the threads).



Plait squares: On a patterned square, sew three contrasting cords or laces next to each other in the middle of one edge of the square. Stitch them down within the 1/4" seam allowance. Each lace should be about 16"/40 cm long. Be sure the loose ends cannot fray- if it isn't lace, stitch across or melt the ends.



Button Tree Squares: Sew a button to the end of each tree branch. Be careful that no button comes within ½" or 1 ½ cm of the edge of the square because you will need to get a sewing machine around it. Vary the size, shape, and colours of the buttons. Include interesting shapes. *Jan advises that you sew on with double button thread and knot each one separately. These will get a lot of pulling so they need to be extra durable, so knot off very soundly! If you sew them on with a machine, use Fray-Check or Fray-Stoppa on both sides.*



Bead Squares: On a shoe lace (or a stout piece of string or a braid of button thread), string 8-10 beads of various shapes, sizes, and colours. Loop the ends of the cord 1" from the edge of the square and stitch over the loop. Stitch the end of the cord down all the way to the edge of the fabric. Leave a little slack so the beads can slide along the cord fairly easily.

Zipper Squares: Sew the zipper flat onto the square at an angle. Be careful that the metal bits are not within the ¼" seam allowance, but that the fabric ends of the zip are within it. This might be a fun place to try out some of the fancy stitches your machine can do! You could thread a contrasting lace, cord or ribbon through the pull and knot, leaving 2" for pulling.

Peep-O-Squares: Make little satin curtains by putting a narrow hem in three edges of the satin (since the edge has been overlocked, it only needs to be turned once). Create your own little 'peep-o' character to hide under the curtain. Jan likes to use animal shapes, but they can be anything! Be sure it is either printed on the square or stitched down securely. Stitch



the unhemmed edge of the curtain to the top edge of the square, hiding the picture.

Ring Squares: With a strong piece of twill tape or grosgrain ribbon, make a loop that secures the ring or rings to the square. You can make your own loops by turning through a tube of fabric. Stitch the loop to the top edge of the square.

Ribbon Squares: Arrange 4-6 short lengths of ribbon (different sizes, textures and colours) along the top edge of the square. Leave 1" / 2.5 cm from the sides and bottom of the square, so they don't get sewn in when we make up the quilt. Cut the ends either at an angle or in an inverted V so they don't fray.

Loop Squares: With heavy twill tape or stiff ribbon (like grosgrain), sew across the tape several times to create 3 or 4 standing loops that someone could poke their fingers through. Be sure they are stitched down very securely and backstitched to both ends. Make the tape go across the full width of the fabric and cut the ends even with the edge of the square.



Texture Squares: With this square you're going to think with your fingertips! Make a pattern on the square that has uneven textures and a meandering, crooked, or curly path for fingers to follow.

Tie End Squares: Cut the end off of a tie. Stitch the tie ends securely to the squares. If you have large tie ends, place them in the middle of the top edge. If you have small tie ends, stitch two to the top edge about 1/2" / 1.5 cm apart, and cut them to be slightly different lengths. Be sure they are 5" or less so they don't get stitched into the same allowance when you put the quilt together.



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To assemble the fidget quilt top

Jan recommends that you use $\frac{1}{4}$ " or 6mm seam allowances, which means you will need to put the edge of the presser foot right against the edge of the fabric. Try to keep the seams as accurate as possible since the backing fleece has been cut to that measurement.

Choose all different activities for the quilt.

1. Assemble 1 strip of 5 plain squares (no activities). This will later be cut in half lengthwise to make the top button strips



2. Assemble 2 strips of 5 squares with 3 activities in the middle of three squares:



3. Assemble 1 strip of 5 squares in this order (this is the middle strip)



4. Cut the plain strip in half, lengthwise, and sew the strips together in this configuration:



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Final steps to finish the quilt

When the top has been sewn together, check again (front and back) that everything is secure and strongly stitched. All the activity bits are sewn into the seams and all the seams have adequate seam allowances.

1. Iron the seams flat- sometimes they work better if not ironed open because of the difference in weight of the various fabrics.
2. Lay the top of the fleece backing, taking care to smooth them both out, pin around the edges and stitch the edges all around, with the same allowance.
3. Lay the quilt out flat again (top side up) and put a pin in every intersection of squares. Hand stitch or bar tack the front through to the back at every intersection of squares. Hand stitch or bar tack the front through to the back at every intersection. (A bar tack is a wide zigzag stitch with 0 stitch length, sewing in place). If you use a machine bar tack, all the tacks must be reinforced with Fray-Check or Fray-Stoppa on both sides because of their tendency to unravel.
4. Make 2” bias binding and bind all the edges of the quilt.



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