

Choosing Fabrics - Pattern

(Excerpted from *Magnificent Spiral Mandala Quilts* by RaNae Merrill)

When I select fabrics for a spiral quilt (or any quilt), I combine three types of fabrics: foundation fabrics, energy fabrics and jewelry fabrics. Each type of fabric plays an important role in bringing the design to life.

Foundation fabrics

Foundation fabrics are solids, small tone-on-tones and textures. These are the backbone of your design, setting the color palette and defining the shapes. However, an entire quilt in these well-behaved fabrics might be bit dull, so it's a good idea to mix in some energy fabrics.



Placing foundation fabrics in a spiral quilt: Anywhere! Since the patterns are tiny and non-directional, they fit in any size piece of the design. They are the best choice for narrow spokes and flow forms. In gradations, they create smooth, subtle shifts from value to value.

Place foundation fabrics alongside energy fabrics to hold and define a shape.

Energy fabrics

Energy fabrics have medium-sized, multicolored patterns. They add sparkle and vitality to any design. For spirals, select non-directional patterns that are small enough to see in the narrow triangles. You may need to fussy-cut small pieces to achieve a consistent color and/or texture across an entire area.



Placing energy fabrics in a spiral quilt: Solid flow forms and other large areas such as backgrounds and borders that have enough space to show the pattern are good places for energy fabrics. Work them into gradations to add texture or to change from one color to another.

Jewelry fabrics

Jewelry fabrics are large-scale prints. They are like a lapel pin on a business suit or a necklace with a dress, creating focal points in your design.



Placing jewelry fabrics in a spiral quilt: Centers of spirals are ideal places to feature a fussy-cut motif. If you are working in mirror symmetry, look for symmetrical prints that you can place in reflection where spirals join. Applique a fussy-cut detail over the finished quilt. Backgrounds and borders are good places to show off a large-scale pattern -- and pick up bits of the same fabric within the design (even if it's really subtle) to create unity between the piecing and the border.

TIP: Use the same color or fabric in at least two places in your quilt. This unifies and balances the design, and helps the viewer's eye take in the whole quilt.

(C) 2010 RaNae Merrill All rights reserved