

Gadgets that I can't live without in my studio

by Millie Cumming

Several years ago I was at a wonderful lecture and workshop by Karen Kay Buckley; she liked to talk about her top ten tips on various topics, so I would like to list ten gadgets that I can't live without in my studio. (Also, most of these are inexpensive, and not necessarily from a quilt shop).

Parchment paper – particularly helpful when using fusible fabrics, to avoid gumming up your iron – reusable, throw away once it is gross – I find it better than the silicone sheets, and cheaper (and very good when I make cookies so I don't have to wash the baking tray.) Also when pressing, the paper (like using a press cloth) prevents that shiny appearance on some dark fabrics.

Freezer paper – excellent for applique, also good for support for writing on fabric such as when making a label, also for squaring up phototransfers (which often stretch). I keep all the little leftover pieces for small projects. Freezer paper can also be used as a disposable palette for fabric paints.

Painter's tape (blue, or green)

– DOESN'T GET STICKY on the fabric or your tools

-keeping a backing tight while preparing a quilt sandwich

-labelling tools for a workshop

- make a pile of strips on top of each other, use an exacto knife to straighten up the edge, and use as a piecing guide next to your presser foot on your sewing machine

-holding pieces of freezer paper together for a larger pattern – you can iron right over the seams of the freezer paper

-the green tape comes in different sizes including ¼', so very useful for marking for quilting

-the tape can be used to pick up stray threads or lint, just like a lint brush

Caddy at each station where you are working – seam ripper, thimble, scissors etc. I use antique cutlery boxes, but even takeout plastic dishes work fine. Also at the stations, a plastic bowl for putting scraps of fabric and batting.

Pill bottles anywhere you are using pins or needles, to immediately discard bent or dull pins.

Pipe Cleaners for gently cleaning your machine around the feed dogs.

Mesh synthetic mats for under caddies or sewing machine pedals, to avoid slippage.

Baby toothbrush for erasing chalk liners; (the textured fingers of quilting gloves work too)

Portable design wall felt over Styrofoam, or a flannel-backed cheap plastic tablecloth

Rulers for folding fabric (including recycled fabrics) – an article in Quilter's Newsletter suggested 2 rulers: a **4"x14"** ruler for fabrics under a half metre, and an **8 ½" x 24"** ruler for any larger fabrics, even those which are irregular dimensions (and this includes fabrics recycled from clothing). Using these rulers means that all your fabrics are of standardized widths for piling them on shelves or stacking in baskets.