

Blind Baby Quilt Hints & Tips

For the last several years, the members of SCVQA have generously handcrafted and donated many quilts to the Bay Area's Blind Baby Foundation (BBF). This organization works with families of infants and young children who have visual impairments and often, multiple disabilities. Your quilts have many uses for babies having no sight and babies with limited sight. For example, quilts with high contrasting colors help babies with limited sight to learn to focus on objects and recognize shapes. And quilts with many different or unusual textures provide rich sensory experiences for babies with no sight as well as those with limited sight. Feedback from BBF has been very positive about the value of our quilts to the work they do with over 200 blind babies and their families every year.

The following suggestions are meant to give you some ideas that will stimulate your creative abilities when making a quilt for the BBF. This is not an exhaustive list and is meant as a starting point only. In general, the quilt should be 'baby safe'; for example avoid beads or other embellishments that could be chewed off and swallowed. All materials in the quilt should be machine washable and dryable.

Tops

Alternate dark colored and light colored blocks or pieces (i.e. checkerboard or crazy quilt)	Helps visually impaired babies locate an object when placed on a dark or light material
Alternate textures; i.e. a smooth block next to a rough block or bumpy or soft or silky, etc.	Provides rich tactile input for both blind babies and the visually impaired
Create folds, pockets, or objects attached to the quilt that can be 'hidden' in the pocket	Stimulates babies problem solving capabilities; i.e. in 'finding' hidden objects, recognizing shapes, etc.
Create 'sounds'; i.e. by sandwiching an object or crackly paper between netting and a material	Adds another sensory dimension, hearing, so expands the baby's cognitive development
Create visual effects with bright contrasting colors or textures such as a square inside a square, simple smiley face (eyes and a mouth) etc.	Aids blind babies in learning shapes and helps visually impaired babies to learn to concentrate, focus their eyes and recognize colors

Backs

Use a single solid dark color or a solid light color	Helps visually impaired babies locate objects when placed on contrasting colors
Use a few large blocks of alternating solid dark color or a solid light color (i.e. 4 square checkerboard)	Improves object recognition and the concept of 'direction'; i.e. babies move object from one color block to the other contrasting color block
Make simple focus object or shape; ie cut out a flower, or star, or animal, etc. from the backing	Stimulates baby's cognitive abilities; ie shape recognition, concentration, focus, etc.

Embellishments

Sew various trims to the top pieces in various ways; i.e. looped fringe, rick rac, furry fabrics, sewn in lines, squares, circles, shapes such as duck, rabbit, etc	Provides rich sensory experiences and also helps with shape recognition
Use 3-D effects; i.e. make 3-D flowers or shapes with chiffon, felt, textured material, etc.	Provides rich sensory experiences and also helps with shape recognition

Note: This guide is a work in progress. Please feel free to suggest additional ways to make BBQuilts that provide sensory experiences. Send suggestions to Rosemary Greene 408 356-7775 rgreene@grdi.com