

French Braid Quilt Pattern

By Karla Hardaway



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This beautiful French braid quilt uses eight blue fabrics (dark) and eight cream fabrics (light). In choosing fabrics, be sure to vary the shade and scale of the prints to make the quilt interesting. You can purchase fabrics or maybe just pull fabrics from your stash. Stark contrast between light and dark fabrics is important to get the braid effect.

The pattern is an old pattern made new by adding a twisted ribbon border. Then you will complete the quilt with a beautiful scrappy binding.

Queen Size (95 x 95)

Fabric Requirements for Queen Size:

Blue (dark) fabric—eight total

$\frac{3}{4}$ yard of seven dark blue fabrics for braids

2 yards of one dark blue solid or very small print for braids and borders

Cream (light) fabric—eight total

$\frac{1}{2}$ yard of six cream fabrics for braids

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ yard of green cream for braids and first twisted ribbon border

2 yards of cream blue for braids and outer twisted ribbon border

9 yards of 45 inch fabric for backing or 3 yards or 108 inch fabric for backing

Optional using pre-cuts and yardage:

Or you may choose to use 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch x width of fabric strips for the braids. You need 40 darks (braids), 12 darks (scrappy binding), and 48 lights (braids).

$\frac{3}{4}$ solid blue for borders

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ green for borders and snowball squares

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ light cream for borders and snowball squares

Cutting instructions for braid columns and borders in quilt center:

1. From each of eight dark blue fabrics cut **five** 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch strips x width of fabric. Sub cut **two** strips into **five inch** length strips. Sub cut **three** strips into **seven inch** length strips.
2. From your solid blue you have chosen for the inside borders cut **twelve** 2 inch strips x width of fabric. (This fabric is also part of the braids.)
3. From each of eight cream fabrics cut **six** 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch strips x width of fabric. Sub cut **three** strips into **five inch** strips. Sub cut **three** strips into **seven inch** strips.

Constructing columns:

1. Although this quilt appears to be very scrappy, I actually sewed my strips in a planned order, although you could certainly sew them in random order. I laid my cream strips out so that shades were varied and scale of patterns was varied. I put the 5 inch next to the 7 inch. Then I did the same with the blues.
2. For the first column, you will use 26 five inch creams, and 26 seven inch blues. So you will use each fabric 3 times ($3 \times 8 = 24$) and then add two in the planned order to get 26. (4 of the first and second fabrics and then 3 of each of the rest to make 26)





3. Lay the first blue 7 inch strip over the cream 5 inch strip, right sides together. Sew $\frac{1}{4}$ inch seam where they intersect. Iron seam up. 5 inch strips will ALWAYS be on the left. 7 inch ALWAYS on the right.



4. Lay the second 5 inch cream on the set and sew $\frac{1}{4}$ inch seam. Iron seam up.



5. Add next 7 inch blue. Iron seam up. (Forgot to take the picture of it ironed up.)



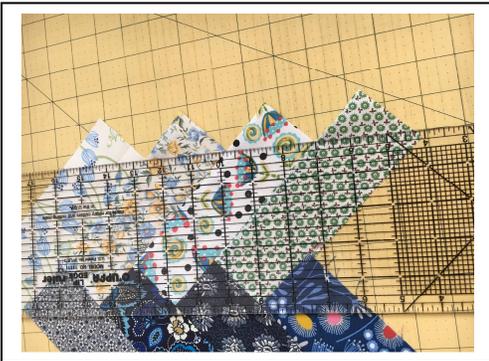
6. Add the next 5 inch cream. Iron seam up. You will continue this process until you have 26 creams on the left and 26 blues on the left.



7. For the second column, start with 5 inch blues on the left and then 7 inch cream on the right. You don't want the same blues to end up next to each other, so go up three fabrics to start and then keep the order going. Iron seams in column two down. Iron seams in column three up, iron seams in column four down, etc. By varying the direction you iron seams, seams will nest when you sew the columns together.

You will have 9 columns for a queen size quilt. For my sample pictures, I'm just using four fabrics on each side. For your quilt you will have really long strips with 26 on each side. Next we will trim the sides to make them straight so that we can seam them together.

8. Number your columns so that you can keep them in the right order. You will have five columns with 5 inch creams on the left and four columns with 5 inch blues on the left. 5 inch are ALWAYS on the left.



9. Lay your ruler along the side of the column. You will be cutting $\frac{1}{4}$ inch above the bottom point and at the place where the strips meet. When cutting the long strips, just cut a few points at a time since it's really hard to lay out the whole strip straight for cutting.

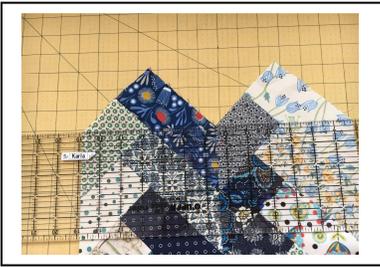


10. Trim the other side and then the next column. Now they are ready to seam together.

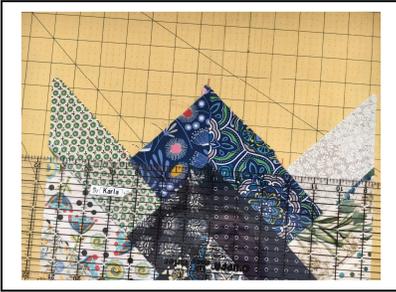
11. Save column 1 and column 9 to put outside the solid blue border. You will join columns 2-8 together to construct the quilt center.



12. Seams should nest. I recommend pinning at the seams and take out pins as you come to them. You will join columns 2-8. The top and bottom edges will look really weird but we're waiting to trim them all at one time.



13 Now we're ready to trim the top. Pretend the picture is long columns. Lots of waste so maybe save for another project. Trim columns 2-8 and then column 1 and column 9 exactly the same.



14. Now trim the bottom. You now have straight edges. When you make your quilt center you will have 7 columns (2-8) and 2 extra columns (1 and 9) for outside the solid blue borders.



These are my strips ready to be cut lying on the table. Notice they are really long.

Cut strips are lying on the chair. I numbered the columns with sticky notes, columns 1-9. You want them in order to make sure seams nest when you sew them together and to keep the pattern repetition in order.

Be careful: you have created a bias edge. The braids are **VERY** stretchy. Don't cut until you are ready to sew them together.

Constructing Quilt Center



This is the quilt center on my bed. It's on top of another quilt and complete with sleeping cat.

In this picture I have rotated the columns so that the column on the far right is actually column one and the column on the far left is column nine. I did this so that the blue chevrons formed where columns are seamed together would point toward the top of the quilt. I liked it better that way. It's up to you. You can't see the blue outside border on the far left, but it's there.

1. You have joined columns 2-8. Trim top and bottom of this construction. Also trim top and bottom of columns 1 and 9 exactly the same. (See pictures in small samples above.)
2. Using ¼ inch seam, join two 2 inch solid blue border strips vertically to make solid blue borders. Make 6 sets (4 vertical borders and top and bottom). Be sure not to have selvages in the seams.
3. Layer four sets of the blue strips on top of each other and lay them vertically through the quilt center to measure and cut them the same length as the center. Be careful as the braid strips are very stretchy. It helps to smooth the braids out and lay the borders on top smoothing the same amount. The borders are going to stabilize the stretchy braids.
4. Add a blue border to each side of center construction pinning the braids to ease in fullness. Use lots of pins. The braids are very stretchy.
5. Add column 1 to the blue side and column 9 to the cream side to complete the braid effect.
6. Add outside blue vertical borders to both sides. You now have blue border, column 1, blue border, all the center joined columns, blue border, column 9, and blue border.
7. Layer two remaining two blue borders and lay across the quilt horizontally through the quilt center to measure and cut to the same length. Add top and bottom blue borders. You may have to work in fullness of the braids. Use steam iron if you have to. You have now stabilized your braids. Whew! Now on to borders.

Cutting Instructions for outside borders:

1. Cut eight 4 inch strips x width of fabric from cream green.
2. Cut four 3 inch strips x width of fabric from cream green. Sub cut into 3 inch squares.
3. Cut nine 5 inch x width of fabric from cream blue.
4. Cut four 3 inch x width of fabric from cream blue. Sub cut into 3 inch squares.
5. Cut one 5 inch x width of fabric of each of your blue fabrics. Sub cut into 5 inch squares.
6. Cut nine 3 ½ inch x width of fabric from dark blue solid used in center borders for last outside border

Adding cream green border:

1. Join two strips of cream green 4 inch strips vertically right sides together. Be sure to remove selva edge. Make four sets.
2. Layer two strip sets and lay vertically down the quilt over one of the vertical blue borders. This step is usually done through the quilt center, but because the braids are so stretchy, I recommend using the blue border as your guide. Cut strips to the same measurement.
3. Attach a border strip to each side. Pin to ease in fullness.
4. Layer two strip sets horizontally across the quilt over the blue top or bottom border. Cut the strips to the same measurement.
5. Attach a border strip to the top and bottom of the quilt. Pin to ease in fullness.

Constructing snowball blocks:

You will need 52 snowballed blocks for the bottom and side borders.



1. On the wrong side of the cream blue and cream green 3 inch blocks, draw a diagonal line from corner to corner to use as a sewing line.
2. Putting right sides together, put a cream green square and a cream blue square on opposite corners of each 5 inch blue block. Stitch on the drawn line or just to the outside edge of the drawn line.



3. Trim to ¼ inch seam.



Front of block

Seams ironed out

Seams ironed in

4. Iron half of the seams in and half of the seams out to make it easy to nest seams later. Square blocks to 5 inches if needed.
5. You need to be sure that you have even numbers of each blue fabric. These will be sewn together in pairs. For 52 blocks, you need 16 pairs.

Adding snowballed border:

Bottom border



1. The center joining square is a blue 6 ½ inch x 2 ½ inch blue sewn to a 6 ½ inch x 2 ½ inch cream blue strip seamed together vertically. This square can be cut smaller in width if needed to make the bottom border fit. Because the braids are stretchy and we are not all computers, you need a square that gives you some wiggle room to make the bottom border fit.
2. For a queen size you need 7 snowballed blocks, the center joining square, and 7 snowballed blocks arranged in this order: First a single snowballed block which will be part of the wrapped corner, then three pairs of like blocks, then the 6 ½ inch wide x 5 inch joining block, then three pairs of like blocks, then a single block which will be part of the wrapped corner. Green cream snowballed corners go on top and blue cream snowballed corners go on bottom. Be sure your blocks are oriented like my picture.
3. Sew seven snowballed squares on the left together.
4. Sew seven snowballed squares on the right together.
5. Lay the joined snowball strips across the bottom green cream border from each corner to the center. Lay your 6 ½ wide x 5 inch center square in the center to see if it needs to be adjusted. Mine was perfect.
6. Sew the center square into the snowballed strips.
7. Add the snowballed border to the bottom of the quilt pinning to match corners and center.

Side Borders



1. The side borders are constructed the same as the bottom border except that you don't need a center joining square. Each side uses 19 snowballed blocks. Start with a pair of blocks that match the bottom left corner. That makes the blue blocks look like they wrap around the corner. Be sure to match what you see in the picture.
2. Then add eight more pairs.
3. The end block will be a single block. This block can be cut smaller if needed to make the strip of snowballed blocks match the side.
4. Construct the right side the same way. The last single block should be the same size as the last single block on the other side.
5. Attach side snowballed block borders. Trim top block where needed.

6. Join cream blue 5 inch border strips to make the blue cream borders. Join five strips vertically. Fold the long strip and lay it down the quilt over the small blue inside borders and cut two strips the same measurement. This step is usually done through the quilt center, but because the braids are stretchy, I recommend using those small blue inside borders as your guide.
7. Attach side cream blue borders.
8. Join the remaining four cream blue 5 inch border strips and the border strips you cut off the other border strips to form the top and bottom borders. Lay the strips across the quilt horizontally over the top or bottom small blue inside border and cut the border strips to the same measurement.
9. Attach top and bottom cream blue borders.
10. Repeat the above steps with the last 3 ½ inch dark blue border—attach sides first and then top and bottom.
11. Layer quilt top with batting and backing and quilt as desired.

Scrappy binding

1. Cut two 2 ½ inch strips x width of fabric from each of the seven dark blue fabric (don't use the dark blue that you used for the last outside border). Or you may prefer 2 ¼ inch wide border strips.
2. Cut the strips in half to get shorter lengths.
3. Join the strips in a pleasing manner using 45 degree angled seams. Iron seams open.
4. Iron strip in half and attach to quilt in desired manner.

Twin Instructions (90 long x 72 wide).

Fabric requirements

Blue (dark) fabric—eight total

½ yard of seven dark blue fabrics for braids

2 yards of one dark blue solid or very small print for braids and borders

Cream (light) fabric—eight total

1/3 yard of six cream fabrics for braids

1 ½ yard of green cream for braids and first twisted ribbon border

1 ¾ yards of cream blue for braids and outer twisted ribbon border

6 ½ yards 45 inch fabric for backing or 2 ½ yards 108 fabric for backing

Cutting instructions for braid columns and borders in quilt center:

1. From each of eight dark blue fabrics cut **four** 2 ½ inch strips x width of fabric. Sub cut **two** strips into **five inch** length strips. Sub cut **two** strips into **seven inch** length strips.
2. From your solid blue you have chosen for the inside borders cut **ten** 2 inch strips x width of fabric. (This fabric is also part of the braids.)
3. From each of eight cream fabrics cut **four** 2 ½ inch strips x width of fabric. Sub cut **two** strips into **five inch** strips. Sub cut **two** strips into **seven inch** strips.

Cutting Instructions for outside borders:

1. Cut seven 4 inch strips x width of fabric from cream green.
2. Cut four 3 inch strips x width of fabric from cream green. Sub cut into forty-eight 3 inch squares.
3. Cut seven 5 inch x width of fabric from cream blue.
4. Cut four 3 inch x width of fabric from cream blue. Sub cut into forty-eight 3 inch squares.
5. Cut one 5 inch x width of fabric of each of your blue fabrics. Sub cut into forty-eight 5 inch squares.
6. Cut eight 3 ½ inch x width of fabric from dark blue solid used in center borders for last outside border.

Constructing Columns:

Follow the directions for Queen quilt # 1-14 except that you will only make 6 columns. Save column 1 and 6 to attach after you have made the quilt center. You only need 24 fabrics for each side of each column instead of 26 like the queen.

Constructing quilt center and Adding cream green border and Constructing snowball blocks:

Follow directions for queen quilt except that you are working with 6 columns instead of 9.

Adding Snowballed border:

1. For the twin you will need 48 blocks: 12 blocks across the bottom and 18 for each side.
2. You will not need a joining block for the bottom. The blocks on each corner need to be exactly like the picture. If you need to adjust the bottom border to fit, take in the center blocks seam just a little bit. This will form a pointed block in the middle.

Side borders:

Follow directions for queen quilt. You will need fewer strips to make the borders since the twin is smaller.

Scrappy binding: Follow directions for queen. You will need fewer strips since the twin is smaller.

King Instructions (95 long x 112 wide)

I have made two queen size quilts with this pattern. I have not made the king but believe these measurements should work.

Fabric Requirements for King

Blue (dark) fabric—eight total

1 yard of seven dark blue fabrics for braids

2 ½ yards of one dark blue solid or very small print for braids and borders

Cream (light) fabric—eight total

½ yard of six cream fabrics for braids

2 yard of green cream for braids and first twisted ribbon border

2 ½ yards of cream blue for braids and outer twisted ribbon border

9 yards of 45 inch fabric for backing or 3 yards of 108 fabric for backing

Cutting instructions for braid columns and borders in quilt center:

1. From each of eight dark blue fabrics cut **seven** 2 ½ inch strips x width of fabric. Sub cut **three** strips into **five inch** length strips. Sub cut **four** strips into **seven inch** length strips.
2. From your solid blue you have chosen for the inside borders cut **twelve** 2 inch strips x width of fabric. (This fabric is also part of the braids.)
3. From each of eight cream fabrics cut **six** 2 ½ inch strips x width of fabric. Sub cut **three** strips into **five inch** strips. Sub cut **three** strips into **seven** inch strips.

Cutting Instructions for outside borders:

1. Cut eight 5 inch strips x width of fabric from cream green for first border
2. Cut four 3 inch strips x width of fabric from cream green. Sub cut into fifty-six 3 inch squares.
3. Cut ten 6 inch x width of fabric from cream blue for border after the ribbons.
4. Cut four 3 inch x width of fabric from cream blue. Sub cut into fifty-six 3 inch squares.
5. Cut one 5 inch x width of fabric of each of your blue fabrics. Sub cut into fifty-six 5 inch squares.
6. Cut ten 4 inch x width of fabric from dark blue solid used in center borders for last outside border.

Constructing Columns:

Follow the directions for Queen quilt # 1-14 except that you will make 11 columns. Save column 1 and 11 to attach after you have made the quilt center. You only need 26 fabrics for each side of each column just like the queen.

Constructing quilt center and Adding cream green border and Constructing snowball blocks:

Follow directions for queen quilt except that you are working with 11 columns instead of 9.

Adding Snowballed border:

1. For the king you will need 56 blocks: 18 blocks across the bottom and 19 for each side.
2. You will not need a joining block for the bottom. The blocks on each corner need to be exactly like the picture. If you need to adjust the bottom border to fit, take in the center squares seam just a little bit. This will form a pointed down block.

Side borders:

Follow directions for queen quilt. Your border strips are cut wider to give you a nice overhang.

Scrappy binding: Follow directions for queen. You may need more strips since the king is larger.

Optional Ideas for Future Braid Quilts:

Change up the braids.

The braids could be constructed the same way but using 7 inch strips on both sides for a more uniform look.

Construct the braids completely scrappy not worrying about light and dark fabrics.

Put border/sashings between all the braid columns instead of just the first and last columns.

Make a quilt which is all braids with one single outside border.

Make the braid columns and then cut them into squares for a quilt.

Make long braids and use them for borders on another quilt.

Vary the borders.

You could substitute plain five inch squares for the snowballed squares and still achieve a great look. This would take a lot less time than making the ribbon border.

You could make a piano key border instead of the borders included in this pattern.

You can leave off some of the borders and make the braid columns a bit shorter to make a smaller lap quilt.