

# How to select fabrics for a quilt.

BoulderMQG - March 2019

# Why is fabric selection so important?

The fabric you choose can define a mood or feeling for your quilt.

Selecting the right fabrics will give your project a cohesive look.

Depending on your selected fabric, your quilt can be dynamic or restful.

Your fabric selection can determine if you like your quilt or not.

Things to keep in mind when selecting fabrics:

-Tone/Saturation

How vibrant do you want the quilt to appear?

-Contrast (variation of value)

The level of contrast can make a quilt look different, bold, or soft.

-Scale of prints

Keep in mind the size of the print on your fabrics and the size of the cut pieces in your quilt. If you piecing is very small it is possible that a large print may not work well. Or, a large print may be the best choice.

-What do you like? What do you dislike?

-Why do you like certain fabrics?

Try to find similarities in the fabrics you are drawn to. Are they all bright colors, are they neutrals, do they all have texture, are they all multicolor prints or more monochromatic combinations?

-How does a fabric “read”

What does the fabric look like from far away compared to up close? Any fabric can give a different appearance from a distance. A red and white print may look pink further away. Make sure to check your fabrics from different vantage points.

-Try adding an unexpected print or color

-Add texture with prints or wovens

-Auditions

Lay out fabrics as you pull them from your stash or shop at the store. Try different combinations to test if fabrics play well together. Don't be afraid to add something unexpected or ditch the one that's not working.

# Solids vs. Prints

Solid fabrics generally bring focus to the shapes of the quilt design or pattern.

Solids generally require the use of a color scheme as there is not other colors to coordinate with as in printed fabrics.

However, manufacturers, designers, and sellers all offer pre-coordinated solid groupings to make it easier for color pairing.

With prints you need to keep in mind the scale of the print compared to the scale of the quilt piecing.

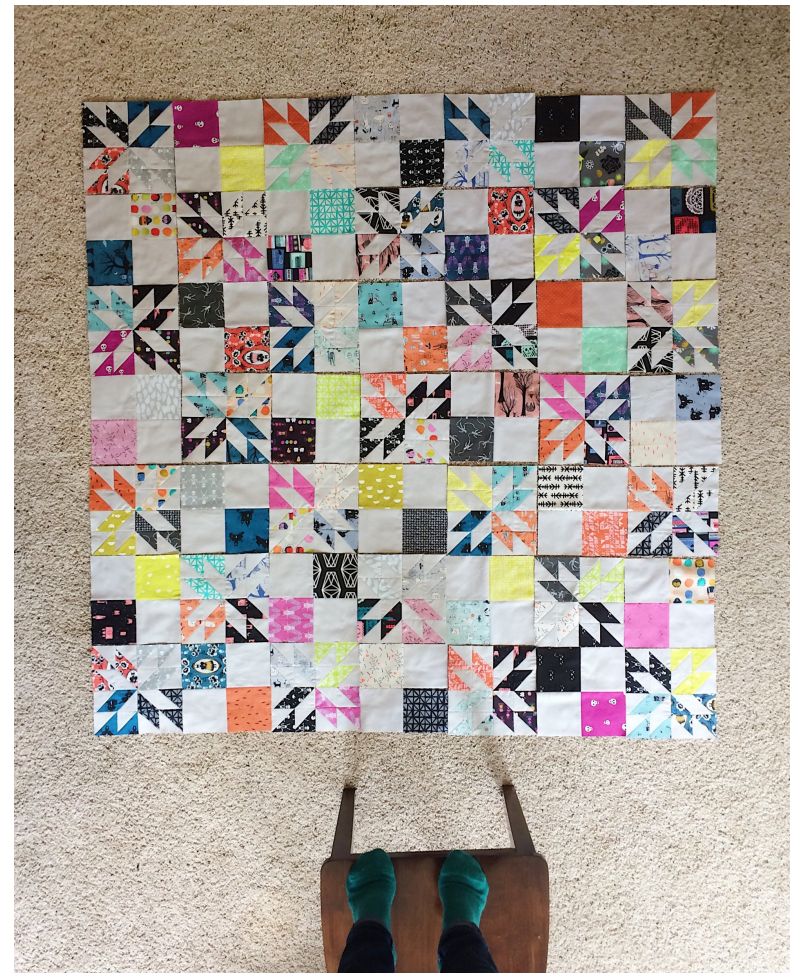
Prints also require attention to the scale or business when grouping them together. Make sure your quilt doesn't become a jumble of crazy prints unless that is the look you are going for.

Ways to select fabric for a quilt:

- Fabric Collection
- Color Scheme
- Rainbow, Monochromatic, or Neutral
- Feature/main fabric
- Secondary fabric
- Selvedge dots
- Photograph
- Online resources
- Inspiration from art/design/fashion
- Another quilt
- Choosing a theme

# Using a fabric collection.

Curated by the designer or by the seller.



This particular quilt uses both a designer collection and a seller curated bundle.

If you don't want to use a designer's collection, many retailers offer coordinated bundles that pull fabrics from multiple lines, designers, and even manufacturers.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.stashfabrics.com/p/cotton--steel-halloween-fat-quarter-bundle?v=1690>. The page features the Stashfabrics logo, a search bar, and a navigation menu with categories: Fabric, Precuts, Patterns, Notions, and Sale. The main product is the "Cotton + Steel Halloween Fat Quarter Bundle" priced at \$42.00, with 4 items in stock. A quantity selector is set to 1, and there is an "add to cart" button. Below the product image, there is an "ADD TO WISH LIST" button. The product details include SKU: CSHALLOWENFQ, Manufacturers: Cotton and Steel, and Themes: Halloween. Social sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest are also present.

Stashfabrics

Search

Fabric ▾ Precuts ▾ Patterns ▾ Notions ▾ Sale ▾

**Cotton + Steel Halloween Fat Quarter Bundle**

**\$42.00**

4 items in stock

1 ▾ [add to cart](#)

[ADD TO WISH LIST](#)

SKU: CSHALLOWENFQ

Manufacturers: [Cotton and Steel](#)

Themes: [Halloween](#)

SHARE: [f](#) [t](#) [p](#)



# Selecting a color scheme.

As a starting point, you can select any color scheme that we studied in January and February. Adding in printed fabrics that 'read' as a certain color within your selected scheme is a way to add prints into your fabric pull.



The color scheme selected for this quilt is a warm analogous scheme.



# Rainbow, Monochromatic, or Neutral

Using all colors, one color, or achromatic fabrics.

The rainbow is a nice organized way to start selecting fabrics. By putting your fabric pull in rainbow order, you can work with many fabrics that will all play nice together.

When using a monochromatic fabric pull make sure you are paying attention to the contrast and value levels of you fabrics. The look of your quilt can change based on the number and expanse of different values you select.

Neutral fabrics are those lacking color. Or more easily fabrics that 'read' as a colorless fabric. This does not always mean white, gray, black, and brown. You can use tones (color hues that have been grayed) to create a neutral looking quilt.



Rainbow order is a preorganized way of arranging the fabrics in your quilt.



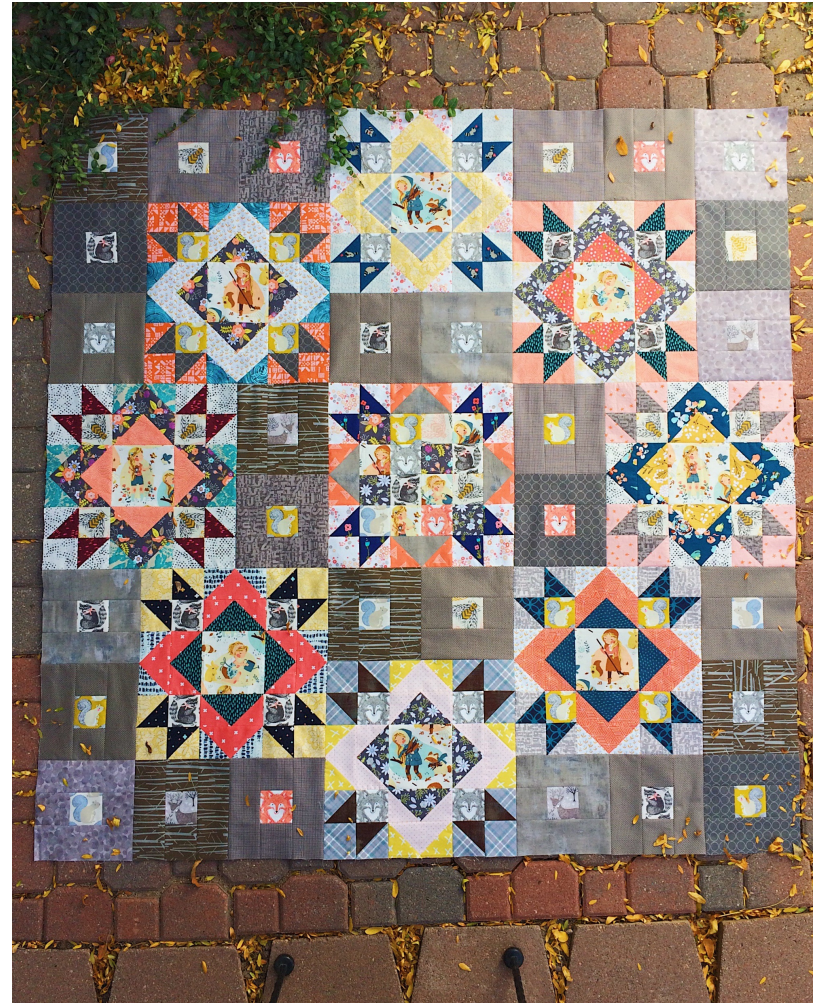
Using a monochromatic scheme allows many fabrics to work together based on their similar hue.



A quilt that generally has not color does not have to be as black and white as a black and white quilt. Don't be afraid to explore color tones.

# Choosing a main fabric to feature.

Selecting a main fabric, or featured fabric, works when you are using prints. Usually the fabric will have multiple colors that you can work with. Begin by auditioning fabrics that are the exact colors and shades as the featured fabric. Then, start pulling things that are similar, darker or lighter values, or different scale of prints.



# Expanding the palette by incorporating colors from a secondary fabric.

After making an initial fabric pull based on the featured fabric, you can then use other printed fabrics from your pull to match fabrics. If a certain color or motif is featured in a secondary fabric, consider adding more fabrics to your pull that have that color or a different scale of the motif.



Although the main fabric does not have any purple in it, the secondary gray floral has purple flowers. This allowed the cohesive use of the red-violet fish print fabric that features both the same purple as the flowers and a coral color, both found in the floral print.





Using the selvedge color swatches.



This doesn't mean making a quilt from selvages, although beautiful. This means checking your selvedge for the color dots. Use these dots to isolate the colors in a multicolored print fabric. This is an easy starting point for creating a fabric pull based around a featured fabric.

Some larger online retailers like Stash Fabrics or Hawthorne offer coordinating color search.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.stashfabrics.com/p/agave-field?v=3709>. The page features the Stash Fabrics logo and a search bar. A navigation menu includes links for Fabric, Precuts, Patterns, Notions, and Sale. The main content area displays the 'Agave Field' fabric, which has a geometric pattern in shades of blue, orange, and green. The price is listed as \$10.95, with a crossed-out MSRP of \$12.00, indicating a 9% discount. The fabric is currently in stock, with 5 1/4 yards available. A quantity selector is set to 1 yard, and there is an 'add to cart' button. Below the product image, there are options to 'ADD TO DESIGN WALL' and 'ADD TO WISH LIST'. The product details section lists the SKU as ARZ-553, the collection as Arizona, the designer as April Rhodes, and the manufacturer as Art Gallery Fabrics. The fabric is identified as Quilting Fabric with a geometric theme and a width of 44 inches. Social sharing options for Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest are also present. At the bottom of the page, there is a 'Find Coordinating Items by Color' section with a row of seven color swatches: green, grey, red, orange, black, light orange, and light green.

Match colors from a photograph.





These fabrics were pulled based on the colors and shapes found in the photograph from the previous slide. The colors that most stood out were pulled in various shades and saturation levels. The feminine floral scene in the photograph lended itself to the types of prints that were selected.

Use an online resource to find a photograph and isolate the color palette.

[canva.com/color-palette](https://canva.com/color-palette)

Pinterest

[play-crafts.com/blog/tools/](https://play-crafts.com/blog/tools/)





Canva allows you to upload your own photo and it does the work of isolating the main colors. You can then use these colors to pull fabrics.

The screenshot shows the Canva Color Palette Generator interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Canva logo, links for 'Browse', 'Features', 'Learn', and 'For Work', and buttons for 'Login' and 'Sign up'. The main heading reads 'The easiest place to get colors from your photos'. Below this is a large image of a colorful, illuminated sculpture of a dragon or mythical creature. To the right of the image is a text prompt: 'Drag another photo here!'. Below the image, five color swatches are displayed with their names and hex codes: Dark Green (#04342D), Teal (#08615F), Light Steel Blue (#B1ACC7), Light Sea Green (#1AB4B3), and Light Sea Green (#2067AC). At the bottom, there is a button labeled 'Upload another image'.

Canva

Browse Features Learn For Work

Colors > COLOR PALETTE

The easiest place to get colors from your photos

Drag another photo here!

Dark Green #04342D

Teal #08615F

Light Steel Blue #B1ACC7

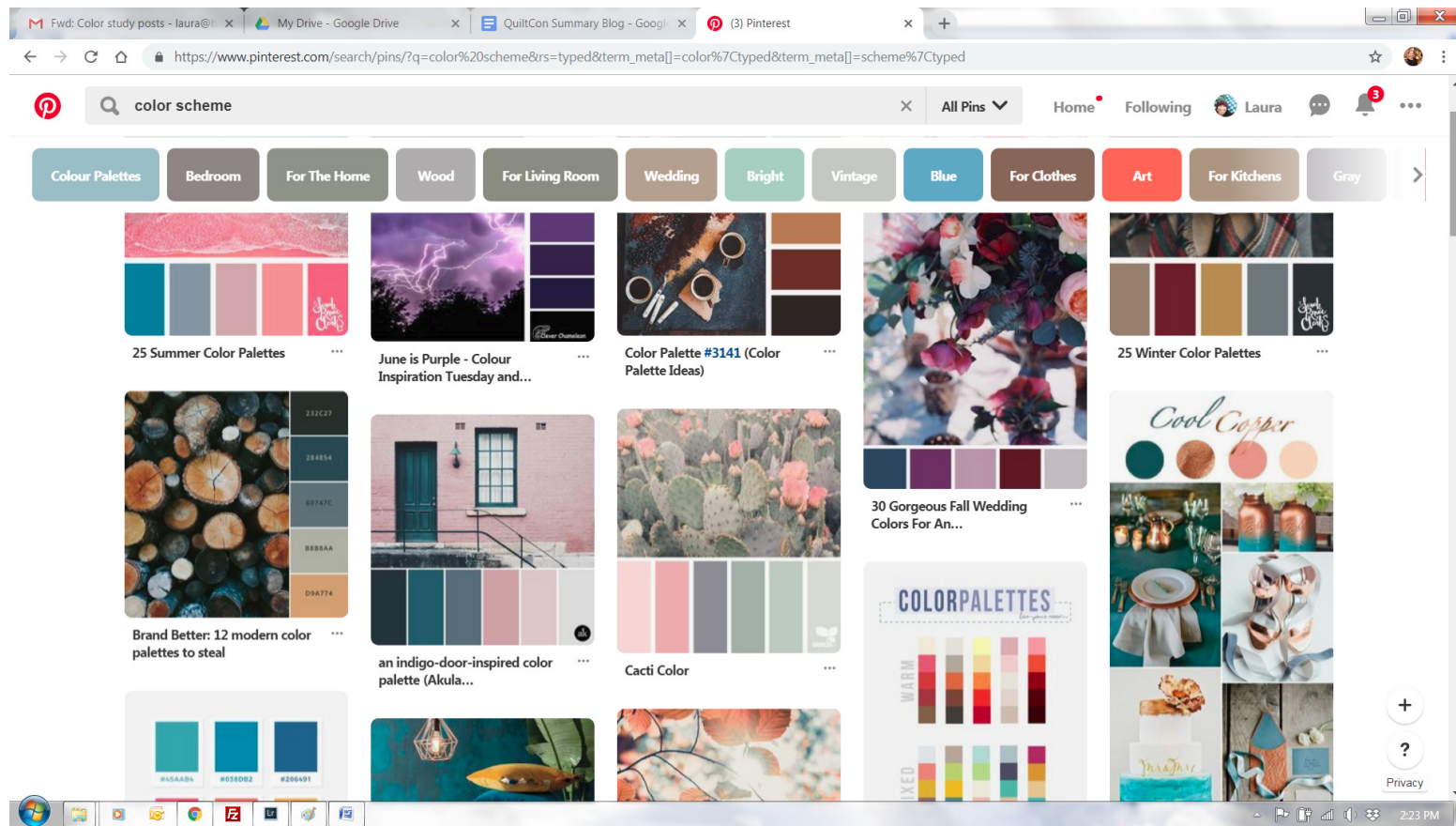
Light Sea Green #1AB4B3

Light Sea Green #2067AC

Upload another image

By a simple search of “color scheme” Pinterest gives sample photos with isolated colors. Google, or another search engine, would also give these results when searching images.

For a more refined palette result, you can search a more specific term such as “pink and turquoise color scheme”



# Taking inspiration from art or design.

Paintings, sculpture, graphic design, advertising, architecture, interior design, fashion, photography, etc...



The colors and fabric choices can be a literal interpretation of art of graphic design, as in the DMMQG logo and quilt.



However, any of these quilts could have also been inspired by the graphic design of the logo. The rainbow starts with yellow-oranges and ends with greens. It does not have to be a literal interpretation of the art or design.



Using art as a starting point for a color palette allows you to not have to think about the colors. Then, you can focus mainly on the prints and how they play together; scale, placement, and motif.





Architecture and interior design are both great places to find inspiration for color and print. For example, the quilt above echoes the gray and white lines in the photo. The fabric selected could be solids used to create stripes or the maker could have selected a gray and white stripe fabric instead.

# SAGE GREEN



WHOWHATWEAR.CO.UK



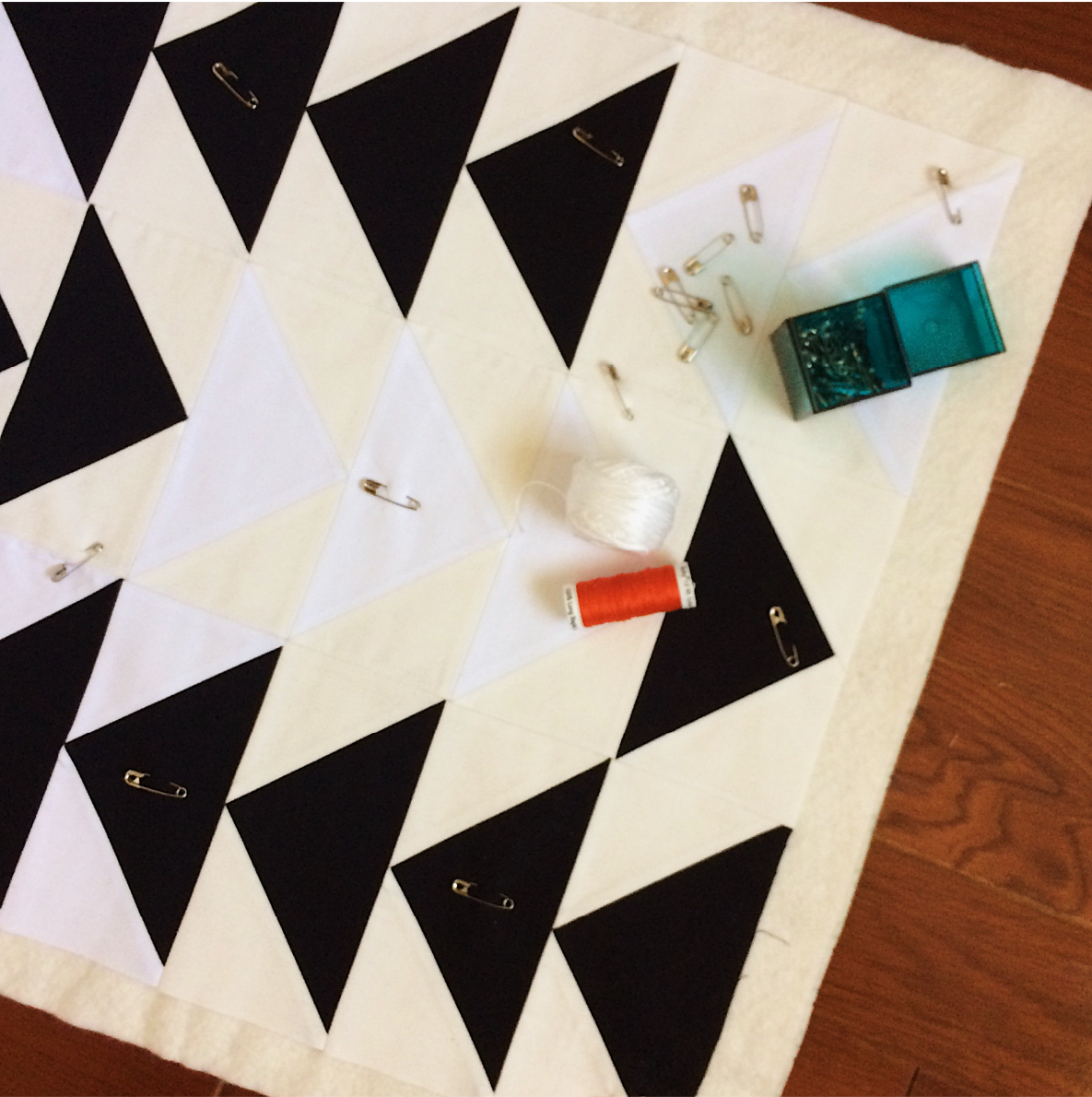
This Suzy Quilts quilt uses colors from fashion. Especially the pairing of the sage green with the camel, as seen in the upper left fashion photo. Look for inspiration for fabric pulls everywhere.

Taking inspiration from fashion is not limited to just color palette. Look at prints and textures that are relevant to the fashion and apply those to your fabric pull.



Copying colors or fabrics from another  
quilt.

There is no such thing as an original idea.







Taking inspiration from another quilt for your fabric choices does not have to be literal like the previous two slides. If you love the way certain fabrics look together but aren't crazy about the pattern, block, or quilt design, you can always take away the fabric choices and apply them to the quilt you are making.

All these quilts are using similar fabrics but the designs are very different.

# Selecting a theme.

Choosing a theme is a good place to start when venturing out into the world of original fabric pulls.

When using a theme you may sometimes have to dig into stereotypes.



Low Volume



Holiday



Masculine



Feminine



Clashy Bright



Soft



# Practice Makes Perfect

BoulderMQG is offering two opportunities in 2019 to practice your fabric selection skills.

The first is a chance to use the 2019 Kona color of the year, Splash, and design and sew a mini quilt. You will be able to apply one of the fabric selection techniques (presented in March 2019) and also a design that defines a modern quilt (presented in April 2019).

The second opportunity allows you to dig through your fabric stash and practice making fabric pulls that follow a theme. This is an Instagram challenge that BMQG will be hosting. You will only need to select the fabrics and you are not required to sew anything.

# BMQG 2019 Kona COTY Challenge

- Sign up in March & April
- Fat eighth of fabric distributed in May
- Use any of the fabric selection methods presented
- Must include Kona Splash in your quilt
- Apply modern design from April presentation
- Sew a mini quilt sized between 15"-36"
- Show and Tell in October 2019

# BoulderMQG Instagram Challenge

#bouldermqgfabricpull

Look for the monthly Instagram prompts and share your fabric pulls using our hashtag.