When I head to the beach, I need a big bag and a big blanket. For years I used a blanket that was too small to have a bunch of little ones crawling all over it. And comforters and quilts are bulky and heavy.

I searched the internet for ideas and, until recently, there wasn't too many. You can check out my Pinterest Board to see what I found.

When I asked my blog readers and facebook fans what their ideal beach blanket is, many said a sheet. They like that the sand shakes off easily. A customer asked me to make two blankets as part of shower gift for each of her two kids who were getting married this summer. I tried the idea of using sheets, fabric, and duck cloth, to add some weight to the blanket so it wouldn't blow away.

The duck cloth is great, but requires a seam to make a wide blanket and can be a bit pricey. My twitter friend, Susan, had planted an idea about using painter's drop cloth as fabric and I thought it would be a great resource for the bottom of a large blanket. There are many online sources of drop cloth or you can get one at your local hardware store. The great thing about drop cloth is that it is washable and can repel water, making it a great choice for a blanket! I was hoping that the large drop cloth would not have a seam, but the one I purchased did.

This beach/picnic blanket is 6 feet x 7 feet - big enough to lay down and not have your feet in the sand!

Big enough to fit a gaggle of admiring girls.

Big enough to play Twister!

And nice enough to relax on.

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Find a downloadable PDF version of the tutorial on my website.

Make the Big Beach Blanket

Supplies:

- 20 fat quarters or 10 half yard cuts of coordinating fabric
- one 9' x 12' canvas drop cloth
- quilt binding or material to make your own, approximately 10 yards

I started with the floral and added coordinating fabrics.

1. Wash and preshrink fabrics. I lived on the wild side and threw all my half yard cuts without finishing the edges. I have a front loader and it did not seem to create a stringy mess. But if you want to be sure to avoid tangles of threads you can sew or serge around the fabric before washing. I washed and dried the drop cloth twice. Do the same if you use canvas.

2. Cut fabric into uniform rectangles. I used half-yard cuts, so I first cut the fabric in half along the fold and then squared it up.

3. Arrange fabric pieces in a 4 x 5 grid

4. Sew pieces together in strips. Sew the rectangles together to make four strips, each with 5 pieces. Then, sew the columns together. Press as you go.

5. Place drop cloth on the floor with the WRONG side up. (If there is a seam, the seam allowance side should be up.) Place the blanket top on top of it so that wrong sides are together.

6. Trim the drop cloth to two inches around the perimeter of the blanket.

7. Pin baste the layers together. I use curved safety pins around the perimeter and throughout.

8. Stitch the fabrics together by stitching in the ditch along the seam lines.

9. Baste around the perimeter of the blanket.

10. Bind the blanket. There are several options. A quick method of binding is to use the 2" perimeter of the drop cloth to self bind. I did this with my duck cloth version and it was quick and easy. You can find instructions here.

I didn't want to use the natural color of the drop cloth with the vibrant colors of the quilt top, so I used orange duck cloth to make a binding. I cut four inch strips and sewed them together to create a huge strip. I pressed the seams open and folded and pressed the strip in half. Duck cloth is heavy and thick, so it can be a challenge to sew. I liked the extra weight it added to the blanket.

I like to use this video tutorial for applying a binding by machine. I stitched my folded binding to the wrong side of the fabric, going all the way around the perimeter of the blanket. I then folded the binding to the front, pinned and topstitched.

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11. Add straps. Create two straps in the same manner as you created the binding. Use 4" strips to create straps that are about 40" long. Stitch the straps to the binding. Stitch at the **midpoint** of each strap.

Place the straps centered on the 2nd rectangle along the top.

12. Fold, roll and go to the beach! First, fold both sides toward the center.

Fold again toward the side that has the straps. In this case, from right to left.

Starting at the bottom, roll and tie.

Put the blanket in your [oversized beach tote] and head to the beach!

A beach blanket and beach bag make a great wedding or shower gift! My custom listing is here.