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Kimberly's Korner

Quilt Class Etiquette

This year, I've been very busy giving lectures and teaching classes for many guilds and at national quilt shows. I absolutely love teaching because it gives me the opportunity to meet so many quilters from around the country and around the world, and I get to see and spend time with industry friends who are also national teachers.

Recently I had lunch with a group of my quilt teacher friends. We agreed that while most quilters who come to class are a delight to meet, there are a few students who prove to be, shall I say, challenging. It was an interesting discussion of some of the do's, don'ts, and "Oh no, she didn't really do that in class?!" Of course I'm absolutely sure none of you reading this column have committed any of these faux pas! Still, I think anyone can benefit by learning from some of these common classroom situations.

The first thing to remember is to show up for class on time. Sometimes being tardy cannot be avoided (traffic jams, lack of parking, etc.), but with careful planning and time to spare, you won't be hurried or get a speeding ticket on the way. That's not a good way to start class for either you or the teacher! If you do arrive late, don't expect the teacher to drop everything to get you up to speed. Like me, many teachers have the lesson perfectly portioned for the allotted class time, and it's not fair to the other students to expect the teacher to stop and repeat all the steps you missed

just so you can catch up on the spot. If you're later than, say, 10 or 15 minutes, simply come in and sit down quietly. In most cases the teacher will be able to spend a little time with you later on.

Be prepared. Nothing ruins the fun like frantically looking for parts and pieces that should have been cut prior to class. Follow the supply lists provided by the instructor, and bring exactly what is listed. For instance, don't bring fusible interfacing when you were supposed to bring fusible web. Waiting until 11:00 p.m. the night before class to begin preparing your fabrics or gathering your supplies is not a good idea, but it happens often. Inevitably, fabrics will be cut incorrectly or you'll forget a necessary item. Your frustration will spill over into distraction for you and those around you.

Manufacturers or local dealers often provide classrooms with sewing machines. The show organizer or class catalog should clearly state that fact. If you're not sure, ask in advance. Don't arrive and insist you must be allowed to sew on your own sewing machine! The brand new or gently used machines are in place so you can simply show up and get right to the fun of sewing without having to haul heavy equipment. Yes, of course they want you to try their machines. Keep an open mind—you may find your new BMF (best mechanical friend) while sitting at this new-to-you machine! Even if you're not in the market for a new machine, be respectful



of all the work, expense, and effort that went into getting everything prepared so you can simply enjoy the classroom experience.

Please don't try to customize the size of the class project to suit you, and don't ask the teacher to "resize it to fit your bed." Some students don't want to leave class with another large UFO to finish, while other students insist they don't want to make yet another table runner or wallhanging! As teachers we spend many long hours writing patterns, class handouts, and supply lists when we'd rather be sewing. Simply be willing to prepare everything as listed on the supply list and bring it to class as directed. Expect to learn the new technique or project in the size the teacher has planned. Take your new skills home to apply them as desired for the next quilt you have in mind.

You may think you have the perfect ruler or tool to make half-square triangles or Flying Geese units, but it is very awkward for the teacher if your preferred method isn't what he or she is teaching in class that day. Please don't come to class with another teacher's ruler or method and extol its virtues to your fellow classmates or worse yet, to the teacher! Be respectful of the teacher's own method or proprietary tools and be willing to give them a try with an open mind in class.

If several people are seated at each table to make room for a full class, your personal sewing space may feel quite limited. Try to go with the flow, it's temporary. It won't last long. Bring a cushion to bolster you up on those low folding chairs, or bring a small light to help brighten the sewing space around you. Wear layers so you can take off a sweater if the room becomes too warm. Do try to keep your area tidy, especially around your chair on the floor. Nothing is worse than someone tripping and falling over far-flung fabrics, Tutto bags, and cords. Relax and enjoy the lively chatter and all the creative energy around you, and you'll end up having such a great time you'll forget about the cramped quarters.

If you need to provide feedback to the teacher,

there is a time and a place to do so. Most major quilt shows provide evaluation forms (either paper or online) for rating the teacher, the room, the class content, and so on. It is perfectly fine to give your feedback, but if the ratings you give are low, be willing to take a bit of time to write constructive comments so the teacher and show organizers can strive to improve. Don't just circle the lowest rating numbers without giving reasons for doing so. Be kind. Remember, those evaluations are read and taken to heart by teachers who are first and foremost quilters just like you. I've hugged more than one teacher who was in tears over hurtful comments.

And please don't give your "insightful feedback" to the instructor in front of other students. You may think you're doing him or her a favor, but it can quickly escalate into a vertical dogpile if other students join in the nit-picking! Worthwhile comments can always wait until everyone leaves after class. Speak privately or write a courteous email afterwards. By all means, if the instructor did an excellent job or you learned something new, be generous with your praise! Give high ratings and ask the show organizer to bring

her or him back again. Your words have the power to bring someone down or lift them up. Use them wisely!

Most importantly, when you sign up for a quilt class, come prepared to learn and have a great time. Quilting is supposed to be fun; it's a time to learn new skills and refuel your creative mojo! It always surprises me when a student shows up for class as a bundle of nerves or consumed with anxiety. Relax, keep an open mind, and enjoy your time with the teacher. She or he is there to share a new technique, method, and knowledge. Classes are YOUR time to learn, to create, to grow, and ultimately to quilt!

See you in class . . .

Quilted blessings!

Kimberly

