

How to mend or store an old quilt


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By [Jeanne Huber](#)

Question: I have a quilt that was made by my grandmother and is very old. Parts are frayed. I want to have it repaired. Is that a good idea, or is it better left worn and stored away in my cedar chest? Is there someone in the area who can do this kind of work? --*From the Home Front chat*

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Answer: Quilts from your grandmother's era were usually made to put fabric scraps to good use. If a part frayed, there was no big debate about what to do: The homemaker just mended it. So mending might indeed be the way to go on your quilt, especially if you want to continue using it.

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Given your quilt's high sentimental value, you might want to start by consulting a professional conservator trained in assessing and repairing fabrics. The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works has a "Find a Conservator" service at www.conservation-us.org. It lets you search by area for people who specialize in various fields. The listings include six antique quilt specialists within 50 miles of Washington.

One of them is [Julia M. Brennan](#), owner of Caring for Textiles (202-362-1941, www.caringfortextiles.com), a D.C. company that works on textiles from throughout the United States and abroad. She gives free quotes.

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Brennan often prepares antique quilts for use as wall hangings or for display in boxes or frames. "If a quilt is just too fragile and cannot be left out and enjoyed, then I recommend that it is stored in a cool, dry place in the home," she says.

Avoid the attic or basement. If you use a cedar chest, line it with a washed cotton sheet so acids in the wood don't leach into the fabric. Storing a quilt in an acid-free box or even a drawer also works well. Fold the quilt like a fan and pad the folds with acid-free tissue paper to eliminate creasing, then wrap the whole assembly in a clean sheet or muslin.

You can buy acid-free tissue paper and boxes at the [Container Store](#) or online from conservation suppliers such as University Products (www.universityproducts.com) and Gaylord Bros. (www.gaylord.com).

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