



1451 Montiel Road Suite 140  
Escondido, California 92026  
760-738-9677

*Connecting People with  
the Joy of Quilting*

## Why Value “Value”?

There’s an old, but wise, saying in quilting: “Value does all the work in a quilt, but color gets all the credit”. But “What is value?” you ask. Simply put, it’s the lightness or darkness of a fabric and three categories are generally used: light, medium and dark.

Ok, but why does that matter? Because value has a dramatic effect on a quilt’s overall appearance: from one that really stands out to one that is flat. The general idea is that the greater the difference in value between fabrics, the greater the contrast in appearance. Value difference is what makes one fabric cause another fabric to “pop”. Certainly, fabric color, texture, print design and print scale all play important roles, but it is value that fundamentally drives the overall “popping” effect.

Well, isn’t it easy to tell a fabric’s value by just looking at it? After all, white is light and black is dark. True, some colors, such as white and black, are always light or dark. However, there’s a big, wide world of “gray” in-between. And, a fabric’s value is relative to its neighboring fabrics. For example, a sky blue fabric would be considered dark relative to a white fabric, but would be considered light relative to a black fabric. As more fabrics are added to the mix, things get more complicated: a given fabric may look lighter or darker than it did before.

So how does one reliably tell what a fabric’s value is? First, keep in mind that value has nothing to do with color; in fact, value can be thought of as how light or dark of a gray a fabric is. (The lightest gray is white and the darkest gray is black.) The trick is to remove the color when viewing the fabric. To do that, hold a piece of clear red plastic close to your eyes and view the fabric as shown below – don’t put the clear red plastic on the fabric and then look at the fabric. The colors will be removed and you’ll be able to easily determine the degree of lightness and darkness. Put fabrics that you want to use together in your quilt and view them together.



Using Quilter’s Paradise’s red CutRite™ Square-Up Templates  
For Determining a Fabric’s Value