

Quilt Making Basics

These instructions are intended to give you a brief and basic introduction to quilt making. Please take time to review these notes before beginning if you are making your first quilt or quilting project.

Supply List

Iron and ironing board

Pins

Rotary cutting mat

Rotary cutter

Basic quilting ruler

Sewing Machine

Thread to match your fabrics

Scissors

Cutting

Rotary cutting is fast, accurate and easy. It's fast because you measure and cut with one stroke. It's accurate because the fabric stays flat as you cut, instead of being raised by a scissors blade. You can follow the simple rotary cutting instructions or simply use a scissors for cutting.

Fabric off the bolt is likely to have jagged edges or be folded off-center. The first step in rotary cutting is to square up the edge of the fabric.

- 1) Fold the fabric with selvages matching. Place the fabric on your cutting mat with the fold nearest you. Then fold the fabric in half again, bringing the selvages down almost even with the fold to make four layers. Align this bottom edge with a horizontal line on your cutting mat.
- 2) Align the left side of the folded fabric about $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ " to the left of a vertical line on the cutting mat. Make your first cut with the rotary cutter on the inch marking to the right of the excess $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ " of fabric. This will square up your fabric.
- 3) When rotary cutting, always hold your ruler firmly in place. Walk your hand up the ruler as you cut; never cutting beyond your hand position or the ruler may shift. Always be careful that your fingers are not in the way of the cutting blade.
- 4) Cut in the increments called out by the pattern instructions. Strips are usually cut first and often sub-cut into squares or rectangles.

Sewing

To join pieces of fabric by machine, match two pieces with *right sides together*. Align raw edges even and place pins, perpendicular to the seam line, to secure. (We suggest removing pins just before reaching the sewing machine needle.) Use your presser foot as a guide to sew in a ¼” seam allowance. The distance from the outside edge of the presser foot to the machine needle should be ¼”. When stitching, the outside edge (right side) of the presser foot aligns with the raw edges of the fabric to make a ¼” seam allowance.

To chain piece, feed pairs of matched fabric pieces under the presser foot one after another, without cutting the threads between them. Continue in this manner until all pairs have been stitched. Cut the chains after stitching.

Pressing

Press seam allowances to one side, not open as in dressmaking. Press toward the darker color fabric, if possible, to avoid seam allowances showing through light fabrics. Press seam allowances in opposite directions from row to row. By offsetting seam allowances at each intersection, you reduce the bulk under the patchwork.

Backing

The backing of your quilt is just as important as your top. The backing should be 3” – 4” larger than the quilt top on all sides. For quilts up to 40” wide, use a single length of 45” wide fabric. Larger quilts may need a pieced backing. Many quilt backings have 2 to 3 seams in them. The key is to avoid having seams in the center of the quilt. Once the backing is pieced, press seam allowances *open*, not to one side.

Batting

When selecting batting, consider loft, washability and fiber content. Loft is the thickness of the batting. For a flat look, choose a cotton or low loft polyester batting. Thicker batting, high loft, may be slightly harder to quilt, but it’s nice for a puffier look and feel. The most commonly used (and least expensive) batting is a low loft polyester batting. This is also a very easy batting to quilt, particularly for beginners.

To save hours of time in basting, we recommend June Tailor’s Quilters Fusible Batting. All three quilt layers, backing, batting and quilt top, can be press-fused in place instead of being basted. Layers do not shift as your quilt. June Tailor’s Fusible batting comes in cotton, low loft and high loft polyester.

Layering

Prepare a large surface where you can spread out – a large table, two tables pushed together, or a clean floor. Take the batting out of the package and unfold it to let it “relax” for a few hours.

Place the backing right side down on your work surface, smoothing out any wrinkles. Center the batting on the backing, smoothing it as you go. With the right side up, place quilt top on top of batting, keeping all layers wrinkle free.

Baste in desired manner.

Basting

Should you choose a batting that is not fusible, you will need to baste the three layers (quilt back, batting and pieced top) together before you can quilt. Basting can be done several ways. Always start from the center of the quilt and work toward the outside edges.

- 1) Pin all three layers together with safety pins. Pin about every two to three inches.
- 2) Hand baste with needle and thread.
- 3) Use a quilt basting gun (tacking tool) with plastic tacks.

Machine Quilting

For beginners, we recommend straight line quilting such as “stitch in the ditch” where your needle goes right in the seams of the quilt or outline quilting, where you stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ ” away from the seam line. Neither of these methods requires marking of the quilt.

Before beginning, it is best to plan out a quilting strategy. The object of your strategy is to find the longest uninterrupted stitching routes. Once these routes are determined, make a directional map of your design to guide you as you stitch. This will enable you to stitch the longest line without stopping. The less you have to stop and start, the better your quilting will turn out.

The even-feed foot or walking foot is a helpful tool for straight-line stitching. It assists the top fabric through the machine at the same rate as the feed dog moves the bottom fabric.

Binding

Binding strips should have already been cut for your project. These strips are cut on the straight of grain and are 2-1/2” wide. Attach binding strips together on short ends to make one long 2-1/2” strip. Fold the strip in half lengthwise, **wrong** sides together, and press.

Stitch layers of basted quilt together $\frac{1}{4}$ ” from the quilt edge.

Trim excess batting and fabric.

With raw edges of binding aligned, position the binding on the front of the quilt top, in the middle of any side. Leave 3” of binding free before the point where you begin.

Stitch through all layers with a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam. Stop stitching $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the quilt corner and backstitch. (Placing a pin at the $\frac{1}{4}$ " point beforehand will show you where to stop.) Remove the quilt from the machine. (Figure 1)

Rotate the quilt a quarter turn (90 degrees). Fold the binding straight up, away from the corner, and make a 45-degree angle fold. (Figure 2)

Fold the binding straight down in line with the next edge, leaving the top fold even with the raw edge of the previously sewn side. (Figure 3) Begin stitching at the top edge, sewing through all layers. (Figure 4) Stitch all corners in this manner.

Stop stitching as you approach the beginning point. Fold the 3" tail of binding over on itself and pin. The end of the binding will overlap this folded section. Continue stitching through all layers to 1" beyond the folded tail. Trim any excess binding.

Fold the binding over the seam allowance to the back. When turned, the beginning fold conceals the raw end of the binding.

Blind stitch (by hand) the folded edge of the binding to the backing fabric. Fold a miter into the binding at back corners and stitch.