

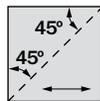
Project: Back to Basics

Refer to these tips and techniques when you need quilting how-to information, from cutting pieces to binding and finishing your quilt.

Cut Bias Strips

Strips for curved appliqué pieces and for binding curved edges should be cut on the bias (diagonally across the grain of a woven fabric), which runs at a 45° angle to the selvage and has the most stretch.

To cut bias strips, begin with a fabric square or rectangle; use an acrylic ruler to square up the left edge if necessary. Make a cut at a 45° angle to the left edge (**Bias Strip Diagram**). Handle the diagonal edges carefully to avoid distorting the bias. To cut a strip, measure the desired width from the 45° cut edge; cut parallel to the edge. Cut enough strips to total the length needed.



Bias Strip Diagram

Make and Use Templates

MAKE TEMPLATES

A template is a pattern made from extra-sturdy material so you can trace around it many times without wearing away the edges. Acrylic templates for many common shapes are available at quilt shops. Or make your own by duplicating printed patterns on template plastic.

To make permanent templates, purchase easy-to-cut template plastic, available at quilt shops and crafts supply stores. Lay the plastic over a printed pattern. Trace the pattern onto the plastic using a ruler and a permanent marker to ensure straight lines,

accurate corners, and permanency.

For hand piecing and appliqué, make templates the exact size finished pieces will be (without seam allowances). For piecing, this means tracing the patterns' dashed lines.

For machine piecing, make templates that include seam allowances by tracing the patterns' solid and dashed lines onto the template plastic.

For easy reference, mark each template with its letter designation, grain line (if noted on the pattern), and block or quilt name. Also mark the matching point of each corner on the seam line (these may be indicated with dots on the printed pattern). Cut out the traced shapes on their outside lines. Using a pushpin, make a hole in the template at each corner matching point. The hole must be large enough for the point of a pencil or marking pen to mark through.

Verify each template's shape and size by placing it over its printed pattern. Templates must be accurate because errors, however small, compound many times as you assemble a quilt. To check templates' accuracy, make a test block before cutting the fabric pieces for an entire quilt.

USE TEMPLATES

To trace a template on fabric, use a pencil, a white dressmaker's pencil, chalk, or a special fabric marker that makes a thin, accurate line. Do not use a ballpoint or ink pen; the lines may bleed if washed. Test all marking tools on a fabric scrap before using them.

To make pieces for hand piecing, place a template facedown on the wrong side of the fabric and trace. If desired, mark the matching points on the corners of the seam lines. Reposition the template at

least 1/2" away from the previous tracing, trace again, and repeat (**Diagram 1**). To make pieces for hand appliqué, place a template faceup on the right side of the fabric and trace. The lines you trace on the fabric are the sewing lines. Mark cutting lines 1/4" away from the sewing lines, or estimate the distance by eye when cutting out the pieces with scissors. For hand piecing, add a 1/4" seam allowance; for hand appliqué, add a 3/16" seam allowance.

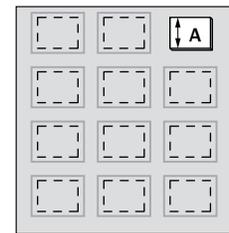


Diagram 1

Because templates used to make pieces for machine piecing have seam allowances included, you can use common tracing lines for efficient cutting. Place a template facedown on the wrong side of the fabric and trace. Mark the corner matching points through the holes in the template; they should each be right on the seam line. Reposition the template without leaving a space between it and the previous tracing, trace again, and repeat (**Diagram 2**). Using a rotary cutter and ruler, cut out pieces, cutting precisely on the drawn lines.

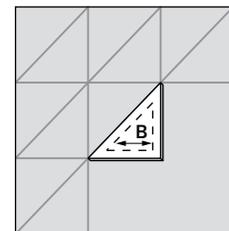


Diagram 2

Project: Back to Basics

PLAN FOR CUTTING

Our project instructions list pieces in the order they should be cut to make the best use of your fabrics.

Always consider the fabric grain before cutting. The arrow on a pattern piece indicates which direction the grain should run. One or more straight edges of a pattern piece should follow the fabric's lengthwise or crosswise grain.

The lengthwise grain, parallel to the selvages (the tightly finished edges), has the least amount of stretch. The crosswise grain, perpendicular to the selvages, has a little more give. The edge of any pattern piece that will be on the outside of a block or quilt should be cut on the lengthwise grain. Do not use the selvage of a woven fabric in a quilt. When washed, it may shrink more than the rest of the fabric.

In projects larger than 42" in length or width, we usually specify that the border strips be cut the width (crosswise grain) of the fabric and pieced to use the least amount of fabric. If you'd prefer to cut the border strips on the lengthwise grain and not piece them, you'll need to refigure the yardage.

Foundation piecing

To make precisely pieced, intricate blocks or units, you can sew together fabric pieces on a paper pattern or foundation. Some quilters find this technique (also called paper piecing) to be freeing because precise cutting isn't required and grain line direction isn't a worry. However, it requires you to think about piecing in a different way.

To foundation-piece, you stitch fabric pieces to a foundation paper with the marked side of the paper facing up and the fabric pieces layered underneath. The resulting

pieced unit will be a mirror image of the foundation paper. To illustrate the process, **Diagrams 3-7** show the right and wrong sides of a unit as it is being constructed.

To make a foundation paper, trace desired pattern onto tracing paper or the foundation material of your choice, including all lines, numbers, and dots. Repeat to make the desired number of foundation papers. Cut out the traced foundation papers roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ " outside the dashed outer lines.

Roughly cut out fabric pieces that are at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " larger on all sides than the area on the foundation they will cover. (For this example, light and dark print rectangles were cut to cover the triangles on the foundation paper.)

With right sides together, layer light print position 1 rectangle atop light print position 2 rectangle; align a pair of long edges.

Place a foundation paper, marked side up, atop the layered rectangles, positioning the paper so the aligned rectangle edges are $\frac{1}{4}$ " beyond the stitching line between positions 1 and 2 and at least $\frac{1}{4}$ " beyond the foundation's outer stitching line (**Diagram 3**).

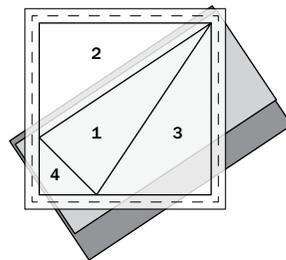


Diagram 3

To check placement, pin on the line between positions 1 and 2; then flip the dark print rectangle open. Make sure the rectangles completely cover positions 1 and 2 and extend at least $\frac{1}{4}$ " into adjacent positions. If they don't, reposition and recheck until they do.

Working with marked side of foundation paper up, use a small stitch length (1.5 millimeters) to sew on the stitching line through all layers, extending stitching past the beginning and end of the line by a few stitches (**Diagram 4**).

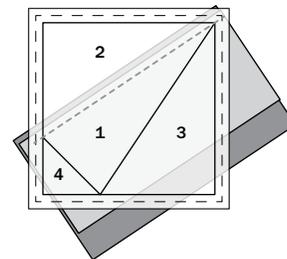


Diagram 4

Turn stitched layers over so foundation paper is on the bottom. Press dark print rectangle open. Referring to **Diagram 5**, trim light print rectangle only (not the foundation paper) to about $\frac{1}{4}$ " beyond next stitching lines (the line between positions 1 and 3, and the line between positions 1 and 4). Roughly trim dark print rectangle to the edge of the foundation paper (you will trim it later on the dashed lines when you trim the entire unit).

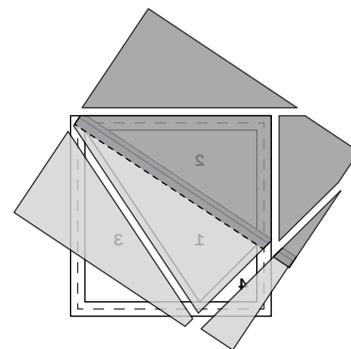


Diagram 5

With right sides together, align dark print position 3 rectangle with long trimmed edge of light print piece. Turn stitched layers over so foundation paper is on top. Sew on the stitching line (**Diagram 6**). Turn stitched layers over so foundation paper is on bottom. Press dark

Project: Back to Basics

print rectangle open. Roughly trim dark print rectangle to the edge of the foundation paper.

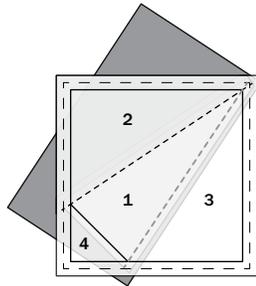


Diagram 6

In same manner, add dark print position 4 triangle. Trim all fabric layers and foundation paper on the outer dashed lines to complete a foundation-pieced unit (Diagram 7). Remove foundation paper with tweezers or the blunt edge of a seam ripper.

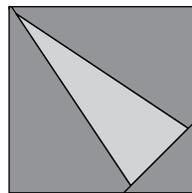


Diagram 7

Complete Quilt

Cut and piece backing fabric to measure at least 4" bigger on all sides than the quilt top. Press seams open. With wrong sides together, layer quilt top and backing fabric with batting in between; baste. Quilt as desired. Trim batting and backing fabric even with the quilt top edges.

Binding for most quilts is cut on the straight grain of the fabric. If your quilt has curved edges, cut binding strips on the bias. Cutting instructions for the projects in this issue specify the number of binding strips or a total length needed to finish the quilt.

Instructions also specify enough width for a French-fold, or double-

layer, binding because it's easier to apply and adds durability.

Join strips with diagonal seams to make one continuous binding strip (Diagram 8). Trim excess fabric, leaving $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowances. Press seams open. Fold one end of the binding strip under 1" (Diagram 9); press. With wrong side inside, fold strip in half lengthwise and press (Diagram 10).

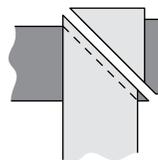


Diagram 8

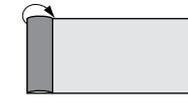


Diagram 9



Diagram 10

Beginning in center of one edge, place binding strip against right side of quilt top, aligning binding strip's raw edge with quilt top's raw edge (Diagram 11). Sew through all layers, stopping $\frac{1}{4}$ " (or a distance equal to the seam allowance you're using) from the corner. Backstitch, then clip threads. Remove quilt from under the sewing-machine presser foot.



Diagram 11

Fold binding strip upward, creating a diagonal fold, and finger-press (Diagram 12).

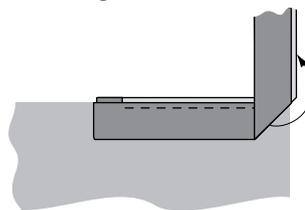


Diagram 12

Holding diagonal fold in place with your finger, bring binding strip down in line with next edge of quilt top, making a horizontal fold that aligns with the quilt edge (Diagram 13).



Diagram 13

Start sewing again at top of horizontal fold, stitching through all layers. Sew around quilt, turning each corner in same manner.

When you return to the starting point, encase binding strip's raw edge inside the folded end (Diagram 14). Finish sewing to the starting point (Diagram 15).

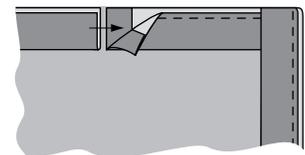


Diagram 14

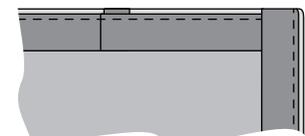


Diagram 15

Turn binding over each edge to the back. Hand-stitch binding to backing fabric, making sure to cover all machine stitching.

To make mitered corners on the back, hand-stitch up to a corner; fold a miter in the binding. Take a stitch or two in the fold to secure it. Then stitch the binding in place up to the next corner. Finish each corner in same manner.