

# Quilting Basics

## Beginning Quilting Class

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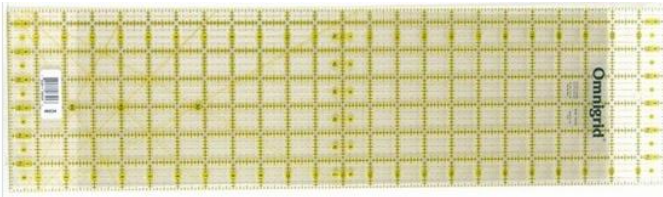
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There are three basic fundamentals that every quilter should know and practice – accurate cutting, accurate  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch seam and pressing.

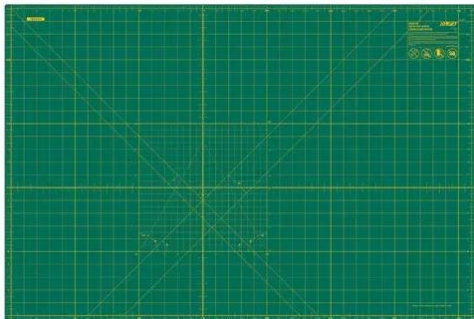
1. **Cutting** the Fabric accurately is a very important first step. Accuracy in cutting will help insure accuracy in piecing.

What do I need?

- Acrylic ruler (a nice size to start out with is 6" x 24")



- Cutting mat



- Rotary cutter (45mm)



Tips for accurate cutting:

- Use a sharp blade. When the blade starts to get dull, it will start skipping during cutting.
- Make rulers non-slip if necessary.
- Measure from the ruler, not the mat. Use the mat to keep the fabric square.
- Cut, pressing away from you with the blade side of the cutter against the ruler.
- Make a clean cut. It is not necessary to push the cutting blade back and forth for a cut. One pass of the blade should do it.
- Cut off selvages and square up fabric. Always make a clean cut before beginning to cut pieces for your quilting project.
- Cut fabric into strips and then sub cut into the desired size pieces.
- Two layers can be cut at the same time.

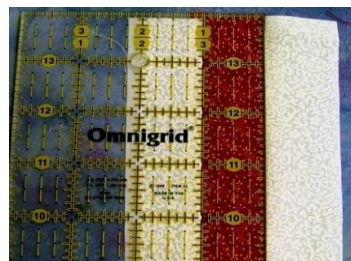
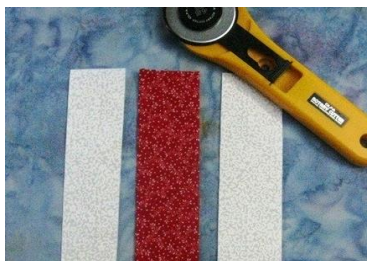
2. **Accurate ¼ - inch seam.** Sewing an accurate ¼ -inch seam is crucial to quilt making. Even if your ¼-inch seam is off just a little bit, it can make a big difference. Many think that a ¼-inch seam is achieved if they sew lining up the edge of their pressure foot with the edge of their fabric. This is not always so. It is a good idea to check and see if the ¼ - inch that you think you are sewing is actually a true ¼-inch.

There are a couple of ways to do this.

- Measure the seam. It is best if it is a scant ¼ inch. The stitching thread and then pressing the seam takes up a little room and may make your ¼ inch seam a little larger and that does make a difference.

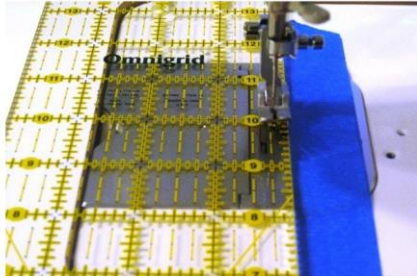


- Measure after sewing two seams. I think the best way to accurately determine if your ¼ inch seam is correct, is to sew three pieces of fabric together and measure the center piece. For example: cut three pieces of fabric that are 1 ½" wide x 3" long. Match up the fabric so the 1 ½ inch widths are side by side and sew the three pieces of fabric together using a ¼ inch seam. Now, measure the middle piece (the piece that has a seam on each side). This piece should measure exactly 1 inch. If it does not measure exactly 1 inch then adjust as necessary to correct the width of the seam. This can be done by adjusting the needle position so that the edge of the pressure foot will be at ¼ inch or using markings on the machines needle plate or placing a piece of tape to follow at the accurate location .



Methods to use to get an accurate  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch seams:

- Use a  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch foot for your machine. Some machines come with them and some are an additional accessory that needs to be purchased.
- Move the needle position on the sewing machine.
- Measure and mark with tape.



3. **Pressing:** In the quilting world, we like to **press** the seams instead of ironing. Pressing is an up and down motion, whereas ironing is a back and forth motion. The reason for this, is that when a seam is "ironed" it tends to distort and stretch the fabric. Pressing will help keep the blocks square.
- Set the seam. To get a cleaner press on the seam, it helps to press on the stitching before opening and pressing to one side.
  - Generally, press the seam towards the dark fabric. Sometimes, we want to change this if we want connecting seams to nestle, then we may press to the lighter side. On a rare occasion we may want to press the seam open if it will help the seam lay flatter.
  - Steam or no steam? It is a debate. Steam helps the fabric to be more "crisp". Steam can also skew or distort the block if not careful.
  - It is helpful to use starch on bias edges. This helps the bias edge to be stable.
  - Use an ironing board that is stable and flat. Some ironing boards are wobbly and/or show indentation onto fabric after pressing.