

Precision Piecing Pointers

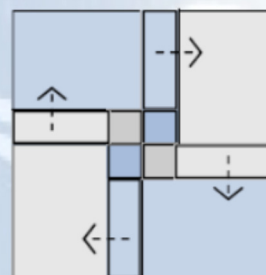
by Deonn Stott and Cat Beckstead

- **ACCURACY** begins with the basics: Good tools, accurate cutting, using the best materials you can find and afford (sewing machine, fabric, thread, batting, mat, rotary cutter, ruler, etc.)
- **MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE!** Using the same brand of ruler regardless of size when measuring and cutting will keep your pieces consistent. Keep a sharp blade!
- ◆ **CUTTING** ~ Square up and align pieces before sewing together. Pin/glue stick/stiletto to help pieces fit together as you stitch. If necessary to ease, place larger piece on bottom so feed dogs can help. Make it a habit to re-trim each pieced unit to the correct required measurement.
- ◆ **THREAD** ~ Use a neutral thread color - helps the thread blend in, especially when you have multi-value fabric. Use thread meant for piecing—bulky thread makes bulky seams.
- ◆ **SEAMS** ~ Use accurate 1/4" seams on all piecing. Stitch length: 2 to 2.5. Check your seam allowance: Sew three 1-1/2" strips of fabric together with a 1/4" seam. PRESS away from the center strip. The center strip should measure exactly one inch. Place masking tape on the throat plate of your machine 1/4" away from needle for a guide if necessary.
- ◆ **PRESSING** ~ As a general rule, press seams on the right (printed) side of fabric. First press sewn unit flat to sink the stitches into the fabric. Press seams toward the darker fabric whenever possible. Use a hot, dry iron and press in an up and down motion. Use a light mist of water if needed, but be wary of steam—after all, cotton shrinks.
- ◆ **ALTERNATE** seam allowances wherever possible to help with precise joints at intersections and to reduce bulk at seams. Try the Darlene Zimmerman's "Magic Twist" to further reduce bulky seams. This only works if seams are pressed to the side in alternating directions.

The Magic Twist:

Release the stitches in any intersection where four corners meet, fanning out seam allowances in a circular direction.

Press center intersection with the tip of your iron, then flip unit to the right (printed) side to continue pressing.



- ◆ **RELAX** ~ Sew slowly and keep control. Sometimes multi-tasking such as chain piecing or cutting multiple layers of fabric can diminish the ability to be precise. Relax, remember to blink, breathe, swallow. Take a break every 45 minutes.
- ◆ **ENJOY** ~ The process should not be a race to the finish but an enjoyable experience. You are telling your story and making a treasure in cloth. It deserves your best work. Be willing to try new things, take your time, test your creativity, and enjoy yourself!