

Quiltmaking Basics

HOW TO FINISH YOUR QUILT



Quiltmaking Basics: How To Finish Your Quilt

General Guidelines

SEAM ALLOWANCES

A $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance is used for most projects. It's a good idea to do a test seam before you begin sewing to check that your $\frac{1}{4}$ " is accurate. Accuracy is the key to successful piecing.

If a seamline will be crossed by another seam which will anchor it, there is no need to backstitch.

PRESSING

In general, press seams toward the darker fabric. Press lightly in an up-and-down motion. Avoid using a very hot iron or over-ironing, which can distort shapes and blocks. Be especially careful when pressing bias edges as they stretch easily.

Borders

When border strips are cut on the crosswise grain, piece the strips together to achieve the needed lengths.

BUTTED BORDERS

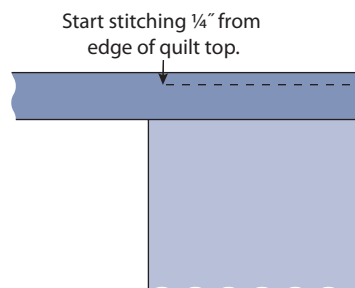
In most cases the side borders are sewn on first. When you have finished the quilt top, measure it through the center vertically. This will be the length to cut the side borders. Place pins at the centers of all four sides of the quilt top, as well as in the center of each side border strip. Pin the side borders to the quilt top first, matching the center pins. Using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance, sew the borders to the quilt top and press toward border.

Measure horizontally across the center of the quilt top including the side borders. This will be the length to cut the top and bottom borders. Repeat, pinning, sewing, and pressing.

MITERED CORNER BORDERS

Measure the length of the quilt top and add two times the cut width of your border, plus 5". This is the length you need to cut or piece the side borders.

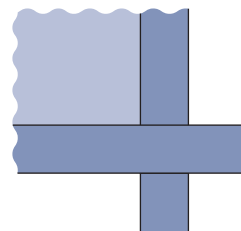
Place pins at centers of both side borders and all four sides of the quilt top. From the center pin, measure in both directions and mark half of the measured length of the quilt top on both side borders. Pin, matching centers and the marked length of the side border to the edges of the quilt top. Stitch the strips to the sides of the quilt top by starting $\frac{1}{4}$ " in from the beginning edge of the quilt top, backstitching, and then continuing down the length of the side border. Stop stitching $\frac{1}{4}$ " before the ending edge of the quilt top, at the seam allowance line, and backstitch. The excess length of the side borders will extend beyond each edge. Press the seams toward the borders.



Stop stitching $\frac{1}{4}$ " from edge.

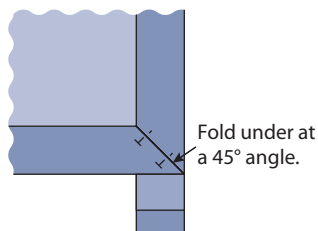
Determine the length needed for the top and bottom border the same way, measuring the width of the quilt top through the center including each side border. Add 2 times the cut width of your border plus 5" to this measurement. Cut or piece the top and bottom border strips to this length. From the center of each border strip, measure in both directions and mark half of the measured width of the quilt top. Again, pin, and start and stop stitching at the previous stitching lines, $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the quilt edges and backstitch. The border strips extend beyond each end. Press the seams toward the borders.

To create the miter, lay the corner on the ironing board. Working with the quilt right side up, lay one border strip on top of the adjacent border strip.



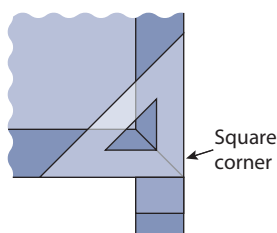
Border strip on top of adjacent strip

With right sides up, fold the top border strip under itself so that it meets the edge of the adjacent border and forms a 45° angle. Pin the fold in place.



Fold under at a 45° angle.

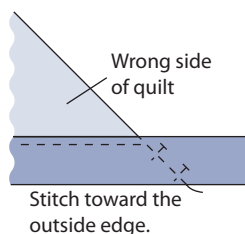
Position a 90° angle triangle or ruler over the corner to check that the corner is flat and square. When everything is in place press the fold firmly.



Square corner.

Remove pins. Fold the center section of the top diagonally from the corner, right sides together, and align the long edges of the border strips. On the wrong side, place pins near the pressed fold in the corner to secure the border strips.

Beginning at the inside corner at the border seam line, stitch, backstitch and then stitch along the fold toward the outside point of the border corners, being careful not to allow any stretching to occur. Backstitch at the end. Trim the excess border fabric to a ¼" seam allowance. Press the seam open.



Stitch mitered corner.

Backing

Plan on making the backing a minimum of 8" longer and wider than the quilt top. Piece, if necessary. Trim the selvages before you piece to the desired size.

To economize, piece the back from any leftover quilting fabrics or blocks in your collection.

Batting

The type of batting to use is a personal decision; consult your local quilt shop. Cut batting approximately 8" longer and wider than your quilt top. Note that your batting choice will effect how much quilting is necessary for the quilt. Check the manufacturer's instructions to see how far apart the quilting lines can be.

Layering

Spread the backing wrong side up and tape the edges down with masking tape. (If you are working on carpet you can use T-pins to secure the backing to the carpet.) Center the batting on top, smoothing out any folds. Place the quilt top right side up on top of the batting and backing, making sure it is centered.

Basting

Basting keeps the quilt "sandwich" layers from shifting while you are quilting.

If you plan to machine quilt, pin baste the quilt layers together with safety pins placed 3"–4" apart. Begin basting in the center and move toward the edges first in vertical, then horizontal, rows. Try not to pin directly on the intended quilting lines.

If you plan to hand quilt, baste the layers together with thread using a long needle and light-colored thread. Knot one end of the thread. Using stitches approximately the length of the needle, begin in the center and move out toward the edges in vertical and horizontal rows approximately 4" apart. Add 2 diagonal rows of basting.

Quilting

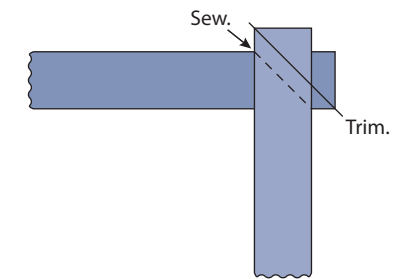
Quilting, whether by hand or machine, enhances the pieced or appliquéd design of the quilt. You may choose to quilt in-the-ditch, echo the pieced or appliquéd motifs, use patterns from quilting design books and stencils, or do your own free-motion quilting. Remember to check your batting manufacturer's recommendations for how close the quilting lines must be.

Binding

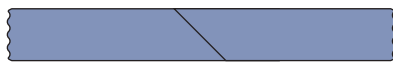
After the quilting is completed, trim excess batting and backing from the quilt even with the edges of the quilt top.

DOUBLE FOLD STRAIGHT GRAIN BINDING

If you want a $\frac{1}{4}$ " finished binding, cut the binding strips 2" wide and piece them together with diagonal seams to make a continuous binding strip. Trim the seam allowance to $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Press the seams open.



Sew from corner to corner.

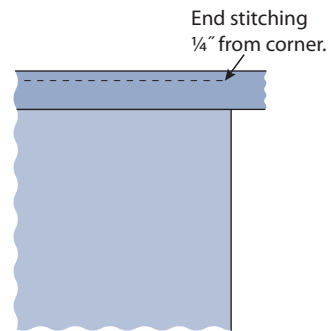


Completed diagonal seam

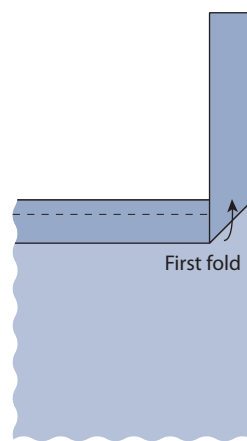
Press the entire strip in half lengthwise with wrong sides together. With raw edges even, pin the binding to the front edge of the quilt a few inches away from the corner, and leave the first few inches of the binding unattached. Start sewing with a backstitch, using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance.

Stop $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the first corner (see Step 1), backstitch one stitch. Lift the presser foot and needle. Rotate the quilt one-quarter turn. Fold the binding at a right angle so it extends straight above the quilt and the fold forms a 45° angle in the corner (see Step 2). Then bring the binding strip down even with the edge of the quilt (see Step 3).

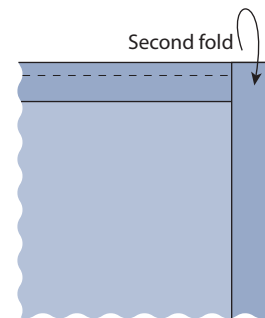
Begin sewing at the folded edge. Repeat in the same manner at all corners.



Step 1. Stitch to $\frac{1}{4}$ " from corner.



Step 2. First fold for miter alignment



Step 3. Second fold

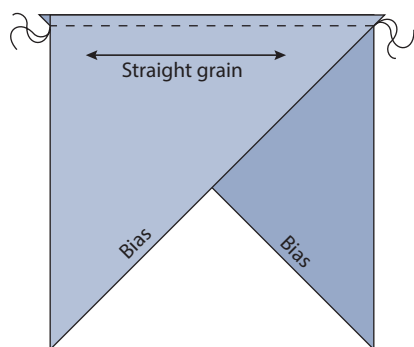
Continue stitching until you are back near the beginning of the binding strip. See *Finishing the Binding Ends* for tips on finishing and hiding the raw edges of the ends of the binding.

CONTINUOUS BIAS BINDING

Continuous bias binding involves using a square sliced in half diagonally and then sewing the resulting triangles together. You then mark strips, sew again to make a tube, and cut to make a continuous binding strip of the desired length. The same instructions can be used to cut bias for piping.

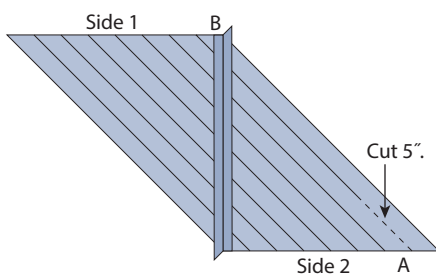
Cut the fabric for the bias binding or piping so it is a square. For example, if yardage is $\frac{1}{2}$ yard, cut an 18" \times 18" square. Cut the square in half diagonally, creating two triangles.

Sew these triangles together as shown, using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. Press the seam open.



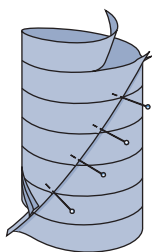
Sew triangles together.

Using a ruler, mark the parallelogram created by the 2 triangles with lines spaced the width you need to cut your bias. Cut about 5" along the first line.



Mark lines and begin cut.

Join Side 1 and Side 2 to form a tube. The raw edge at line A will align with the raw edge at B. This will allow the first line to be offset by one strip width. Pin the raw edges right sides together, making sure that the lines match. Sew with a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. Press the seam open. Cut along the drawn lines, creating one continuous strip.



Cut along drawn lines

Press the entire strip in half lengthwise with wrong sides together. Place binding on quilt and sew as described in Double Fold Straight Grain Binding section.

See Finishing the Binding Ends for tips on finishing and the hiding the raw edges of the ends of the binding.

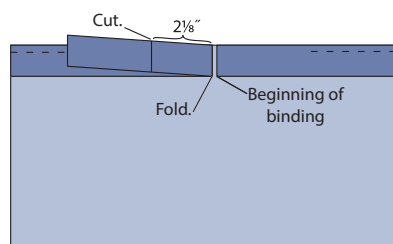
FINISHING THE BINDING ENDS

Method 1:

After stitching around the quilt, fold under the beginning tail of the binding strip $\frac{1}{4}$ " so that the raw edge will be inside the binding after it is turned to the backside of the quilt. Place the end tail of the binding strip over the beginning folded end. Continue to attach the binding stitching slightly beyond the starting stitches and backstitch. Trim the excess binding. Fold the binding over the raw edges to the quilt back and hand stitch, mitering the corners.

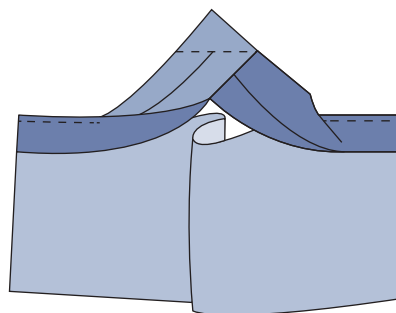
Method 2: (See our blog entry at <http://www.ctpubblog.com/2009/03/23/quilting-tips-completing-a-binding-with-an-invisible-seam/>.)

Fold the ending tail of the binding back on itself where it meets the beginning binding tail. From the fold, measure and mark the cut width of your binding strip. Cut the ending binding tail to this measurement. For example, if your binding is cut $2\frac{1}{8}$ " wide, measure from the fold on the ending tail of the binding $2\frac{1}{8}$ " and cut the binding tail to this length.



Cut binding tail.

Open both tails. Place one tail on top of the other tail at right angles, right sides together. Mark a diagonal line from corner to corner and stitch on the line. Check that you've done it correctly and that the binding fits the quilt, then trim the seam allowance to $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Press open.



Stitch ends of binding diagonally.

Refold the binding and stitch this binding section in place on the quilt. Fold the binding over the raw edges to the quilt back and hand stitch.