



## Measure Twice, Cut Once

Timeless Stitches — Quilt Capital of Kansas

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When I first started quilting, shapes were cut by tracing templates onto fabric and cutting the fabric with scissors. Often the templates were cut out of used cereal boxes or other food boxes of similar thickness. After all, the quilter used what she had available, and those empty boxes were free! Depending upon how the templates were drawn, the quilter may have drawn the shape on fabric and then add a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance all the way around before she cut. And someone had the idea of making a ruler that would slide up against the template and extend  $\frac{1}{4}$ " beyond. What a concept! That made it so much easier to add the seam allowance to the cut piece. Now there is even another ruler that will add  $\frac{1}{8}$ " and it is used for paper foundation piecing among other things.

The appearance of rotary cutters and mats and acrylic rulers has revolutionized quilting! The cutters must be used with special mats to protect the blades. The blades are razor sharp, but they are vulnerable to acquiring dull places if you cut over a pin or some other hard object. The rulers are approximately  $\frac{3}{16}$ " thick so that they are easy to cut around and the acrylic from which they are made is a hard substance that does not allow you to cut into the ruler. It will keep its precise shape for many years. Some of them will have a non-slip surface on the back. That is a nice feature. There are other products that can be added to rulers to keep them from slipping. I have added non-slip strips to my older rulers that I use a lot.

The ruler manufacturers provide so many rulers that making a choice can be almost overwhelming! Sometimes the intended use will help make the final decision.

If a quilter can have only three rulers, which ones should they be? Here are my recommendations:

The first ruler a quilter needs is one that is approximately 24" long so she can cut completely across the piece of fabric that is folded in half as it comes off the bolt. The width may vary—they come from  $3\frac{1}{2}$ " wide to 6" or  $6\frac{1}{2}$ " wide. I use a 6-inch wide ruler a lot for cutting border strips. I also have a 5-inch wide ruler that we use for cutting fabric for customers. That ruler has a lip on one end so it catches on the edge of the cutting mat to reduce the possibility of slipping.

The second ruler would be a  $12\frac{1}{2}$ " square. A 12" finished square block is the standard for many quilts, both pieced and appliqued. That means the block needs to measure  $12\frac{1}{2}$ " before it is sewn into place. Of course the ruler may be used to square up smaller sizes as well— $6\frac{1}{2}$ ",  $8\frac{1}{2}$ ",  $9\frac{1}{2}$ ",  $10\frac{1}{2}$ ", etc.

The third ruler is a  $6\frac{1}{2}$ " square. Be sure that it has a diagonal line from corner to corner. I use my  $6\frac{1}{2}$ " square in so many ways! First, it can be used as a template to cut squares and rectangles and size smaller than  $6\frac{1}{2}$ ". It can be used to cut triangles. I use the  $6\frac{1}{2}$ " ruler to trim half-square triangles before I press them open. Then I have to trim only two sides, press it open, and I have a perfect square. I use it to trim flying geese blocks

because, so far, I have not found a flying geese ruler that I like better.

There is a multitude of specialty rulers. If you are cutting equilateral triangles, you will need a 60° ruler. There are also 45° rulers and 9° rulers; there are rulers for cutting multiple strips and rulers to cut specific blocks. There are all kinds of rulers to enable you to measure twice and cut once.

The holidays are just around the corner. Here is a recipe for a fast and easy snack.

### **Rollo Treats**

1 package small pretzels

1 package Rollo candy

1 cup pecan halves (approximately)

Preheat oven to 350° F. Cover cookie sheet with a piece of aluminum foil. Arrange pretzels on foil. Place an unwrapped Rollo candy on each pretzel. Bake at 350° F for 3 minutes. Remove from oven and press a pecan half into softened candy. Cool.



Gluten-Free Rollo Treats: Substitute gluten-free pretzels for regular pretzels and follow the recipe above.