

Binding Basics

I have a little binding trick that I teach my students, and they always tell me that learning it is worth the fee they paid for the class. It involves cutting out a little of the bulk at the corners (similar to the way that clipping and grading works on a garment seam in fashion sewing).

I've seen many students who, after stitching their binding on, whack the corner off of the quilt with a diagonal cut beyond the seam line. What they removed with that cut was actually the foundation for a good corner. Don't do that! Instead, use my binding instructions to remove just a little bit that makes a big difference. These tips and techniques will help you get perfect corners on your binding.

1. Begin stitching the binding to the quilt approximately 6"–8" from the beginning of the binding strip, using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance (*Photo A*).



2. Stitch to $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the corner; stop with needle in down position (*Photo B*).



3. Raise presser foot, pivot quilt, and stitch a line from this point through the corner of the quilt as shown in *Photo C*. Do not backstitch.



4. Fold the binding up, along the diagonal stitching line (Photo D).



5. Fold binding down to align with the next edge to be stitched (Photo E). Continue stitching around the quilt, repeating steps #2–#5 for each corner.



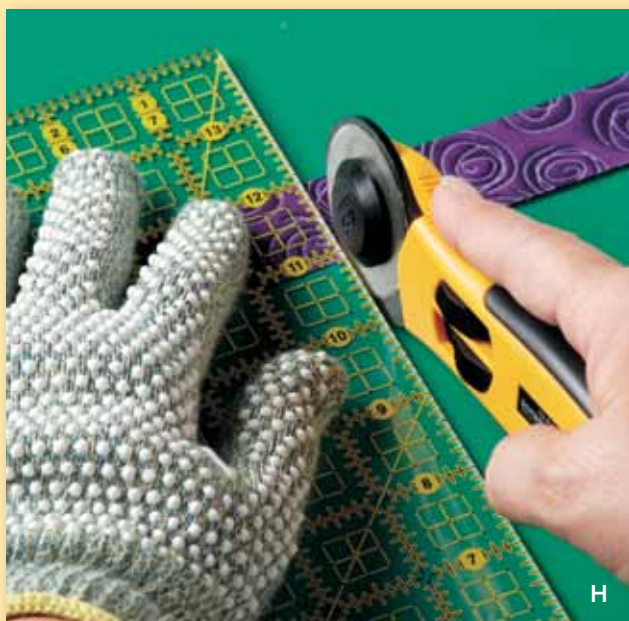
6. Stop stitching about 8"–10" from where you started. Fold binding back, butting the fold up to the beginning of the binding strip (Photo F).



7. To the left of the fold, mark the binding at whatever the measurement is for the width of your binding (Photo G). (For 2¼" -wide binding mark a line 2¼" to the left of the fold.)



8. Cut away the excess binding beyond the marked line (Photo H).



9. Open up the binding and place the two ends right sides together at a right angle as shown in *Photo I*. The wrong side of the beginning end of the binding should face up.



10. Pin the binding strips together and mark a stitching line from corner to corner (*Photo J*). Stitch along marked line to join the binding ends with a mitered seam. Trim $\frac{1}{4}$ " beyond stitching. Press seam. Refold binding on crease. Finish stitching binding to quilt.



11. At each corner, slip the point of your scissors under the fold in the binding. Snip to the stitching line, but not beyond it. Lift up the seam allowance of the binding layers to reveal the diagonal seam stitched in Step #3. Remove the stitching of the diagonal seam (*Photo K*).



12. You have created a wedge of fabric that will be removed. (*Photo L*).



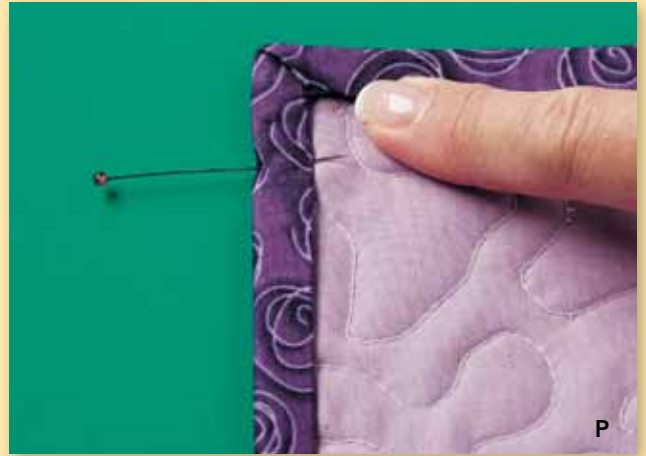
13. Pull the binding and the quilt seam allowances away from this wedge from above and below it (*Photo M*).



14. Cut away the wedge to the right of the seam line, being careful not to cut the binding or quilt (*Photo N*).



16. Pin or clip turned binding in place. Turn quilt to back side and turn the next side of the binding over as shown in *Photo P* to make a neatly mitered corner. Pin or clip binding in place and stitch to quilt back by hand.



15. Press binding away from quilt top and turn to the back, forming an angled fold (*Photo O*).



1. Fold the binding over the raw edge of the quilt to the back and hold it in place with your left hand. Your first stitch should be made within the seam allowance to hide the knot. Take a stitch outside of the seamline as shown in *Photo A*. The length of your stitch should be about ¼".



2. Catching just a couple of threads, bring the needle up through the fold of the binding directly across from where you exited the backing, or just to the underside of the fold to make it even less visible (*Photo B*).



3. Pull the thread through the binding until it's snug (*Photo C*).



4. Begin your next stitch into the backing where you exited it before and take another ¼" stitch as in Step 1 (*Photo D*).



5. As you become more proficient, your needle will exit the backing and enter the binding fold almost simultaneously (*Photo E*). It is important to make the stitch in and out of the binding directly in line with the entry/exit points in the quilt's backing. This will keep the stitches nearly invisible. Continue in this manner around the entire quilt. Miter corners by folding them in the opposite direction of the folds on the front side of the quilt.



Making Continuous Bias Binding

DETERMINE THE SIZE OF FABRIC SQUARE YOU'LL NEED

1. Measure the circumference of your quilt. Add the length of binding you need for connecting or overlapping the ends (about 20"). If you are binding multiple smaller pieces, add their circumferences together.

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When you're making several curved-edge placemats, table toppers, or the mug mats on page 27, you can cut enough binding for all of them from a single square of fabric.—Patrick

2. Multiply the total length of the binding strip needed by your desired binding width. This will give you the binding area in square inches.
3. Calculate the square root of the area. (Use a calculator with a square root function.)

For example:

If you need a bias strip that is 112" long and 2¼" (2.25") wide:

Multiply 112×2.25 . That equals 252 square inches.

The square root of 252 is 15.87. Round up to 16.

Cut a 16" square of fabric for your bias binding.

CREATE A CONTINUOUS BIAS BINDING STRIP

1. Cut the fabric square in half diagonally. Place the two triangle pieces right sides together with the straight edges on the right as shown in *Diagram A*. Press seam open.

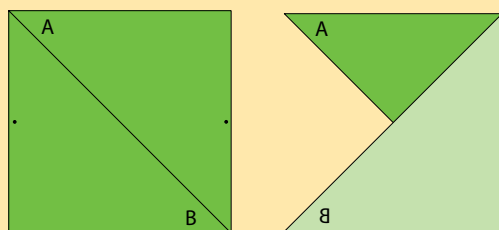


Diagram A

2. Using a gridded transparent ruler, measure from the long diagonal edge and draw a parallel line every 2¼" on the wrong side of the fabric piece as shown in *Diagram B*.

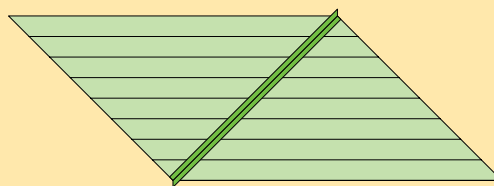


Diagram B

3. Fold the marked piece right sides together to form a tube, aligning the edges and pinning the marked lines so one width of the binding extends beyond the edge on each side as shown in *Diagram C*. Sew the tube together with a ¼" seam; press the seam open. Cut on the marked line to make one continuous 2¼"-wide bias binding strip.

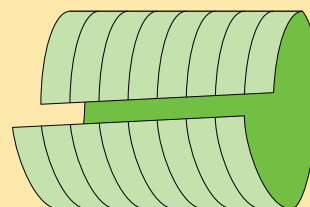


Diagram C

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Be careful not to stretch bias binding as you apply it to your project.—Patrick