



Perfecting Piecing

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Jukebox Quilts

Springtime in the Rockies Shophop 2019

## Just the Basics

### Thread for Piecing

The finer the thread, the more accurate your piecing. DO NOT use cotton wrapped poly or any shiny polyester, or any thread that stretches when you pull on it. Shiny or slippery threads will cause seams to come undone.

Not ideal - 2 ply 60 wt cotton (says 60/2 on label), can be delicate, prone to breakage, generally pricey.

Ideal - 80 or 100 wt cottonized polyester - Decobob or Invisifil by Wonderfil threads. Strong, super fine, textured with "teeth" like a cotton (does not slip), does not stretch and takes up minimal space in the seam allowance.

### Use a thread stand for all threads

Dragging the thread off a spool increases tension in your thread path and can contribute to your block shrinking after you piece it. Cone threads are far less expensive than spools, neutral colors like white, off white, gray and black are all you'll need. Center the thread guide directly above the center of the spool.

### Machines

Not ideal - elliptical feed dogs found on many inexpensive machines. These are designed to ease in extra fabric (useful in clothing construction, but wrecks havoc in quilt construction).

Ideal - box feed dogs - Juki 2010QL is a great piecing machine with a box feed and 1/5" foot, straight stitch only. High speed, all metal, knee lift and tie off/thread cutting feature, for less than \$1000.

Ideal - Scant quarter inch foot or Juki's 1/5" foot, see above, single hole needle plate and feed dogs the same width as the presser foot (also on the Juki 2010)

### Pinning vs. glues

Depends on the type of piecing, all of the items below are useful

Glass head fine (silk) pins

Forked pins

Quilter's Choice or Roxanne's Glue (needle tip applicator)

Sewline or water soluble children's glue stick

"I've sewn on nearly every machine. To me, the Juki is as good a piecing machine as a Singer Featherweight, maybe better! That said, I still love my Featherweights for their gorgeous looks and portability!"

### Iron and pressing surface

The best surface is a 2x4' sheet of mfd board with a single layer of cotton batting covered by tight canvas. Excess padding or stretchy ironboard cover contribute to inaccuracy in piecing. The angled point on an ironing board makes it impossible to easily press yardage.

Spray starch

Don't use spray sizing. Only use on yardage, not during piecing as it can contribute to stretching.

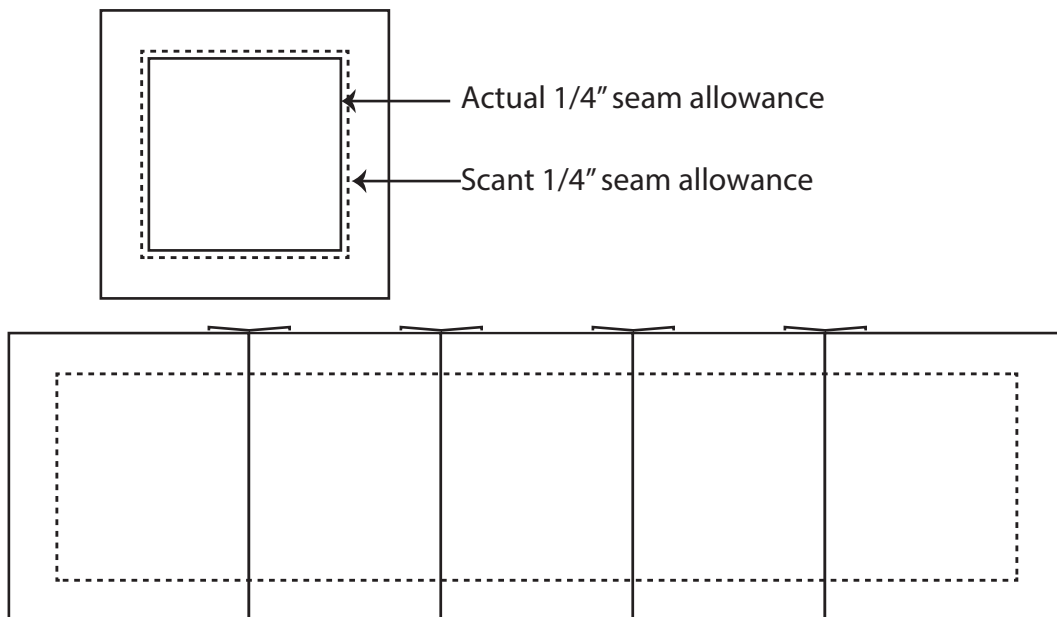
Respecting the Bias

The outer edge of every block, and every unit of blocks (the quilt top before borders are added) must be on the straight of grain. See my [article](https://www.jukeboxquilts.com/helpful-hints/6654/respecting_the_bias.pdf) at [www.jukeboxquilts.com](https://www.jukeboxquilts.com) under Helpful Hints ([https://media.rainpos.com/6654/respecting\\_the\\_bias.pdf](https://media.rainpos.com/6654/respecting_the_bias.pdf)) for more information.

## Testing your seam allowance

Super accurate seam allowances are extremely important. The most accurate seam allowance actually is less than 1/4". This is referred to as a scant 1/4" seam allowance. This scant 1/4" compensates for the fabric taken up in the fold and around the thread when you press your seams. Confirm that your stitching is a scant 1/4" by doing the following.

In your kit are several 1 1/2" squares cut on a laser cutter. Take five of these, and sew them together. Press the seams open. The finished set of five should measure EXACTLY 5 1/2". The illustration below is exactly 5 1/2".



If your set does not measure 5 1/2", adjust your seam allowance and try with another five pieces of fabric until it does. If you've adjusted your needle position, make a note of that position on the sewn fabrics and keep these with your machine (tuck it in with the accessories). If you adjusted where the fabrics are fed under the presser foot, use painter's tape or an adhesive seam guide on your needle plate to mark this new seam allowance. Do all of your piecing using this guide, and your finished blocks should be much more accurate.

## Tricks for accurate curves and inset circles

This will be our next topic at Quirky Quilters at Jukebox Quilts Thur. May 9th, 5-7 pm, \$10 includes free block if you RSVP to (970)224-9975 at least 24 hours in advance.

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## **Accurate Borders and Square Quilts**

Cut borders parallel to the selvage whenever possible. Measure down the center of the quilt, cut the borders to that measurement, then make the edges of the quilt fit the borders. [See more](https://www.jukeboxquilts.com/Helpful-Hints/https://media.rainpos.com/6654/preparing_your_quilt_for_la_qltg_317.pdf) at [www.jukeboxquilts.com](https://www.jukeboxquilts.com) under Helpful Hints ([https://media.rainpos.com/6654/preparing\\_your\\_quilt\\_for\\_la\\_qltg\\_317.pdf](https://media.rainpos.com/6654/preparing_your_quilt_for_la_qltg_317.pdf)) for more information.

## **Straightening Grain**

Tear the fabric, then pull on both biases the length of the fabric after tearing to straighten, or load on a longarm after tearing, spray with 1 Tbsp Wrinkle Release in a spray bottle of water, roll back and forth, let dry with tension.

## **Prints**

Not always printed on grain, you may wish to fussy cut and have it a little off grain to match print.

## **Thoughts on prewashing fabric...**

I do only if I'm concerned about shrinkage or potential bleeding or crocking.

## **Accurate Cutting**

Sharp rotary cutter, great rulers and large square are necessary. Even better, a laser cutter (we provide laser cutting services for any block you'd like to make, call us for more information).

## **To steam or not to steam...**

Don't. We'll spritz yardage with water in a spray bottle to get out stubborn wrinkles, but NEVER have water in our irons!

## **Ironing vs pressing**

Cardinal rule - do not EVER stretch your fabric. Lift the iron up and set it down, don't press it and slide it across the surface of the fabric.

## **Ramp up your accuracy with blocking**

Draw your finished block, with seam allowance on your canvas cover of your pressing surface (or on freezer paper ironed to the surface, draw after pressing it as freezer paper shrinks when it is pressed). Make every block or unit fit by pinning in place with glass headed pins. At this point you can use spray starch and press it in place.

## **Y Seams**

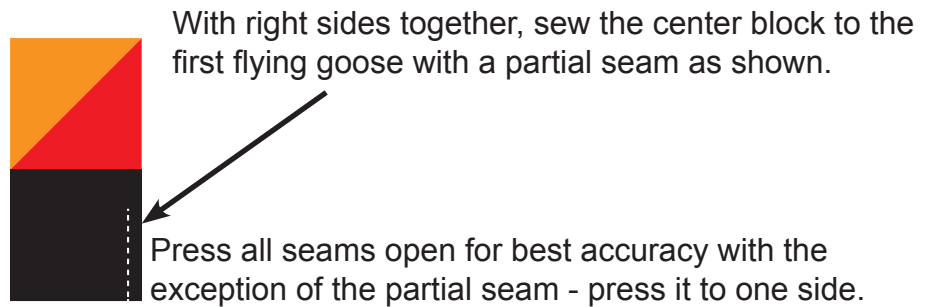
Accurate cutting is absolutely critical. Mark scant quarter inch seams at the corners of the blocks. Start the stitching by dropping your needle precisely at the mark, take a stitch, then backtack one stitch if necessary for more strength at the corner. Never have a stitch between the mark and the cut edge of the fabric. End the seam by backtacking one stitch.

## **Spectrum Star**

In your bag is a laser cut block that is fun and challenging to piece. Use the 1 1/2" laser cut squares to check your accuracy, then assemble the block. Love it? We can cut more for you!

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Make four flying geese units.



Sew the other geese in place. Finish the first seam you sewed to complete the unit.



Sew the outer units. Pay careful attention to color placement..



Sew the black corners onto the top and bottom triangle units. Pin seam intersections and sew the three rows together.



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