

# Binding

Once your quilt is quilted and trimmed, it is time to bind the edges. You can either cut your binding strips straight across the width of the fabric, or you can cut them on the bias. Either way, you will need the same amount of fabric. After you make your binding strip, then you need to apply it to your quilt. There are several steps where you get to make decisions, and I will tell you about all of them.



## Math:

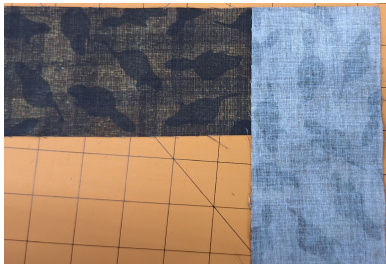
- Determine the total length around the edge of the quilt. This will be the minimum length of binding that you will need.
  - Example: The quilt measures 68" x 84½".
    - $(68" + 84 \frac{1}{2}") \times 2 = 305"$  around the edge of the quilt.
- Determine how many width of fabric strips you need.
  - Fabric is typically 42" wide. I choose to divide by 40, instead of 42, as both the math is easier and that also builds in a little wiggle room for seam allowances and turning the mitered corners.
  - Always round UP the result of the math. You aren't going to cut a partial strip, you will always cut a full strip, and if you round down, you won't have enough.
    - If the decimal remainder is LESS than 0.5, simply round up to the next whole number.
    - If the decimal remainder is 0.5 or MORE, round up, then add 1, just to be sure you won't lose too much in the seam allowances and corners.
  - Example: The quilt is 305" around the edge.
    - $305 \div 40 = 7.625$
    - Round up to 8 strips.

- Because 0.625 is MORE than 0.5, add 1, for a total of 9 strips.
- Decide how wide you want your binding.
  - Many designers will tell you to cut your binding strips to 2" or 2½" wide, and then to use only a ¼" seam allowance when applying it to the quilt.
  - I prefer a wider binding, as I find it more artistically pleasing to the eye, as well as it gives more space to use a decorative machine top-stitch to sew the second seam when applying the binding. I usually cut my strips 3" wide.
- Determine how much fabric you need.
  - Remember, you need essentially the same amount of fabric to make straight-grain and bias bindings.
  - There is NO NEED to make a large square to cut diagonally, then waste the remaining width of fabric when making bias binding.
  - Multiply the number of strips you need by the width of the strips
    - Example:  $9 \times 3" = 27"$  of fabric to make 3" wide binding strips for a 68" x 84½" quilt, regardless of whether it is straight-grain or bias binding.

**Make the binding, choose either straight-grain binding (Step 1) or bias binding (Step 2):**

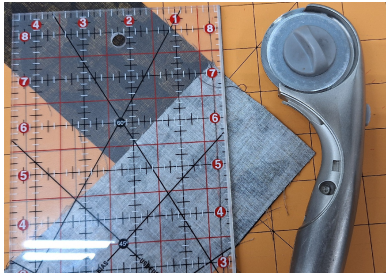
**1. Straight-Grain Binding**

- a. To make straight-grain binding, simply cut your strips of your desired width across the width of the fabric.
- b. Sew these strips together end-to-end, using a diagonal seam. *The seam is sewn diagonally in order to reduce the bulk in the finished binding. If you simply sewed these seams across the ends of the strips, they would all pile up in the same space when you applied the binding to the quilt.*

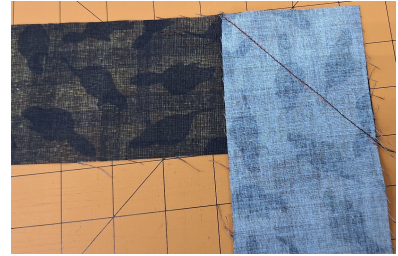


- i. Lay the ends of the strips one on top of the other, right sides together, with the strips making a 90° angle.

- ii. Sew diagonally across the “square” formed by the overlap of the ends of the strips.



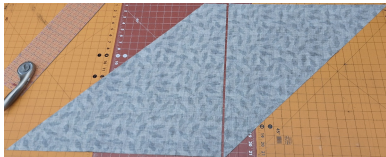
- iii. Trim the seam allowance to  $\frac{1}{4}$ ", trimming off the excess triangle of fabric.



- c. Now skip to Step 3 on Page 5 for Pressing Instructions.

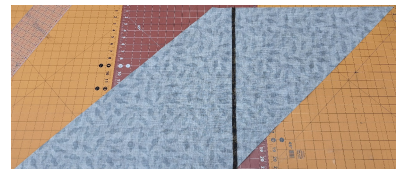
## 2. Bias Binding

- a. Press your fabric flat and make sure both cut edges are reasonably straight and  $90^\circ$  from the selvedge edges.
- b. Lay the fabric out on a large cutting mat, wrong side up.
- c. Lay a long ruler on the fabric, starting in one corner, angling up at a  $45^\circ$  angle.
- d. Cut along the edge of the ruler, cutting off a triangle.



- e. Pick up the triangle you cut off and move it over to the other side of the remaining trapezoid.
- f. Sew these two pieces together, right sides together.

- i. If these are the selvedge edges, use a 1" seam allowance, then trim off the selvages down to  $\frac{1}{4}$ ".
- ii. If neither of these edges are selvages, simply use a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance.



- g. Press the seam allowances open, NOT to one side, in order to reduce the bulk in the finished quilt binding.
- h. You will now have a parallelogram of fabric.

- i. Your next choice is to either simply cut your bias strips (Step j) or to make a Continuous Bias Binding (Step k).



j. **Cut Bias Strips**

- i. Starting at the diagonal edge of the parallelogram, cut as many strips of your desired width as you can.

- ii. Sew these bias strips together, end to end, using  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowances. *You will be sewing along the edges as they are, resulting in seams that cross the strip diagonally.*

- iii. Now skip Step 3 on Page 5 for Pressing Instructions.

k. **Continuous Bias Binding**

- i. Starting at the diagonal edge of the parallelogram, draw lines your desired width apart across the entire width. *These lines will eventually be your cutting line.*



- ii. Draw a line  $\frac{1}{4}$ " from each straight-grain edge of the parallelogram. *These lines will be your stitching lines.*

- iii. Prepare the seam



- (1) Bring the straight-grain edges to meet, right sides together, forming a tube.

- (2) The diagonal lines you drew should form a single spiral down the length of this tube, not several rings. *The end of one line should NOT meet the other end of itself, it should meet the other end of the next line.*

- (3) Using enough pins to hold the edges together, carefully match the points where the drawn stitching lines cross the diagonal lines. *The reason for this is that if you simply matched the diagonal lines at the edges of the fabric, they would not be matching after the seam is sewn.*

- iv. Sew the seam. *Because the seam spirals*





around the tube, you will need to pause and adjust it under the sewing machine several times. Be sure that when you stop, the machine needle is down, through the fabric, to hold it in place.

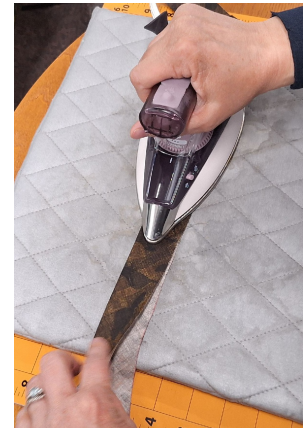
- v. Remove the pins.



- vi. Using fabric shears, carefully cut on the diagonal line that now spirals around the tube, forming one long strip of fabric. *Don't use a rotary cutter, as you are only cutting through one layer of the tube, not both layers.*

### 3. Pressing Instructions

- a. Press all seam allowances open, NOT to one side, in order to reduce the bulk in the finished quilt binding, and trim off any dog-ears.
- b. Fold the binding strip in half width-wise, wrong sides together, along entire length, and press that fold. The strip will be the same length it was, but half the width. One long edge will be the fold and the other long edge will be the two edges of the strip.



### Apply the binding to the quilt:

Now that the binding is made, it is now time to apply it to the edge of the quilt. At this point, you need to make your final decision: are you going to hand sew the second seam of the application process, or are you going to use a decorative machine top-stitch? The process is the same for both options, except that if you are going to hand-stitch the second seam, then you will machine sew the first seam to the FRONT of the quilt, and if you are going to machine top-stitch the second seam, you will machine sew the first seam to the BACK of the quilt. *I typically do a machine top-stitch for the second seam simply because it's faster, so all the pictures you see will show me sewing the first seam to the back of the quilt.*



1. Lay the folded binding on the quilt, with the edges of the strip even with the edge of the quilt.
2. Start sewing in the middle of one side of the quilt, and about 8" from the end of the binding strip.



- a. If your binding strip was cut originally cut 2" to 2½" wide, use ¼" seam allowance.
- b. If your binding strip was originally cut 3" wide, use a ⅜" to ½" seam allowance.

### 3. Mitering binding corners

- a. As you approach the corner of the quilt, stop the distance from the end that is equal to the width of the seam allowance. Stop with the needle down.
  - i. If you are using a ¼" seam allowance, stop ¼" from the end.
  - ii. If you are using a ⅜" to ½" seam allowance, stop that distance from the end.
- b. Turn the quilt so that the point of the corner is pointing straight at you.



- c. Stitch to and off the corner. Cut the thread.

- d. Lay the quilt on your table so that the quilt is to your left and the corner that you just stopped at in front of you



- e. Fold the binding strip to the right, forming a 45° angle with the corner.



- f. Next, fold the binding strip to the left, forming a 90° angle. This should leave a small folded triangle of fabric over the corner. Secure this corner with pins or clips.
- g. Put the quilt back under the sewing machine and resume sewing with your preferred seam allowance down the next side

- 4. Sew the remaining corners and sides of the quilt, stopping about 12" before you get to the place where you started the first seam.

### 5. Join the ends of the binding.

- a. Lay the quilt on your table, making sure it isn't



folded or bunched up in the space where you still need to sew the binding.



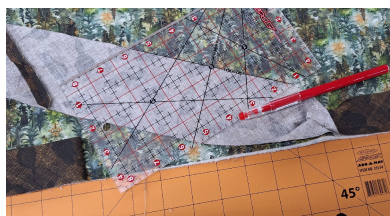
- b. Place a pin in the quilt in the middle of this space.

- c. Lay the left end of the binding strip across the space and make a mark on the inside of the strip where it crosses the pin.

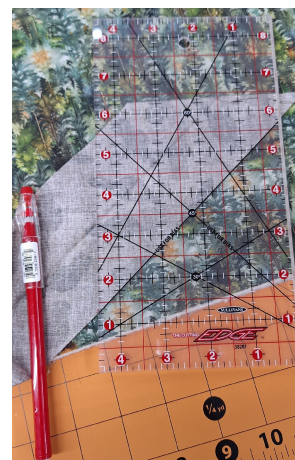


- d. Next, lay the right end of the binding strip across the space and make a mark on the inside of the strip where it also crosses the pin.

- e. Open the fold of the left end of the binding strip and mark a seamline starting from the mark you made in Step c, up and to the right, at a 45° across the strip.



- f. Similarly, open the fold of the right end of the binding strip and mark a seamline starting from the mark you made in Step d, up and to the right, at a 45° across the strip. *It's very important that these two seamline markings both go the same direction.*



- g. With right sides together, match the seamlines of the two ends of the binding, folding the quilt out of the way, secure with pins, then sew on the seamline.



- h. Lay the quilt out again to be sure you didn't twist the binding as you sewed it together (it's easy to accidentally twist the binding).





- i. If it all looks good, trim your seam allowances to  $\frac{1}{4}$ ", press them open, then re-press the center fold across this seam.
  - j. Put the whole quilt back under the sewing machine and sew closed the gap in the binding seam.
6. Sewing the folded edge of the binding to the other side of the quilt.
- a. Wrap the folded edge over the edge of the quilt, covering all the raw edges.
  - b. Either hand sew this with a whip stitch or an invisible stitch to the back of the quilt



or

- c. Use a decorative machine top-stitch to sew it to the front side of the quilt.



*Hint: if you want to be extremely picky about the exact placement of this edge of the binding, you can use basting glue to hold it down before you sew it.*

- d. At the corners, manipulate the various loose triangles of the binding strip on both sides of the quilt to lay nicely and secure them with extra stitching.