

BACK TO BASICS- JANUARY 2024

GETTING AN ACCURATE ¼ " SEAM- END TO END



When you are putting together a very simple patchwork quilt, you may not need to worry as much about your ¼ " seam, but if you are trying to do more complex blocks with multiple seams, getting an accurate (and scant) ¼ " seam is crucial to make your block sections fit each other.

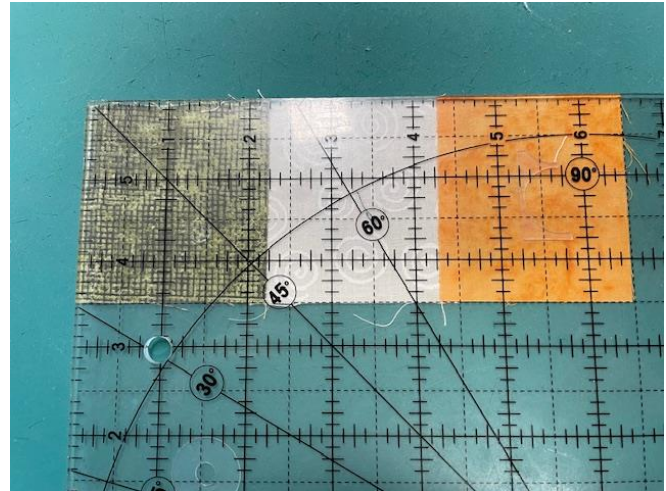
It may seem basic, but let's talk about how we achieve that accurate, straight seam. It is probably one of the most difficult skills in quilting!

1. Start with accurate cutting. (See Melissa Stewart's info , under Program on our website.)
2. Make sure you're sewing a straight seam. (More info to follow)
3. Press carefully- no steam, hold iron in place rather than sweeping it back and forth, and make sure seam is pressed completely open or to one side.

CHECKING FOR ¼ " SEAM

Most machines have a 1/4" presser foot, but you still need to check your results.

Simple test- cut 3 2 ½" squares and stitch together. Check to see if your completed piece is exactly 6 and ½" long. If it's too wide or too narrow, you need to check your needle placement.



Put a ruler under your presser foot and slowly lower the needle by hand. Adjust until it is sitting directly on the ¼" line. If the edge of your ruler is not lining up with the edge of the presser foot or the ¼" line on your throat plate, you might need to move your needle slightly to the left or right. *(NB Check to make sure your throat plate will accept the new needle position.)*

KEEPING YOUR STITCHING STRAIGHT



There are lots of items on the market to help keep your stitching straight. I have had good luck with placing several layers of masking tape on my machine table at the $\frac{1}{4}$ " line. This gives me a bit of a ledge that helps keep the fabric straight as I feed it in. It is too late to adjust when it's at the needle. It needs to be lined up straight.

Check out these two videos by Just Get it Done Quilts for some *excellent* ideas about achieving the $\frac{1}{4}$ " straight seam.

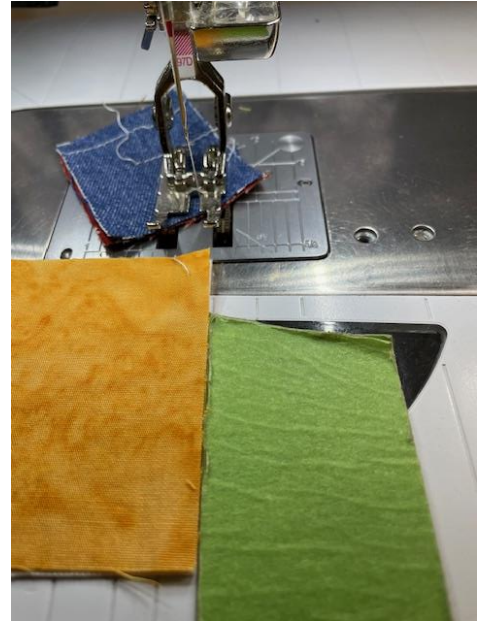
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDsNb5hdhDM> $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQKh7BgG6Jc>, how to sew a straight seam.

LEADERS/STARTERS AND ENDERS

If your machine is occasionally pulling your fabric down into the needle hole, try using a starter/leader and an ender. The starter/leader can be a couple of small scraps of fabric (such as the blue in this picture) on which to begin your sewing. You can use these over and over again.

If you can, try chain piecing (feeding one set of pieces after another under the foot) An ender (same thing as leader) can be added after you finish the last item. This ender can then serve as your leader when you start another round.



KEEPING THE SEAM STRAIGHT AT THE END

As your fabric nears the end of the seam, it is so easy to let it get pulled slightly by the feed dogs, especially if it is a narrow part of the seam. Use a stylus or a chopstick or a purple thing to hold that fabric straight right to the end. Laura Coia shows an interesting tip using pin placement to help you accomplish this in this video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2O-8bE4Yagw> Laura Coia- how to keep your seam straight right till the end.



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