

CAMP LEBANON

General Quilting Instructions

The purpose of these instructions is to assist Camp Lebanon Quilters, especially beginners, with basic quilting information. Hopefully, they will take away some of the mystery of quilting and be a reference for that next project made at home.

We encourage you to visit your local fabric and quilt shops and the public library for additional information as you pursue your quilting journey. You will readily find there are many different options within the quilting processes. What is most comfortable for you personally will be your best. You may discover and create yet another new technique, method or approach.

Happy Quilting!

FABRIC PREPARATION

Ahead of Time

- Ahead of time, soak your fabrics in cold water and dry in a warm dryer to preshrink your fabric. Fabrics vary in their shrinkage percentage, therefore, pre-shrinking will avoid unnecessary puckers when you wash a finished project.
- Make sure none of the fabrics are bleeding before you dry them. You can treat bleeders by soaking them in white vinegar and then rinsing them thoroughly. If this does not stop the bleeding, put the fabric through a wash cycle with laundry soap. A fabric still bleeding after this process may need to be retired and another found to take its place

Pressing of Fabric

- There is a difference between ironing and pressing your fabric. Ironing is moving the iron back and forth across the fabric. Pressing is lifting the iron **UP** and **DOWN** on the fabric which will prevent stretching.
- Once the fabric has been preshrunk, it is okay to *lightly* steam iron your fabric **PRIOR** to cutting and construction of the quilt. (Some quilters will use a light starch for pre-washed fabric.)
- Once you have begun to cut your strips and start your quilt construction, use only a **DRY** iron and **PRESS** your fabric. (**Do not** use steam, as this will stretch your fabric.)

Pressing Seams

Two Step Process:

- First "set" the seam by pressing the seam as sewn.
- Second, open the fabric (right side facing up) and press the seam, both layers to the same side. Press on the right side of the fabric not the back. (Pressing from the back can lead to puckers in the seams.)
- Generally seams are pressed toward the darker block to prevent the seams from showing through your lighter blocks. *However*, based on the quilting pattern, there are exceptions to this guideline in order to avoid excess seam bulk.

Labeling of Fabric

It is helpful to identify your fabrics as specified by the pattern in a manner comfortable to you.

For example: A=dark, B=light, OR "background", "block", etc. We suggest you cut a small swatch of each fabric, make a fabric "key", and tape it to your pattern to remember which fabric you intended to use where.

ROTARY CUTTING

The Rotary Cutter

- We recommend the large or extra large Olfa cutters for large quilting projects.
- Be careful - it is **RAZOR** sharp! **ALWAYS** close the blade when done with each strip. It is too easy to accidentally brush against it when moving the fabric and it can result in a deep cut or ruined fabric.
- Use firm but not hard pressure.
- Change the blade if it begins to skip when cutting the fabric.

The Mat

- Larger mats have greater flexibility for different projects.
- Smaller mats are easier for class/travel.
- **IMPORTANT:** DO NOT use the lines on your mat for accurate measurements. As unbelievable as it seems, the mats are not accurately marked. Instead, use your quilter's ruler to measure for accuracy.
- The cutting technique recommended is to use the horizontal lines on the mat as a **guide** and use your quilter's ruler for measuring.

The Ruler

- Is generally more accurate than mats, but still measure to be sure.
- Thick lines on rulers CAN impact measurements; so be consistent which edge of the thick line you use when measuring.
- A 5-6.5" wide x 24" long ruler is best for greater flexibility.
- It is also nice to have a smaller one for shorter cuts. When purchasing multiple rulers, stay within the same family to ensure measuring consistency.
- Since rulers will vary in the accuracy of their measurements, once you start a project use the same ruler for the entire project.

Cutting Basics

- ALWAYS roll the cutter AWAY from you.
- Always cut in the same direction on the mat - away from you.
- Hold the cutter at a 90-degree angle to the ruler to ensure crisp, straight cuts.
- Apply pressure as you roll the cutter along the edge of the ruler.
- Carefully "walk" your hand up the ruler.
 - Cut until the rotary cutter is opposite your fingertips holding down the ruler.
 - DON'T lift the cutter.
 - Carefully reposition your ruler hand by "walking" up the ruler and then roll the cutter away from you.
 - This will avoid the ruler slipping sideways on long cuts, which affects your measurements and quilt.

Cutting Technique

Easier sewing is achieved when all the fabric is cut on the cross grain. *However, if you are working with curves, you will need to cut on the bias.* Here's how to cut your strips on the cross grain:

- Freshly press the fabric to eliminate the wrinkles. (Optional: Use very light starch. This is especially helpful when working with bias piecing.)
- Line up the selvages of fabric.
- With the fold toward you, position it on a horizontal line of the cutting mat (one of the closet ones to you).

The rough edge of the fabric needs to be "squared" before any strips are cut. For this first "square up" cut, if you are right-handed, the fabric will be to your left (to your right if you are left-handed). Using your quilter's ruler, place it so that a horizontal line of the ruler is on the fold of the fabric. A vertical line of the ruler should then be parallel with (or on top of) one of the mat's vertical lines. Cut off the raw edges.

For cutting strips, reposition your fabric (or yourself) so that the fabric is to your right if you are right-handed and to your left if you are left-handed. To cut strips, place the line of your ruler that corresponds to the strip width on the "squared up" edge of the fabric. Cut with these things in mind:

- In cutting, the ruler measurement is your guide for the strips.
- Be consistent in lining up the ruler for each strip to enhance your accuracy.
- If you are making a large quilt you may want to square up your fabric edge from time to time during the cutting process.
- Cut ONLY where your hand is HOLDING the ruler. "Walk" up the ruler to reposition your hand.

SEWING PREPARATION

Preparing Your Working Area

Be sure your working area is well lit and that you have your materials close at hand. If space allows, it is helpful to work in an “L” arrangement with your sewing table as one part of the “L” and your cutting table/or ironing board as the other part of the “L”. This allows for quick and easy movements back and forth during your project.

Preparing Your Machine

Ahead of time, be sure it is cleaned, oiled and ready with a new needle.

Also identify your stitch length. The recommended stitch length for construction of the quilt top is 15 stitches per inch. Experiment with your machine and fabric to determine the appropriate setting. (Machine quilting stitch length is closer to 10 stitches per inch.)

Preparing Your Quarter Inch Seam Allowance

In quilting, we use a “scant” 1/4” seam allowance. A “scant” 1/4” is 1-2 threads short of a 1/4”. This is used to compensate for the pressing of the seam open. Determine your scant 1/4” mark using a ruler and test on scrap fabric pieces.

Put the ruler under your presser foot and GENTLY move the needle down until it JUST touches the 1/4” marking on the ruler. This will show you where your 1/4” seam allowance is. Put a piece of masking tape along the edge of your ruler on to your sewing machine bed.

Test the accuracy of this mark by

- Cutting 1 – 2.5” strip of scrap material. Cut this into 3 pieces.
- Sew 2 of these strips together along the long edge using your 1/4” guide. Press.
- Sew the 3rd strip. Press
- Measure. The resulting width should be 6.5” If not, adjust your mark accordingly and continue until you have an accurate 6.5” width.

As you sew, use the tape as your 1/4” guide. (Hint: Dr. Scholl’s moleskin can also be used to make an elevated guide that is easier to use than masking tape.)

Sewing Tips

Unless otherwise noted, in quilting sew with:

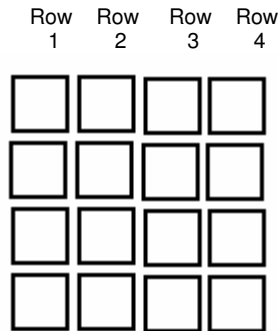
- Right sides together
- A scant 1/4” seam - check frequently as you sew to ensure ongoing accuracy.
- A stitch length of 15 stitches per inch

Chain Piecing

A time saving measure for assembling identical quilt blocks is to do the same step for each block or “*chain piecing*”. After each step, clip the blocks apart, press and begin chain piecing the next strip onto the block.

QUILT CONSTRUCTION

When all the quilt blocks are completed, lay them out to determine your quilt design. Once this is determined, it is time to sew the blocks together. One quick and easy method is to lay out your blocks on the floor or table as determined by your design. Then number the top of each vertical row with a piece of masking tape or paper. (HINT: Mark the pieces near the top, so you always know which is the top of the block.)



Vertical Assembly

1. Flip each of the Row 2 blocks on top of the Row 1 blocks immediately to its left (right sides together and ensuring that edges stay together).
2. Beginning at the top of this “combined” row, stack the blocks together with the top staying on top and **DO NOT TURN THE BLOCKS!** Label your blocks so you remember their position. (For example, label the upper right hand corner consistently with the row number.)
3. Now, stack each remaining row, from top to bottom. Again, **DO NOT TURN THE BLOCKS!** Place each row in order on your work surface.
4. To sew, begin with the combined Row 1 and 2 stack. Chain piece to end of this stack. **DO NOT CLIP THREADS BETWEEN BLOCKS.**
5. When all blocks from Rows 1 and 2 are pieced, chain piece Row 3 to Row 2 blocks - beginning at the top of the quilt. **DO NOT CLIP THREADS!**
6. Continue by adding Row 4 to Row 3, etc. until all vertical rows have been joined.

Remember, for ease in piecing the rows together:

- Do NOT turn the blocks
- Always start at the top of each row
- Piece the rows from left to right

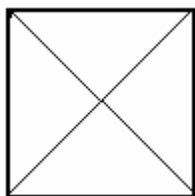
Horizontal Assembly

After the vertical rows are sewn together, its time for the horizontal rows.

1. **PRESS** every other seam - (horizontal row 1 to the left, horizontal row 2 to the right) as you sew each row, matching and “locking” seams.
2. The seams should easily lock into place when the seam allowance has been pressed in opposite directions.
3. After all horizontal rows are sewn, press your quilt top on the right side of the fabric.

BORDERS

Borders are cut after the blocks are sewn together. They are viewed as the frame of the quilt. Therefore, it is good to wait and see how the picture turns out before choosing your frame. You can have as many or few borders as you desire. The width of each border can also vary. Before measuring for borders, it is wise to check the dimensions of your quilt (applicable for square or rectangular quilts). Check by measuring diagonally across the quilt. The measurements should be the same.



If significantly different, now is the time to make adjustments before adding your borders. (NOTE: The best measuring tape to use at this time is a metal carpenters tape.)

Border Options:

- Strip borders (with or without corner blocks) are recommended for those brand new to quilting.
- Mitered borders for the more advanced quilter.

Determining Border Lengths

Before beginning, determine how your borders will be sewn. For strip borders, will the width or length be sewn on first? The longest side is usually the border attached first. However, depending upon the desired quilt appearance, it is your option to sew either the width or the length on first.

Step 1: Measure the length of your quilt on the right, center and left (about 1" from the edge so as not to stretch your quilt). Add the three measurements together and divide by 3 to get your average measurement. For example:

Left = 20.50
Center = 20.25
Right = 20.75
Total $61.50 / 3 = 20.5"$

This measurement is the length of the quilt and the length of the left and right borders. Cut 2. Attach the lengths to the left and right sides of the quilt with a 1/4" seam allowance, with the lengths on top to ease in any fullness.

Step 2: Now measure the width of your quilt (include the borders just added) at the top, center, and bottom (again about 1" from the edge). Add the three measurements together and divide by 3 to get your average measurement. This measurement is the width of the quilt and is the length of the top and bottom borders. Cut 2. Attach the widths to the top and bottom sides of the quilt with a 1/4" seam allowance, with the widths on top to ease in any fullness.

If more than one border is added, repeat the measuring process after each border is added to the quilt top.

Piecing Strips for Borders

For borders greater than 44" long you have two choices:

1. You can piece strips together OR
2. You can cut fabric on the length of grain.

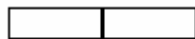
NOTE: The length of grain is parallel to the selvage of the fabric. The cross grain is perpendicular to the selvage. Your fabric will act differently when cut on the length of grain than on the cross grain. The cross grain has more stretch to it. You will also need to cut more cross grain strips for your quilt construction. If cutting your borders on the length of grain, the borders are cut before your quilt strips to maximize the length available. Therefore, your cross grain strips will be shorter and you will need more of them.

These instructions will discuss two methods of piecing or joining the fabric strips together to make the border - straight piecing or biased piecing. However, before discussing the piecing methods, there are also two different options in pressing the pieced seams.

- Press flat (an open seam) to minimize seam bulk; OR
- Press both seams to one side (adds strength to outer edges of the quilt)

Straight Piecing

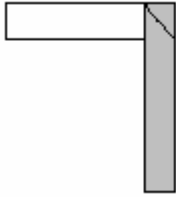
Straight piecing is easier for those making their first quilt. Lay two strips, right sides together and sew across one end.



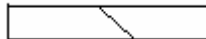
Biased Piecing

This is where the seams are joined at an angle. This is typically less noticeable than a straight seam, especially with solid fabric. This is a difficult method to describe, but once observed, it is easier to understand.

Lay one strip, right side up, horizontally on your ironing board. Keep the right edge on the ironing board. Take the second strip, right side down, and form a right angle on this edge (second strip will run vertically).



Keeping the corners of the two strips together, fold back the second strip and press back the top strip to form a triangle on the right top corner.



Open (you may want to pin) and then stitch along the press mark from the top inner edge of the seam to the bottom outer edge of the seam. Trim to 1/4" seam allowance. Press flat (or to one side). You now have one continuous strip for your border.

BATTING AND BACKING

When the quilt top is completely finished, it's time to assemble the quilt. (NOTE: Some prefer to mark the quilt top for quilting before assembling the entire quilt. Others choose to wait until it is basted together.)

Backing

Be sure your backing is larger than your quilt top. Depending upon the size of the quilt top, it can be 2-4 inches larger on EACH side.

Lay your backing on the floor/table top, wrong side up. Tape it tightly to the surface using masking tape (1.5" minimum width suggested). Firmly smooth out the wrinkles so it is firm and taught, but NOT STRETCHED (too tight or too loose may result in puckering).

Batting

Batting comes in different thicknesses. We recommend using a low loft batting for ease in handling. Lay your batting over the backing. The batting should be the same size as the backing.

If your batting is cotton, it should be pre-washed and dried. TIP: To take the "fold" lines out of rolled up batting, put it in the dryer on the no heat/fluff setting for 10 minutes or so to perk it up before you baste the layers together.

Basting

Center your quilt top over the batting and backing, right side up. Starting in the middle, smooth wrinkles towards the edges.

Once you believe the quilt is well positioned, re-measure your diagonal lines like you did before adding the borders. The diagonal measurements should be equal. Make adjustments if necessary. This will enhance the appearance of your quilt, especially if it is a wallhanging.

The purpose of basting the quilt together is to prevent it from slipping or puckering as you join all three layers together. You can "pin" or "thread" baste your quilt together.

Pin Basting

- To pin baste, use 1" rust resistant safety pins.
- Starting in the middle, pin all three layers together from the center out to each edge (forms a cross (+)). Then in each quadrant, pin from the center out towards each corner. There should be a pin every 4" or so. Your outstretched hand should touch several pins. As you pin, be aware of how you intend to quilt the top and try not to pin where you know you will be quilting.

- Tools to aid in the pinning process are either a grapefruit spoon with jaws or a “Kwik Klip”. Both are easier on your fingers if you have a large quilt to baste.

Thread Basting

- Take long pieces of thread and baste the quilt layers together
- Start with a line down the centers of the quilt.
- Then continue with horizontal and vertical long basting stitches, stitching from the center towards each edge.

QUILTING

There are many different ways to “quilt” your quilt. There are several good books discussing each technique and we suggest you purchase one and/or take a class for further instruction.

Hand quilting - is the use of only one thread color at a time.

Machine Quilting can be “in the ditch” (seams), free motion or following one of the special designs for machine quilting.

When machine quilting, the top thread color depends on the effect you wish to achieve. You can match the thread color to the dominant color in the quilt top, use a contrasting thread, a neutral thread color, or a good quality invisible thread. Typically Amish quilts are quilted with black or navy thread.

The bottom thread color (bobbin) does not need to match the top. You can choose a different color here. NOTE: If you want to use an invisible thread, use only one of the new “soft” invisible threads (Sulky is one good brand). Using invisible thread in the bobbin case can be machine sensitive. Experiment first.

BINDINGS

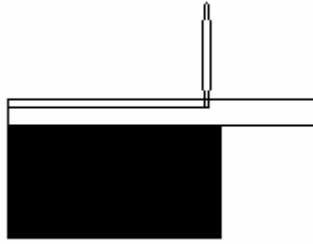
There are different methods for binding your quilt. You will find that different instructors prefer different methods. We will discuss just one method here and that is the popular French Seam Binding.

If your quilt is a wallhanging, please refer to the section on Hanging Your Quilt before you attach your binding to the quilt.

1. Measure the perimeter of your quilt (and add 10-15 inches).
2. Cut enough 2.5” strips of fabric on the cross-grain to equal this perimeter measurement. (Some quilters prefer 2-2 1/4” strips.)
3. Sew these strips together to form one long strip that equals the perimeter measurement (plus the 10-15 inches). These strips can be sewn together either straight across or mitered (see the instructions in the border section). Mitered is preferred to reduce the bulk in the seams, especially with solid fabrics.
4. With WRONG sides together, press the binding strip in half. (NOTE: Some quilters prefer not to press because then it is easier when tacking the strip onto the back of the quilt.)
5. Leaving a 6” tail, begin to sew the binding to the quilt top starting near the middle of one of the quilts sides. Match the raw edge of the binding to the quilt top’s raw edge using a 1/4” seam.

6. Corners - we will make mitered corners. This produces a picture frame effect.

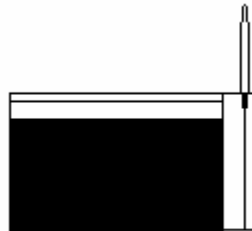
At the corner, stop stitching 1/4" from the corner edge. Leave the needle in the fabric, raise the presser foot, and turn the quilt 1/4 turn counterclockwise. (You will be ready to sew down the next side of the quilt.) Put the presser foot back down and back stitch off the edge of the quilt. Raise the presser foot and pull the quilt towards you slightly.



Bring the binding strip above the quilt so the raw edges are in line with the quilts raw edge (this will form a miter with the binding). Finger press the diagonal fold.



Fold the binding strip straight down so that the raw edges meet again. Keep the diagonal fold in place underneath. The folded edge on the binding should align with the top edge of the quilt.



Resume stitching at the top edge of the quilt.

7. Attach binding to the total quilt perimeter, mitring each corner.

8. Stop stitching 10-12" from the start of your stitching.

9. There are different methods to join the ends of the binding. We will discuss two.

Straight Seam

Press or finger press a 1/2" hem on one of the tail ends. Cut off excess binding, leaving enough to overlap the tails by an inch or so. Your hemmed tail will go on the outside to form a nice finish.

Mitered Seam

Overlap the two tail ends by the same amount as the width of your cut binding, cutting off the excess.

Example: If the binding were cut 2.5" wide, your tails would overlap by 2.5".

Take the two ends, right sides together and follow the same instructions as if you were mitering strips/borders together.

- Open the binding tail on your left with the right side up.

- Open the binding tail on your right and place it on top of the left strip at a right angle, right side down.
- Press on the diagonal, forming a triangle.
- Open the seam and stitch on the pressed line. Trim excess.
- This will join the binding with a mitered seam

10. Once the tails are joined, finish machine stitching the binding to the quilt.

11. Trim away the excess batting and backing (use the raw edge of the quilt top as a guide). A rotary cutter and ruler do a great job!

12. Fold the binding to the back of the quilt and blind-stitch the folded edge to the seam line of the quilt.

OR Fold the binding to the backside of the quilt. Pin in place so that the folded edge on the binding covers the stitching line (where you attached the binding). From the right side “stitch in the ditch” using invisible thread on the right side of the quilt and a bobbin thread to match the binding on the wrong side. Catch the folded edge of the binding on the backside with the stitching.

HANGING YOUR QUILT

These instructions will cover how to hang your quilt by use of a Rod Pocket or Tabs.

Rod Pocket (*Rod is Not Visible*)

1. Cut a 5” strip of fabric the length of your quilt top minus 2 inches.
2. Fold the fabric in half lengthwise, right sides together.
3. Stitch a 1/4” seam on each end of the fabric.
4. Turn the fabric (right sides now on the outside) and press the strip in half lengthwise.
5. Center and pin the strip on the quilt backing, placing the rough edges even with the rough edge of the quilt. *Be sure you have placed it on the side you wish to hang the quilt from.*
6. Attach the binding as discussed in Binding Instructions
7. Secure folded and pressed edge of rod pocket to quilt back with blind stitch.
8. Cut wooden rod 1” shorter than the finished length of the quilt top. Slip the rod through the rod pocket.
9. Hang your masterpiece!

Variation: Attach a long strip of heavy duty Velcro to your strip between steps 4 and 5. Attach the other half of the Velcro strip to the wall. After step 7, match Velcro to Velcro and your quilt is on display!

Tabs (*Decorator Rod Visible*)

1. Cut a 6.5” wide strip on the cross grain of fabric. From this strip, cut 3 - 10.5” long tabs.
2. Fold strips in half lengthwise, right sides together and stitch a 1/4” seam the length of the strip (leave ends open).
3. Turn the tab right side out.
4. Press the tab so that the seam is in the center. (Not on an edge of the tab.)
5. Determine tab placement on your quilt backing. Place one tab in the center with the remaining two equal distances from each end. Mark the positions. *Be sure you mark these on the side of the quilt you wish to hang it from.*
6. Fold the tabs in half lengthwise (seams together) and place where marked on the quilt backing. Align rough edges of the tabs with the edge of the quilt.
7. Machine baste tabs to the quilt.
8. Attach binding as referred to in Binding Instructions
9. After binding is secured, thread rod through the tabs. Your quilt is ready for display!

Hint: The number and size of tabs depends on the size of the quilt being hung.

Signing/Dating your Quilt

Don't forget to sign and date your quilt. There are a variety of methods in signing and dating your work. Check with your local quilt shop or your quilting friends.

Happy Quilting!