

## BPQ Block of the Month 2018-19

### General Instructions - Striving for Accuracy - A Few Hints

When blocks are made by different people accuracy takes on new meaning, since without it the blocks will differ in size. Please review these hints and make use of any that apply to your current project.

#### Preparing your fabric

- If you think your colors will bleed, the time to wash (or at least rinse them, to test colorfastness) is before you cut! Some products, like Retayne (available in quilt shops and, of course, Amazon) allow you to pretreat fabrics and set the dyes so they won't bleed later. Follow product instructions.
- Press fabric before cutting. For additional accuracy, spray starch (on wrong side) to add body. This is especially helpful when bias edges are involved in the pattern.

#### Pressing seams

- After sewing your seam, but before opening it up, "set the seam". To do this, if you want to press to side D (D for Dark, since we quilters favor the Dark Side), lay your piece on your ironing board wrong sides up, with the dark side on top, raw edge toward you, seam away from you. Give a quick press to the seam.
- Now flip the dark side up, away from you. Press the seam, gliding just slightly so that the seam is fully open, no pleats. The seam is now pressed to the D side.



#### 1/4" Seams

- Know your machine, and how to get an accurate 1/4" seam. Even if you are using a 1/4" foot, test it. Even such factors as the weight (thickness) of your thread, or the flatness of your ironing can affect the seam width. To check the accuracy, you can cut two strips of fabric, each 2-1/2" wide, stitch together using a 1/4" seam, press open and measure. Your piece should be 4-1/2". If it is less than 4-1/2", your seam is too wide. Remedies include sewing a scant 1/4", moving your needle slightly to the right (some machines have this feature), and/or using a piece of moleskin (from the drugstore) or even masking tape to mark needle plate for where to position the edge of your fabric. You might have to make several tests before you find the sweet spot...so be sure to make a note when you get there.

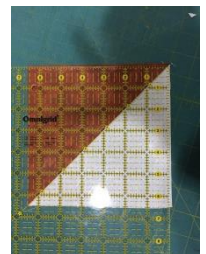
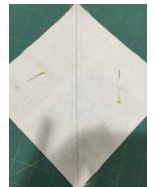
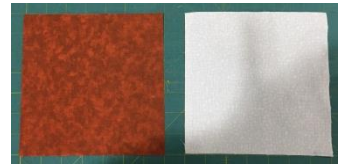
#### Stitch Length

- Even the most basic machine has the capability to set the stitch length. For quilt piecing, my preference is 2.1, the default on my machine, or even smaller. This makes the stitches more secure (although, admittedly, also more tedious if you need to unsew, not that it ever happens).

## Half Square Triangles (HSTs)

There are lots of HSTs in the patterns we are making (and, in general quilting). It's well worth it to use a method that results in accurate size. Here's my favorite technique (it makes two HSTs):

- Cut a square piece of each of the two fabrics 1" larger than your desired finished size. For example, if you want your finished HSTs to be 6" (after assembled into the quilt), cut a 7" square from each of your two fabrics. (you can even cut larger, because they will be trimmed, but not smaller).
- On one of the two squares, draw a diagonal line on the wrong side of the fabric (ordinary pencil is fine).
- Place the two squares right sides together. To keep the squares from shifting, you might secure each side with a pin.
- As if the drawn line is the edge of your fabric, sew  $\frac{1}{4}$ " on each side of it (not on the line, as instructions for other piecing calls for). Err on the side of a narrower seam, not wider.
- Cut on the diagonal line.
- At your ironing board, place your triangle with dark side on top and point toward you (seam away from you). Lightly press, to set the seam. Then flip back the top (dark side) and press the seam open, away from you. This ensures that the seam is fully pressed open (no little pleats).
- Back to the cutting mat to size the square. You will need a ruler with a diagonal line. Your square should now be slightly larger than desired. (For example, if you want your finished HST to be 6", you will trim this to 6-1/2", but it's probably a tiny bit more than that now.)
- Place your squaring up ruler on your square lining up the diagonal mark on the ruler with the diagonal seam. Trim as little as possible off the right and top edges. This will also trim off the "dog ears."
- Rotate your square 180 degrees and carefully align your ruler to the desired size on the lower left edges of the fabric and the diagonal line on the seam. Trim the top and right edges. If you find that your square is not big enough, either you have trimmed too much off in the first step, or you should start with bigger squares, just to be safe.
- Your HST should now be perfectly sized, with the diagonal seams going right to the corners.



### Caution

When working with the Bedrock Cloud fabric it's easy to confuse the wrong side and right side (very little difference). Ask us how we know (tee hee). Be careful.

### Cutting your fabric

When rotary cutting fabric pieces, it's good to check for proper alignment after each cut. The simple movement of the rotary cutter against the ruler "shifts" the fabric to the left by a minuscule amount. If cutting several pieces the cumulative shifting may cause problems in fitting the parts together.

This is particularly true when cutting strips with the fabric folded. To avoid the dreaded elbow, be sure the fold of your fabric is on a ruler line perpendicular to your cut. If the ruler slips a little, you might mess up not just the current strip but subsequent ones. To prevent ruler slippage, attach some little sandpaper dots (or other non-slip dots) to the underside of the ruler. And then re-align every few cuts, at least.

### Fabric shifts while sewing.

Don't be hesitant to pin pieces together when ready to sew. This prevents shifting of the top or bottom fabric so they don't line up precisely. Accuracy is much improved with pinning. Spending a tiny bit of extra time before sewing is much preferable to ripping out stitches and resewing. This will aid in getting points to line up.3333