

BPQ Block of the Month 2019-20

General Instructions - Striving for Accuracy - A Few Hints

We strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with all the information provided, and read each pattern completely before beginning to cut and sew.

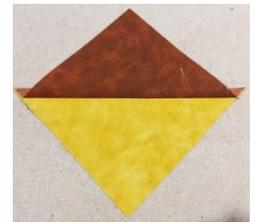
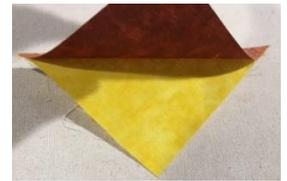
When blocks are made by different people accuracy takes on new meaning, since without it the blocks will differ in size. Please review these hints and make use of any that apply to your current project.

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. Factors such 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.

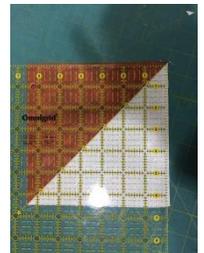
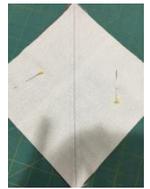
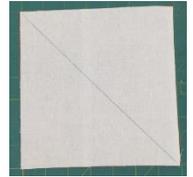
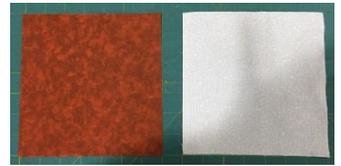
Stitch Length

- 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 2" (after assembled into the quilt), cut a 3" 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).
- Optional: you might want to press your seam open. I often prefer this.
- 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 2", you will trim this to 2-1/2", 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.



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 hesitate 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.

Assembling rows and columns of your block

Many of the blocks consists of lots of squares and HSTs that fit together like a puzzle into a block. The instructions may say (simply) assemble as shown in the diagram.

Although there are methods that might speed things up, we suggest the following: Lay out your pieces on a table so that they look like the photo/diagram.

Assemble the first row by sewing the first square to the second, and so on. When the row strip is done, lay it back on the table with the others. Do not press the seams yet.

Similarly, assemble the second row and place it back on the table.

Continue until all rows are assembled.

NOW you will press the row strips in such a way that the seams will nest (and points line up) when you sew the rows together.

Turn over all the rows, keeping in the correct order.

PRESS THE SEAMS OF THE FIRST ROW ALL IN THE SAME DIRECTION.

Press the seams of the second row in the **OPPOSITE DIRECTION** from that of the first row..

Press the seams of the third row in the **SAME DIRECTION** as the **FIRST** row.

CONTINUE, ALTERNATING the direction of the pressing in each subsequent row.

Now sew Row 1 to Row 2, then attach Row 3, etc., until you are done.

At this point my preference is to sew the seams open, to make it easier to attach the blocks together.

Optional Fused Elements

October - Puppy nose and eyes: use one circle for nose; cut second circle in half for eyes. Use half circles flat side down.

January- Snowman facial features: two eyes; one 5x5 inch square each orange carrot nose fabric and square of Heat N Bond Lite for fusing.

These embellishments are optional. Feel free to create your own puppy nose and eyes as well as your own snowman face. Have fun with the variety of expressions you can create!

Fusing Instructions-

Eyes-

Decide on placement of eyes, peel off Heat N Bond backing, and put in place on block. Use medium hot iron (no steam) to fuse the eyes to the face. Hold iron on spot for about 2-3 seconds, until securely fastened.

Carrot Nose- Using a pencil, draw the size and shape nose you want on the smooth side of the Heat N Bond Lite. When satisfied with it, place the fusible paper onto the orange fabric square, rough side of paper to fabric. As with eyes, press medium hot iron (no steam) to the smooth paper (fabric will be underneath the paper) for 2-3 seconds until paper adheres. Cut out your carrot nose on your drawn lines and follow same fusing procedure as you did for the eyes.