

Tips, Tricks and Techniques

When pressing your quilt, do not use the “steam” function of your iron, Steam causes “stretching”. Use a dry iron. Also, when pressing sewn seams, press the seam in the direction it is first sewn, then press the seam in the direction you desire (right, left or open). This will make your seams flatter and straighter.

To pin or not to pin! Pins facilitate precise piecing. Choose the right pin for the job. For piecing, use pins with a thin shaft labeled “fine”. They will not distort or leave holes in your fabric. Glass headed pins are easy to handle, easy to find when you drop them on the floor and the heads do not melt when ironed. Flat flower shaped heads lie flat when you stitch.

When Paper Piecing:

1. Use microtex sharp needles (size 90)
2. Use an open toe foot as it makes it easier to see the line you are stitching on.
3. Make your stitches smaller than normal (1.5 stitch length or 15 stitch length, depending on your machine).
4. To make it easier to remove the paper, run the handle of your scissors along each stitching line to weaken the paper.

Does your rotary mat need TLC? They love water. It helps the slits to heal. You can soak the entire mat in the bathtub. Use ¼ C white vinegar for every gallon of water. The water must be cool, and you can safely scrub with mild dishwashing soap. This will help get out the small threads so the slits can close.

When sewing dark and light fabrics next to each other, have the light fabric extend past the dark (by a thread). If the seam has to be pressed to the light side of the fabric, the dark will not extend past the light and possibly show on the light right side of the quilt.

There are two systems for labeling needles. There is a US System and a European System. US System sizes range from 8 – 19, while the European System ranges from 60 – 120. Both systems use the smaller numbers for the finer needles. That is why you will see needle packages saying 8-60, 12-80 and 16 – 100.

Trying to decide where to put your focal point on your quilt or block square? For quilt squares, cut a piece of paper the size of your square and fold it in 1/3's, then fold in 1/3's again in the other direction. Where the fold marks meet is where your best focal points are. The same applies for larger pieces too.

Trouble sewing with metallic thread? Here are some guidelines:

1. Use a needle designed for metallic thread, the eye is smoother and larger.
2. Make sure your spool of thread is in the upright position, not on its side.
3. Practice on a quilt sandwich to test your stitches.
4. Loosen the upper tension.
5. Use a longer stitch.
6. Slow down your stitching speed.

When sewing squares or long strips that will be joined in rows, iron the seam allowances (of the 2 adjoining seams) in opposite directions so that when you join the sections they can butt the opposite pressed seam. This will give you perfectly matched corners. To aid you in this, use “U” shaped or 2 pronged pins to hold the seam together. They are a little expensive but are extremely helpful for accurate matching.

To wash small pieces of fabric without fraying the edges, put them in a salad spinner, rather than the washing machine. Spin with hot water and soap. Rinse with cool water, drain and spin. Press the pieces dry.

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