

Hedgehog Hints

by Terry Albers
terry@hedgehogquilts.com
www.hedgehogquilts.com



Controlling Bias Edges

Many quilters have no issue with diagonal or bias edges. But the rest of us need to have a few tricks to help us. In no particular order, here are some of my favorites.

Remember: There is no "ironing" in quilting... I press and lift but don't push the fabric with my iron.

1. Use spray sizing or starch alternative, such as Mary Ellen's Best Press™ on your fabrics before you cut! You don't have to spray every bit of fabric for a quilt top, but spray the pieces you will be cutting into setting triangles or squares that will be sewn on the diagonal. I cut my setting triangle strips about 1" wider than indicated in the pattern, iron them with spray starch and then trim them to the proper width before cutting the triangles. Check your yardage to be certain that you have enough fabric to cut your strips oversize by an inch each.

2. When sewing a bias edge to a straight-of-grain edge, sew with the bias on the bottom (next to the bed of the machine). The straight cut edge stretches less; it supports the bias edge.

3. When sewing 2 bias-edge pieces together, use a walking foot or dual feed foot and go slow! Do a test piece first. If you are still having trouble, pin a narrow strip of thin paper (foundation piecing paper is ideal) to the top of the seam, so that you are stitching on the paper. After sewing, score the paper at the seam line so that it tears away easier. As with foundation piecing, hold the seam with your thumb and forefinger while tearing off the paper so you don't stretch your seam.

4. Press seams flat as they were sewn to set the seam before opening anything out. I do this for all my seams but especially bias. Allow the piece to cool before messing with it. It will hold its shape better and be easier to work with. I finger press my seams before I go in with the iron. When the seam is nicely pressed and all the parts are going in the right direction, hit it with another shot of steam and let it cool completely.

5. Whenever possible, I make my half-square (or bias square) pieces larger than needed and trim them down to size. I usually make them 1/2" larger than needed and trim away the excess. This means that all my points go right into the corners perfectly.

6. Learn to paper piece! Also called foundation piecing, it's my favorite method because flying geese are one of my favorite design elements and I constantly struggle when sewing them together. I know that there are lots of rulers and techniques out there. But paper piecing lets me make them the exact size I want and controls those pesky bias seams! I use Thangles™ triangle papers to make perfect half-square triangles with no waste. The papers are available at most quilt shops.

Practice a bit...do what works best for you. This little bit of extra time spent will make your projects much more fun than frustrating.