

Educational Tidbit for October 2020

BINDING

Happy Autumn to everyone. Everything is well at Bonbright Manor and I pray you are healthy. This tidbit is all about binding, including calculating how much fabric you will need; the number of strips to cut; sewing binding strips together; creating double fold binding; introducing a binding wheel to hold the binding strip; and machine binding.

Please note, I only bind quilts when I absolutely must bind them. I prefer to choose a pattern, plan a quilt, buy the fabric, and sew all the pieces together. The finishing part is not my joy. Because I only bind quilts occasionally, I am not very practiced at it, and tend to run into problems. I just learned (and/or relearned) some good stuff about binding, so I want to pass it on to you.

In our last episode I wrote about using up 2 ½ inch squares to make a Scrap Happy quilt. When we left off, I had sewn 14 blocks and had 19 to go. In the meantime, I have finished all 33 blocks and began sewing them into columns rather than rows, as prescribed by the pattern. So far, there is one column completed, one partially completed, and the other three are just waiting to be sewn. Argh! I just could not face one more block with all those seams to match up with another, I needed a break. I longed to sew just one long straight line without matching or nesting seams! I am still on the lookout for the paper quilt pattern, it has disappeared some place in the manor.



I took some time and sewed up some 10" x 10" pillows for Kathie Wolin's "Cough Pillow Project". I ran out of stuffing and am awaiting more stuffing from Amazon. I complete pillows while I watch television in the evening. Okay, I went a little overboard, but I was not ready to go back to sewing those Scrap Happy blocks together!

I have been using up fabric leftovers from completed quilts and using up some fabric that I bought on sale. Some of this fabric has been in the drawer for a while because when I pull it out to audition for use in a quilt, I scratch my head and ask myself, what were you thinking? Why did you purchase this?

Next I took a class online called “Create Better Bindings” with Natalie Earnhart, from Missouri Star Quilting. It was one of those they offered at a good sale price with 5 lessons, so I took the bait. It was worth the time and money. I was so refreshed on sewing binding that I decided to finish up a couple of quilts by applying what I just learned. After all, binding involves sewing a straight line for quite a while and there were no 2 ½ inch squares in sight.

One thing that has perplexed me for the longest time was determining how much fabric I needed to bind a quilt. The class provided a very easy formula to use.

Now don’t freak out, this math is not really that hard. Remember, in quilting, math is our friend and saves us from running out of fabric in the middle of the night (this is my new mantra).

After you have completed the quilting, square up your quilt and trim off excess fabric, batting, and backing. Next measure the length of the quilt and the width of the quilt. Then use the 4-step process outlined below to determine the total number of inches of binding required, how many strips to cut, and how much fabric you will need.

STEP 1 (double the length plus the width to get the perimeter in inches)

(Length	+	Width)	x	2	=	(A)”
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(A) = The perimeter of your quilt

STEP 2 (add some wiggle room)

(A)”	+	10” (extra for seams & wiggle room)	=	(B)”
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(B) = The perimeter of your quilt plus a fudge factor
(I use a fudge factor of 12 inches, because I make a lot of fudge.)

STEP 3 (divide the total from step 2 by the WOF minus the selvage)

(B)”	/	40” (width of fabric minus the selvage)	=	(C)
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(C) = The number of strips need to be rounded up to the whole number

STEP 4 (multiply the number of strips by the width of one strip)

(C)	x	2.5” (or preferred width of strip)	=	(D)”
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(D) = yardage needed for your binding (rounded up to next ¼ yard)

Using this 4-step method, let's calculate how many strips I will need and how much fabric I will need for my 40-inch wide by 45-inch long quilt. For step 3, we are using 40 inches as an estimate of fabric width after you have cut off the selvage. Your fabric may be wider, so you can use your precise number.

STEP 1 - Determine (A)

$$45'' + 40'' = 85'' \quad 85'' \times 2 = 170'' \quad (A) = 170''$$

STEP 2 - Determine (B) $170'' + 12'' = 180''$ (B) = 182''

STEP 3 - Determine (C) $182''/40'' = 4.55$ strips (C) = 5 strips
Round up to 5 strips

STEP 4 – Determine (D) $5 \times 2.5'' = 12.5''$ or .347 yd (D) = ½ yard
Round to one half yard

Once you have your one-half yard of fabric for your binding, based on our calculations, you will need to cut it into five 2 ½ inch strips.



CUT THE FABRIC

1. Cut off the selvages.

In the class, the instructor recommends cutting off the selvage prior to cutting the strips.

This keeps you from having to stop and cut the ends off each strip.

I found it to be quite the time saver.

Line up the fabric with your mat and ruler and cut off both selvages.

In the formula above, we use 40 inches as the measurement for the WOF less the selvage amount that you cut off. If you want to use another number, please do so.



2. Straighten the edge of the fabric.

After cutting off the selvage, rotate the fabric 90 degrees.

Line up the fabric with the straight edge of the cutting ruler.

Trim off the edge of the width of fabric (WOF) to ensure you will have a nice straight edge to begin cutting your strips.



3. Cut five 2 ½ inch binding strips.

Rotate the fabric 180 degrees and line up the fabric with the cutting ruler.

For safety purposes, a right-handed cutter should keep the cutting ruler to the left and run the rotary cutter along the right edge of the ruler, away from your body.

To keep everything in place and keep the stress off my arthritic hands, I use two 8-pound weights to hold the ruler and fabric while I cut.



SEW THE BINDING STRIPS TOGETHER

1. Sew strip 1 to strip 2.

Lay the end of strip 1 face up horizontally as shown.

Lay the beginning of strip 2 face down vertically on top of the first strip, as shown. Line up the edges.

Mark a diagonal line from the top left to the bottom right and pin in place, as shown.

Take the two pinned, marked strips to the sewing machine and sew along the marked diagonal. Remove the pin.



2. Sew the end of strip 2 to beginning of strip 3.

Without cutting the threads, take the end of strip 2 and place it face up horizontally as you did with strip 1.

Place the beginning of strip 3 face down vertically on top of the end of strip 2.

Mark a diagonal line from the top left to the bottom right and pin in place.

Place the two pinned, marked strips under the sewing machine presser foot and sew along the marked diagonal. Remove the pin.

3. Sew the end of strip 3 to the beginning of strip 4, after lining up, marking, and pinning just as you did above.

4. Sew the end of strip 4 to the beginning of strip 5, after lining up, marking, and pinning, just as you did above.



CUT THREADS, TRIM, AND PRESS

Finally, you end up with all five strips sewn together into one continuous strip; and now you need to cut the threads, trim off the excess fabric and press the seams flat.

Before you cut anything, flip open each union seam and ensure that the strips are sewn properly and make a nice straight line. Make sure each combined strip set is straight and the edges are even.

Stop and fix any problem areas before proceeding.

Once you determine that all four seams are acceptable, clip your threads and trim the diagonal leaving a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance, for all four seams, as shown in the picture.



Lay out the strip showing the seams and press the seams flat.

You can press them open if you wish.

I prefer to simply press them over to one side.



CREATE DOUBLE FOLD BINDING

Take the long 2 ½ inch strip you have just created and fold it in half horizontally and press along the entire length, creating a double fold binding measuring 1 ¼ inch wide.

If you are like me, as you press this single long strip in half, you pull it along and let it hang off the ironing board. The folded and pressed strip of material piles up on the floor beneath. It gets bits of thread all over and gets tangled up into a chaotic mess. So, what to do to organize this better?

Over time, I have used various methods to keep the pressed double fold binding neat and tidy, but I have not been very successful, until... I found the binding wheel.



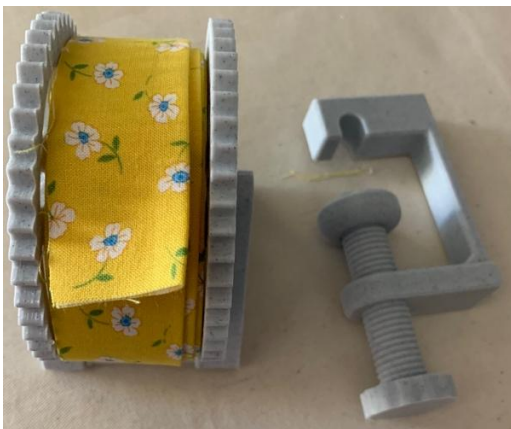
INTRODUCING THE BINDING WHEEL

At first glance, it looks like a child's toy or a Ferris Wheel for lady bugs or something.

This wheel is a very efficient tool for containing your binding until you can sew the binding in place on your quilt.



You slip the end into a slot intended for this purpose. Then as you fold and press the fabric strip into the double fold binding strip, you roll it up on the wheel.



This is what the wheel looks like holding approximately 200 inches of double folded binding. The clamp comes separately but I found it invaluable to hold the wheel while pressing and rolling up the binding. I also used the clamp to hold the wheel near my sewing machine as I sewed the binding onto my quilt. No more dragging binding on the floor and rolling over it with my chair.

Now let's get started attaching the binding to the quilt.



Beginning in the middle of one of the sides of the quilt, match the raw edge of the binding to the raw edge of the quilt.

Leave a tail of about 10 inches and begin sewing with a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch seam, backstitching as you start.

I like to sew my binding on without pins or clips, but that is simply my preference. You could also use basting glue if it helps to keep the binding in place as you sew.

Use whatever method works for you, just remember to remove clips and pins as you sew.



Sew up towards the corner stopping $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the end.

In the class the instructor suggested pivoting and sewing off at a diagonal.

This was new for me, but I tried it and it helped me to better control the fold for the mitered corner.

As you can see in the picture, I used a pin to show where to stop.

Normally, I would stop at the place indicated by the pin ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the end) and back stitch.

Remove the quilt from under the presser foot and cut the thread.



Fold the binding up at a 45-degree angle.

Finger press the crease.

Then fold the binding down toward the side where you will be continuing to sew.

I place a pin in the fold to hold it until I get it under the presser foot.

Turn the quilt 90 degrees, place the corner under the presser foot, back stitch and continue sewing down the side with the $\frac{1}{4}$ inch seam.

Repeat this for all 4 corners.



When you get to the fourth corner, you are ready to begin sewing back to the starting point. Place a pin about 10 inches from the starting point.

Sew up to that point, backstitch and remove the quilt from under the presser foot.



Now at this point is where you will be joining the two ends together. I used to always mess up on this part. But the class from MSQC has given me the best solution.

Lay the quilt on a flat surface. Pull the strip up from the bottom and lay it flat. Trim a small piece of binding from your longest end.

Turn that piece face up across the binding as shown in the picture. Make sure it is lined up with the end of the binding.



Next take the top piece and lay it down and across the bottom piece.

Using the small piece of cut binding as a measuring guide, cut the top piece of binding as shown in the picture.



This step gives you a 2 1/2 inch overlap of the top and bottom binding pieces.



Remove your small measuring guide piece. Turn the top binding piece to the right and lay the end flat horizontally, as shown in the picture.



Open the bottom piece and keep it vertical, as shown in the picture.

As you can see, you have a wide gap between the top binding piece and the bottom binding piece. We need to sew those two pieces together using the same diagonal method we used to sew the original binding together.

You could simply struggle and force these two together, or you can try a simple solution I learned in the "Storm at Sea" class hosted by the Crazy Quilter's Guild at Clubhouse 4 sometime in the past



With the use of large pins, you make a pleat in the quilt and pin that pleat down before you pin, mark, and sew this last seam joint in your binding.

If you don't have these large pins, you can use large safety pins.



As we did for joining the original binding strips, mark a diagonal from the top left to the bottom right and sew on that line.

Remove pins, double check that the fabric is straight and trim to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.



Voila! The binding fits perfectly.

This is the place where I would always mess up. I cannot tell you how many times I would discover after I sewed the ends together that I would have the binding all turned around, or it would be too short, or too long. I called it my 3 Bears binding method. It was very frustrating and not pretty.

Sew down this last bit and you are finished attaching the binding to your quilt.

Next, you roll the binding to the other side, the front in my case, and either finish sewing it by hand or machine stitching it.

I find that if I press the binding again after I roll it to the other side and before I sew it down, it looks better and stays in place better as I sew it down.

This MSQC Create Better Bindings class helped me so much. I hope these tips help you as well. I was able to successfully bind two quilts very quickly.

I have broken my photo record; this tidbit has the most photos I have ever used in a tidbit. My thanks to Ron Nelson who puts my tidbits together and posts them on the website.

I miss all my quilting friends. Stay safe and stay healthy. I will be back next month. Blessings to all.

Oh, By The Way: I am still looking for ideas to combat fraying. Please let me know if you have any. I would really appreciate your help.

To provide input on this tidbit, go to the members section on the website and obtain my email address to write your reply.