

Quilt Binding

by Serena Smith

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You have stitched your fabric pieces, layered the top, batting and backing and quilted your project. What's next? Fabric must be attached to the unfinished edges of your quilt; this is called a binding.

A binding is a strip of fabric cut to various widths depending on how wide you want it to be. It is machine stitched on the top of the quilt, folded to enclose the raw quilt edge and tacked down by hand on the back of the quilt.

The binding can be a single layer or a double layer by folding the fabric strip in half. Double bindings are most commonly used because they are much easier and more durable than a single binding. It can be cut on the bias or straight of grain, depending on the look you want to achieve. If your quilt has scallops or curved edges, cutting your binding on the bias is a must so the fabric will curve to the shape of your quilt edge.

Cutting binding strips

Binding strips of fabric are usually cut 2-3" wide for a double layer binding. I usually cut my strips 2" wide, which makes a finished 3/8" wide binding. Measure around your quilt and add another 15 inches for the length needed. This allows for seams, mitered corners and extra room for the last finishing seam.

I usually cut straight of grain strips for my quilts for two reasons. When the binding is straight of grain, it is easier to stitch to the quilt without the fabric wanting to stretch and twist. It takes less fabric for straight grain binding versus bias binding.

Stitching binding strips

Join the fabric strips together by putting right sides together to form a 90 degree angle and stitching a diagonal seam. Trim the seam allowance to 1/4".

Press the seam open so the bulk will be distributed evenly. This will also prevent a big lump in the binding that happens when two strips are sewn together in a straight seam instead of a diagonal seam.

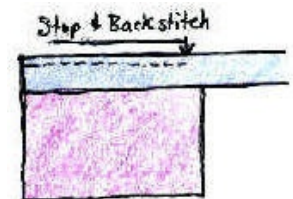
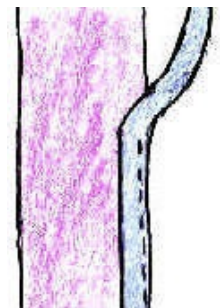
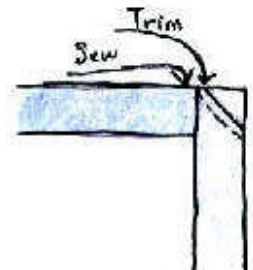
Fold the strip in half lengthwise, wrong sides together and press. This creates a double binding!

Attaching to quilt

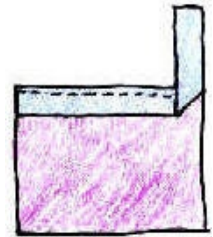
Trim the batting and backing even with the edges of the quilt top. You will be attaching your binding with a 1/4" seam.

Position the binding strip on the right side of the quilt top, aligning the raw edge of the quilt with the raw edge of the binding. Do not start in or close to a corner; start on one of the sides. Leave a 6" tail of binding when starting to stitch. Stitch the binding to the quilt using a 1/4" seam allowance.

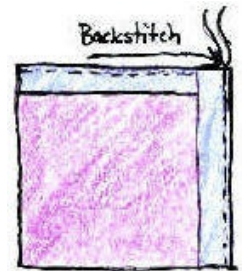
When you reach a corner, stop sewing 1/4" from the edge of the quilt top and backstitch. Clip the threads and remove the quilt from the machine.



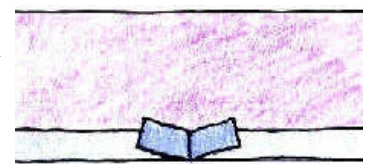
Fold the binding up and away from the quilt, forming a 45 degree angle as shown.



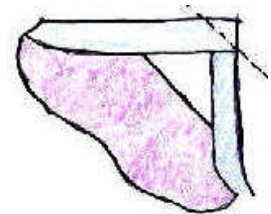
Keeping the angled fold secure, fold the binding back down. This fold should be even with the edge of the quilt top. Pin the fold in place so the head of the pin is to the outside of the quilt. Insert the quilt in the machine and start stitching at the folded edge. Remove the pin and be sure to backstitch at the folded starting point. Continue stitching the next side and repeat the same process with the other three corners.



As you approach the beginning of the binding strip, stop within 10" of the starting point. To finish, fold both strips back along the edge of the quilt so that the folded edges meet about 5" from both lines of stitching and the binding lies flat on the quilt. Finger press to crease the folds. Measure the width of the folded binding. Cut each strip that distance beyond the creased fold. For example, if my folded binding measures 1", then I will cut 1" beyond the fold line on each strip.

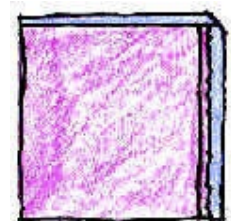


Open both strips and place the ends right side together to form a 90 degree angle. Fold the bulk of the quilt out of the way. Join the strips together with a diagonal seam. Trim the seam allowance to 1/4" and press open. Keeping the wrong sides together, refold the binding strip. Reposition the binding flat against the quilt and finish stitching it to the quilt.

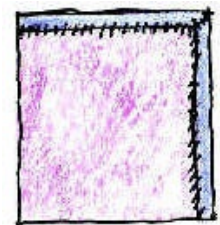


Finishing the binding

After the binding is machine stitched to the quilt top, it needs to be pressed. Press the binding away from the quilt top. This will make it much easier to fold it to the back of the quilt.



The neatest method for attaching the binding to the back of the quilt is by hand. Bring the folded edge of the binding over the raw edges and blindstitch the binding in place over the machine stitching line on the back. Hand-miter the corners on the back. They should naturally fold into place because they are mitered on the top of the quilt. If you prefer machine stitching, pin the binding down to the back of the quilt. Miter the corners and pin securely. From the top of the quilt, stitch in the ditch where the binding is attached to the quilt.



To achieve a crisp edge, press binding and quilt!

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