

“Coveted Corners”

My tip for perfecting the corners of your bindings.

Among professional quilters, I'd say I'm known as more of a designer than a “technician”. I've always had great admiration for (and some envy of) those quilters whose every creation is competition-ready. You know who they are; their piecing is impeccable, they might have used a T-square and a plumb bob for perfectly squared corners, and the backs of their quilts are often more interesting than the fronts of ours.

I've always had more of an interest in the look of my finished pieces and the way they made the viewer feel than the mechanics of making them. I know how to get them to look good but never really thought about whether or not I had tips or tricks to share with my students and quilter friends. That was until I stumbled upon a way to make the corners of my bindings neatly mitered and no longer “lumpy”.

On the banners, table toppers and smaller quilted pieces that I design, the binding is like the frame for the artwork. That's why I often choose to bind in contrasting colors. But that draws attention to the bindings so, just like a good picture frame, the corners need to be squared and crisply mitered.

I have a little binding trick that I teach my students and they always tell me that learning it, alone, was worth the fee they paid for the class. One of them even told me that, after learning my method, her bindings would be good enough to make her quilts worthy of entry in the Iowa State Fair competition - a prestigious accomplishment, indeed! It involves cutting out a little of the bulk at the corners the way that clipping and grading works on a garment seam in fashion sewing.

After stitching a binding on, I've actually seen many students whack the corner off of the quilt with a diagonal cut beyond the seam line. They were probably garment makers in a previous life and had learned it by cutting off the pointed corners of shirt collars and cuffs before turning them. What they removed with that cut was actually the foundation for a good corner. Don't do that! Instead, pay close attention to steps 11-17 of my binding instructions that follow to remove just a little bit that makes a big difference.

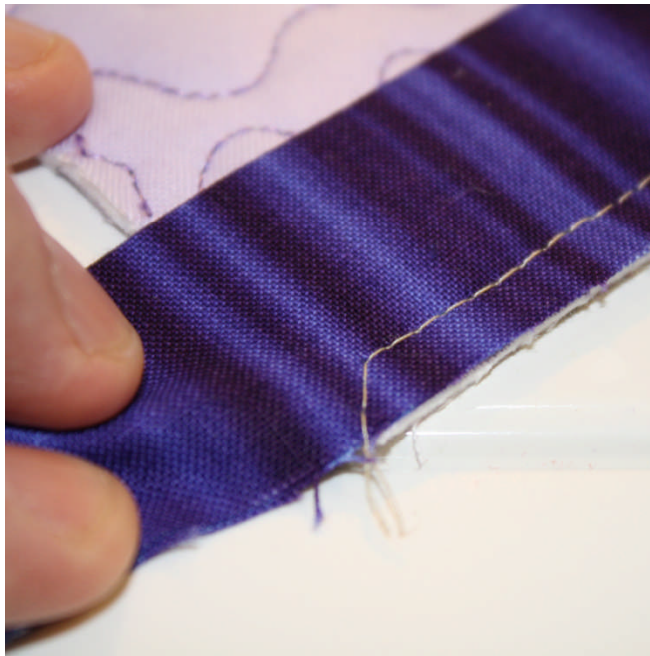
1. Begin stitching the binding to the quilt approximately 6-8 inches from the beginning of the binding strip, using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance.



2. Continue stitching and stop $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the end, with needle in down position.



3. Raise presser foot and pivot 45 degrees and stitch a line from this point through the corner of the quilt's raw edge as shown, below. Do *not* back stitch.



4. Fold the binding up, along the diagonally stitched line, as pictured:



5. Fold binding down to align with the next edge to be stitched. Continue stitching around the quilt treating each corner in the same manner.



6. Stop stitching about 8-10 inches from where you started. Fold binding back, butting the fold up to the beginning of the binding strip as shown:



7. To the left of the fold, mark the binding at whatever the measurement is for the width of your binding. I used a 2¼" wide binding so I'll mark 2¼" to the left of the fold as shown:



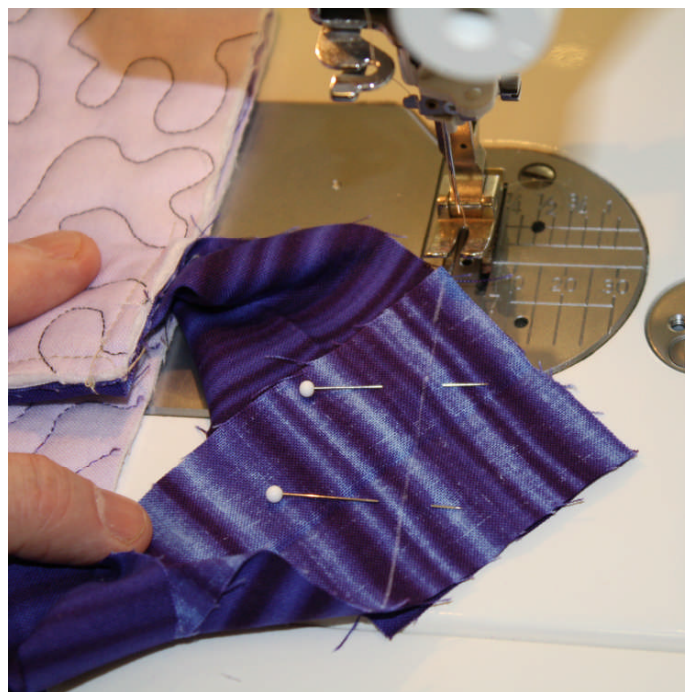
8. Cut away the excess binding beyond the marking:



9. Open up the binding and place the two ends right sides together at a right angle as shown below. The wrong side of the beginning end of the binding should be up.



10. Pin the binding in place and mark a stitching line as shown in the photo. Stitch along this line to join the binding ends with a mitered seam.



11. At each corner, lift up the seam allowance of the binding layers to reveal the diagonal seam stitched in Step 3. This created a small wedge of fabric that we'll remove. Start by slipping the point of your scissors under the fold in the binding. Snip to the line of stitching but not beyond it.



12. Remove the stitching of the diagonal seam line to free the wedge created:



13. Pull the binding and the quilt seam allowance away from this wedge from above and below it.



14. Cut away the wedge to the right of the seam line, being careful not to cut the binding or quilt along with it.



15. Press binding away from quilt top and turn to the back forming the angled fold shown below:



16. Pin or clip turned binding in place. Turn quilt to back side and turn the next side of the binding over, as shown below, to make a neatly mitered binding. The mitered fold on the back of the quilt should be folded in the opposite direction of the one on the front. Pin or clip in place and sew binding to quilt back by hand.

