

Quilt Piecing Tips for Beginning Quilters

By Tammy Harrison

One of the best things about belonging to a quilt guild or group (or just having a quilt friend) is the endless advice and suggestions from fellow quilters. It is admirable to teach yourself how to quilt but your quilting education never ends! There's always new and exciting quilt techniques, notions and patterns to be had but finding the camaraderie and insider tips and tricks of seasoned quilters is like finding a quilting gold mine.

Here are some tips that a beginning quilter may find useful, garnered from a host of seasoned quilters:

- Measure twice, cut once. Learn to cut accurately.
- Holding your ruler firmly is the key to cutting correctly with a rotary cutter.
- Your cutting table and mat should be placed at the right height for your body. To figure out what the correct height is, stand straight and put your arms to your side, bending them at the elbows perpendicular to your body and parallel with the floor. Have someone measure from your arms to the floor. This is the height your cutting table and mat should be. By doing this, you are alleviating any strain on your back.
- Do not measure your quilt fabric by the lines on your cutting mat - measure it with your ruler.
- Beginners should be very careful using geometrical quilt fabric.
- Try to work on your quilts in a pet- and smoke-free zone. The smoke smell is self explanatory. A pet-free zone is especially imperative if you are gifting or donating a quilt. You never know when a recipient is allergic to pet dander.
- Try many different techniques, styles and block constructions. There is a place for your style of quilting in the quilting world and the only way you will know what is best for you is to try everything you can!
- Do not spit on your thread to thread a needle.
- You *can* spit on a quilt or fabric if you have cut or poked your finger and you get a drop or two of blood on your project. Your saliva is the best stain remover for your blood!
- Know the quality of your fabrics, batting and thread.
- Do not be afraid of your seam ripper. Use it and embrace it as you will likely need it for many years, no matter how advanced a quilter you become.
- Learn how to listen to the advice from quilters but not all of their information is correct or pertains to you and/or your quilting style. Keep a notebook with the advice you receive and try out each suggestion to determine if it's something you need to know or do in the future.
- Do not use fluorescent lighting to purchase fabric - ever. If you are in a quilt shop and the only lighting they have is fluorescent, ask them if you may take the bolt of fabric outside so you can see it in natural lighting. Most quilt shops will allow you to do this although most discount stores and fabric shops will not.
- There are NO quilt police!
- Take a class locally to help you right from the beginning of your quilt journey. No point in reinventing the wheel.
- Eliminate the need for speed. Slow down, pay attention and do everything carefully.
- Your quilting does not have to be perfect.
- There are no rules! Just do what you love!
- There are many ways of doing something. Learn the basics then venture out, research, learn and do it your way.
- Get a good rotary cutter and cutting mat... they are so much fun!!
- Buy only the fabric you need, one project at a time. You will create your own fabric stash with the leftovers from each project but don't be in a rush to grow that stash quickly.
- When buying rulers, stick to one brand as not every one matches up exactly.

- Be sure your 1/4" seam is precisely 1/4".
- Use the color schemes you love, the fabric you love and the designs you love.
- Be patient with yourself.
- Do not sweat little mistakes.
- Keep quilting!
- Enjoy each and every step of the quilting process.
- Work on one project at a time. Finish that project before you go onto the next project.
- Find a KIND quilting buddy...one that won't make you feel inadequate over every little mistake!
- Deep breath , cut and sew, just cut and sew till it is a straight 1/4" line and do it again.
- Join a quilt guild or group. Quilters are always willing to share tips and information!
- Close and/or lock your rotary cutter when not in use.
- Keep your sewing machine clean.
- Learn to use your sewing machine, she is your best friend. She will need to be cleaned and will need adjustments from time to time and she will be nice to you if you take care of her.
- Quilt daily...even if for 15 minutes, take time to quilt!
- Never give up!
- Have FUN!
- You learn more from your mistakes than you do from your successes.

These are just a few comments from other quilters. Just imagine how many additional tips and tricks you could hear if you were surrounded by other quilters in a guild or group! Take the time to find out what's available in your area and jump in with both...fat quarters!

©2015 ~ By Tammy Harrison. Tammy is a wife, mother and passionate quilter. Find Tammy online at www.TKHarrison.com. All Rights Reserved.