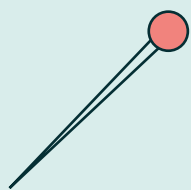




GUIDE TO
(near) **perfect**
patchwork

by Coffee Rings Studio

GUIDE TO (near) perfect patchwork



1. Precise cutting
2. Pinning
3. Pressing
4. Patience
5. Practise

Coffee
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Studio





I'm a big believer that handmade should never be completely perfect...we aren't machines, after all! But if you are looking to up your patchwork and quilting game by achieving more accurate piecing then this is the guide for you.

I've got three technique-based steps and then two more mindset-attitude ideas to help you work towards that (near) perfect patchwork finish.

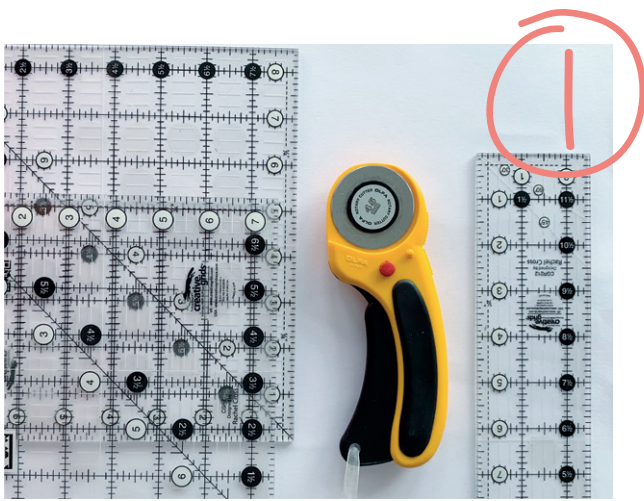


PRECISE CUTTING

Here's a home truth for you...if you don't like or don't want to do or can't be bothered with precise cutting then really accurate patchwork piecing is going to be almost impossible to achieve. That's OK! If it simply is not your thing, there are still lots of techniques to use to create stunning quilt tops (improv and appliqué spring to mind) and, of course, patchwork can still look gorgeous without accurate piecing.

But read on. You might find you learn some tips that make you want to give precise cutting another go. If not, I guarantee you'll find useful tips in the rest of this guide.

Here are my top three tips for precise cutting:

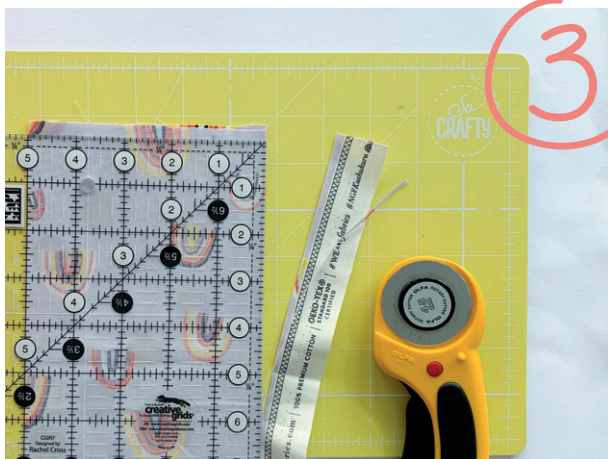
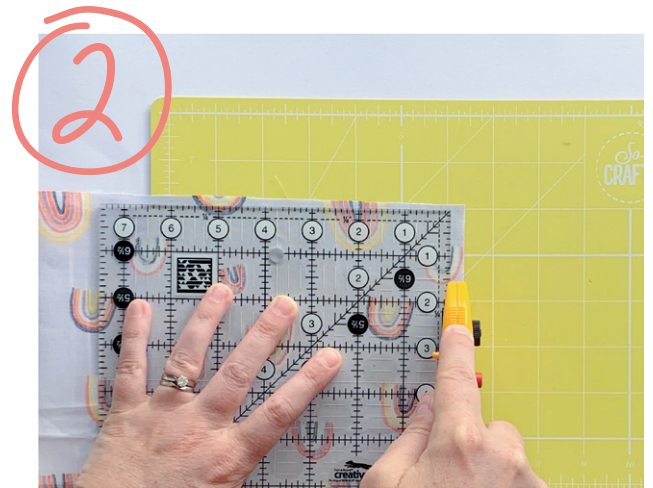


Use a quilting ruler and rotary cutter.

I especially like ruler brands with built-in grip texture (like Creative Grids) as this means the ruler is unlikely to slip whilst you are cutting...ruler movement is a sure-fire way to end up with wonky cutting!

If you are able, always try to stand whilst cutting with a rotary cutter and ruler.

This keeps your cutting blade at the correct angle and makes it easier to keep an even pressure on the ruler, which reduces the chance of accidental movement.



Try not to cut too many layers of fabric at once.

It might seem like a really efficient method to bulk cut patchwork pieces but unless you are just cutting long strips, you run the risk of some of the layers (especially the ones in the middle that you can't see) moving and causing the cutting to be uneven.

PINNING

When I started quilting, I heard and read a lot of people saying “Oh, quilters don’t pin, that’s just for dressmakers” and I followed this advice for quite a few years.

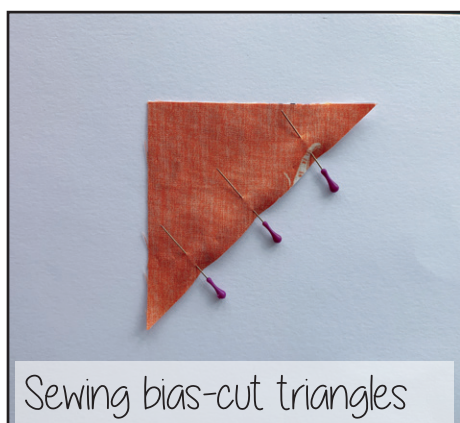
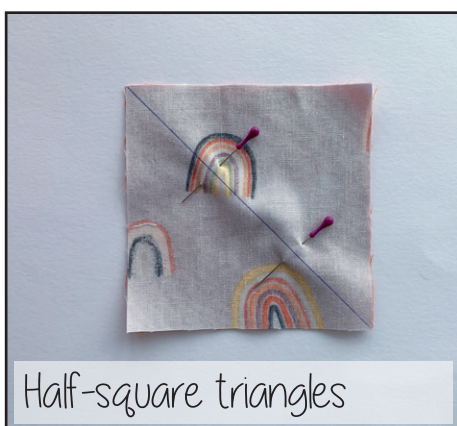
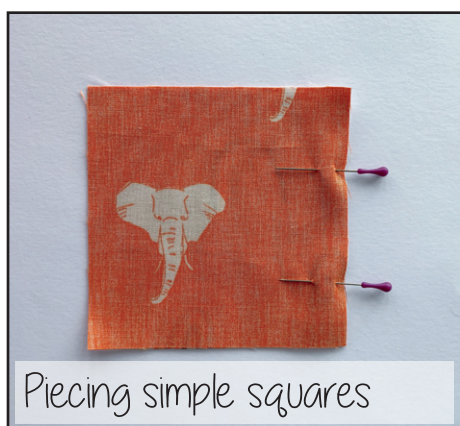
Now I completely disagree! Woven cotton, or quilting cotton, doesn’t stretch but it does “give”. This give means that it can still be pulled out of shape. Don’t get me wrong, giving quilting cotton a little pull to encourage two seams to line up can be very useful but it is not something you want to do too much or too often. Unlike stretchy fabric, once pulled out of shape quilting cotton doesn’t really go back.

Here is my number one reason why pins are such a useful tool:

They hold things in place!

OK, I know what you’re thinking...we know pins hold things in place Amy, how daft do you think we are?! It sounds like such a simple and obvious point to make about using pins but if you are struggling to get your patchwork seams to line up during sewing or to get pieces to sit where you want them to and you aren’t pinning then...bingo...this could be the solution to a lot of your issues.

Here’s a snapshot of my favourite places to use pins to help achieve that (near) perfect patchwork finish:

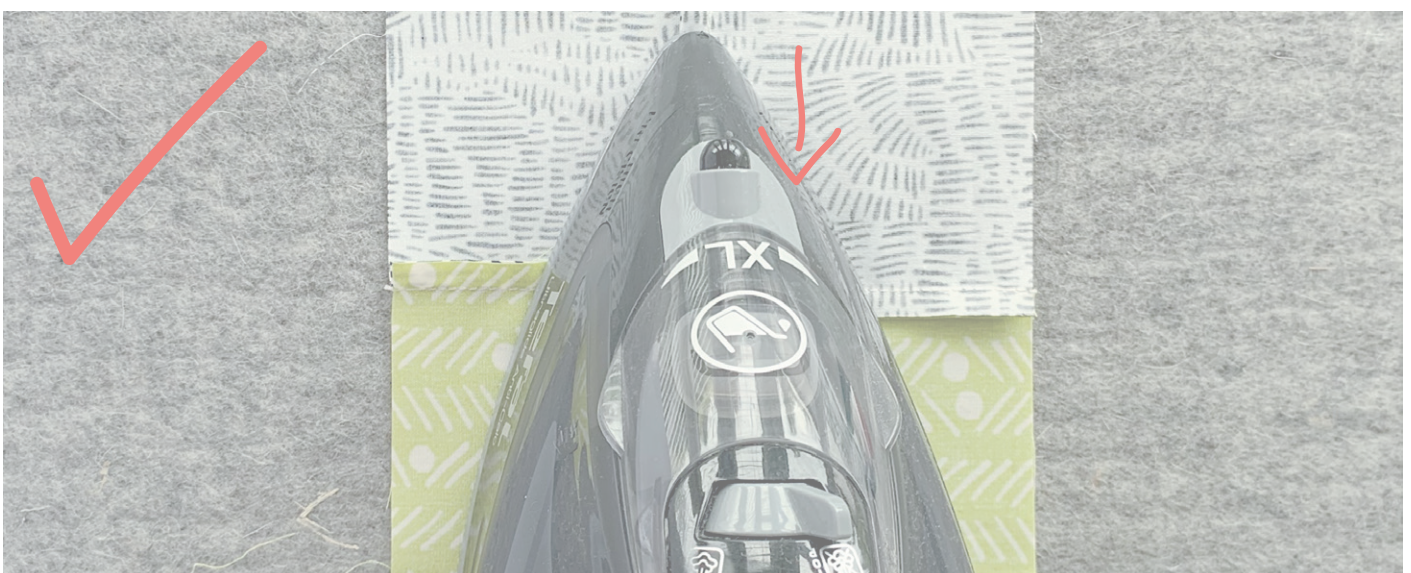


PRESSING

Please note...I said pressing and not ironing! Strange as it may seem these are two very different things, and it is knowing and understanding that difference that could really level up your patchwork piecing skills.

We've already talked about fabric "give" earlier when discussing how your patchwork pieces can be pulled out of shape as you sew. This is also true of how you press your fabric. The heat of an iron combined with the downwards and side-to-side pressure of ironing back and forth over a patchwork block can pull some of the fabric out of shape. If part of your fabric is rippling or ballooning slightly then the action of ironing has probably done this.

So how do we overcome this issue? To get that crisp, precise, (near) perfect patchwork finish your iron is a very important tool so don't get scared and banish it to the back of a cupboard! Use your iron to press. Pressing means, as the name suggests, pressing down with your iron. A little bit of sideways movement is OK (especially if you are pressing seams to one side) but be careful not to be heavy-handed.



PATIENCE

I said there was going to be a couple of mindset-attitude tips in this guide, as well as techniques, and here is the first one.

Patience. Be patient with yourself, and be patient with your work.

This is one of those things that sound obvious when you say it out loud but still needs remembering. Any new skill, or part of a skill, requires work. Van Gogh didn't create a masterpiece the very first time he picked up a paint brush so why do we expect to nail a new sewing technique the first time we try?

I think patience is relevant for two main reasons when talking about getting that (near) perfect patchwork finish. As well as being patient with yourself, especially if this is a new concept, it is also important to be patient with the time it adds to completing a project. Precision and accuracy takes time; however long it usually takes you to make a quilt top, using these techniques to get it crisp and accurate will mean the process takes longer... enjoy the process!

“
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”

PRACTISE

Practise makes perfect...no!
But practise does make progress and that is way more important
in my book.

You may have noticed through-out this guide I have always talked about creating near perfect patchwork...big emphasis on the "near". More than any useful tool or fancy sewing machine, practice is the thing that will really up your skills.

If you're thinking "But Amy I don't want to spend ages practising, I just want to get on and sew" then that is awesome. You go for it; create something fabulous and beautiful that you are proud of, and please show me because I love seeing what people make.

However, if you find yourself looking at your finished quilt tops and thinking "I really like it but I wish those points were sharper/I wish all the seams lined up/I wish there wasn't a little pucker there" then I would definitely recommend taking the time to practise your craft and use the steps in this guide as a jumping off point for you progress and learning.

It will take time but my hope for you is that the journey will be fun and the destination will be worth it.



I hope you have enjoyed this guide and found it useful.

If you'd like to try out some of your new-found skills, you can find my patchwork patterns here:

<https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/CoffeeRingsStudio>

Keep up-to-date with my latest work, tips and upcoming event:

Instagram: @coffeeringsstudio

Pinterest: Coffee Rings Studio

Blog: <https://coffeeandmaking.co.uk>

