

How to Bind a Quilt

The Math

1. Figure out how many binding strips you need. Measure the perimeter of your quilt and add 12". For example, $60 + 60 + 80 + 80 + 12 = 292"$.
2. Divide this number by 40", which is a good general measurement for width of usable fabric (selvedge to selvedge). This number will tell you how many strips you need to cut. For our example, $292/40 = 7.3$, so I need to cut eight strips of fabric. (*This is an estimate; you may need one more or less strip depending on the width of your actual fabric.*)
3. Decide what size you want your binding to be. Often times a pattern will tell you to cut 2.5" strips. I prefer the look of 2.25" strips for hand binding and 2.375" for machine binding. There is no right or wrong size; it's simply a matter of personal preference.
4. To figure yardage for binding, multiply the number of strips needed by the width you will cut them. For our example, $8 * 2.25 = 18"$, so I will need $\frac{1}{2}$ yard of fabric minimum. I prefer to add on a few inches in case of shrinkage during prewashing or to allow for squaring up the fabric or any mis-cuts. So, I would purchase $\frac{5}{8}$ yard.

The Creation

5. Cut your strips of fabric, being sure to remove selvedges, and join them at a 45-degree angle. The easy way to do this is place one fabric right side up. Use the right end of this piece and the left end of the next piece face down, as shown. Sew from the top left to the bottom right, being sure to backstitch at the beginning and end.



6. Continue joining all your binding pieces until you have one long, continuous piece. I like to chain piece mine.



7. Before doing any cutting, test each of your seams to make sure they open up into a straight line.
8. After you are satisfied that all of your joins are sewn correctly, carefully trim each piece so that you have a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance remaining.



9. Press each seam open.



10. Press your binding in half with wrong sides together.



The Attachment

11. Lay out your binding around your quilt top to make sure that you have made a long enough binding piece. Also make sure that no joins are near the corners. If there are, you should adjust the layout until they are out of the corners.



12. Make sure you have aligned the raw edges of the quilt and the binding. Use a walking foot or your machine's dual feed feature to do the sewing. Leaving an 8-12" tail for a mini or a 12-15" tail for a regular quilt, begin sewing your binding to the quilt around the middle of a side using a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. If you're working with a mini quilt, you will want to start sewing a few inches from the bottom corner of one side instead. I would also suggest using pins or clips to hold your binding in place no matter what size you are working on.



13. When you get to the corner, stop sewing $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the edge and pivot your quilt to sew at a 45-degree angle to the corner. Remove quilt from machine.



14. Fold the binding up at a 45-degree angle.



15. Now fold it back down on itself, lining up the top fold with the edge of the quilt.



16. Make sure that the raw edges are aligned, pin, and sew down the sides, again stopping $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the edge, rotating, and sewing toward the corner at a 45-degree angle.

17. Continue this process until you are back at the side you started on.

The Cutting

18. Sew down a few inches. You will want to have 12-20" of unsewn quilt left on a larger quilt, or as big of a space as you can get on a mini quilt. Sometimes you might have to un-sew a bit of previously sewn binding to get enough slack to work with.



19. Lay the unsewn side of your quilt on a flat surface. Place both loose ends of the binding flat along the edge of the quilt. Leave a 1/8" gap between the two where they meet. Roll back the excess binding pieces flat along themselves.



20. Trim the left-hand side at the fold along the 1/8" gap.



21. Open the piece of binding that you just cut off. Line up the open binding with the right/uncut side of the binding, making sure the left edges are aligned.



22. Trim any excess binding to the right of your aligned pieces, making sure to only cut the loose piece of binding, not the bottom piece that is already sewn down. Your binding is serving as a ruler, rather than having to remember any exact formula for size. This method works for any size binding. Set trimmed excess binding aside.



The Join

23. You are now going to join your pieces using a mitered seam. Though it's a bit tricky at first, this process yields a beautiful, invisible join. With the quilt positioned so that the binding is on the top, open/unfold the left piece of binding so that the right side of the fabric is facing up.
24. Open the right-side piece of the binding so that the wrong side is facing up.
25. Overlap the pieces so that the left side goes straight across and the right side meets it at a right angle. Sometimes it's really tricky to get enough space to work with, so you may need to un-sew a bit of the seams in order to make the pieces easier to work with. I like to pin my pieces in multiple places to hold them together. Make sure nothing is twisted.



26. Sew from top left to lower right. You may find it easier to mark the diagonal line with a fabric marker or pencil before sewing. Sew in the direction of the yellow arrow in the photo below.



27. Before you cut, make sure that you open up the binding and make sure that you sewed the seam in the right direction and that nothing is twisted. You also need to make sure that the binding lays flat along the quilt. If it seems too big, you can make your seam allowance slightly larger and try again.



28. Once you have verified that everything is oriented correctly and is the correct size, carefully trim your seam allowance to $\frac{1}{4}$ ".



29. Press open your seam. Since the majority of the binding is already attached, I use a seam roller on this seam rather than trying to iron it. You could also run your fingernail down the seam several times as well.



30. Sew the loose binding into place.

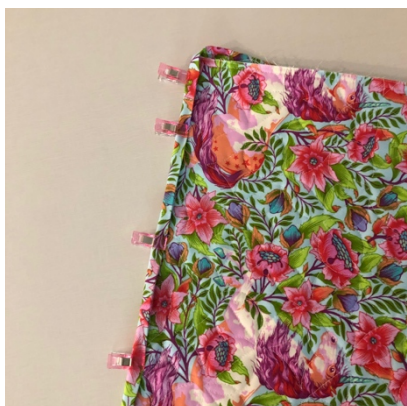


31. Admire your beautiful join.



Finishing Touches

32. If you are planning to do a traditional binding process, sew the binding to the quilt top, then turn it to the back, clip in place, and hand-stitch down, being sure to miter the corners as shown.



33. If you are planning to machine-stitch down the binding, there are several ways to do it. You could sew the binding to the front, fold it to the back, and stitch it down. This will leave a line of stitching visible on the front of your quilt. I don't prefer this method because of the uncertainty of where that stitching line is going to land on the back. Instead, if I am finishing with the machine, I attach the binding to the back of the quilt first, then fold it to the front and stitch it down. This way I am guaranteed that the front looks how I want. The binding process works the same either way you decide.