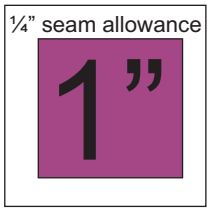
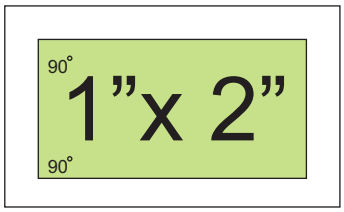
Suzie's Quick Tip: Seam Allowances

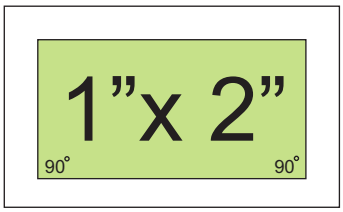
As I'm sure you all know, quilt blocks are sewn with a ¼" seam allowance.

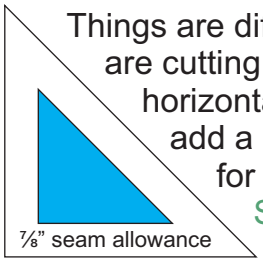


So, if you want the finished size of a square to be 1", you must cut out a 1 ½" square. If you want a finished square to be 6 ½", you will need to cut a 7" square.

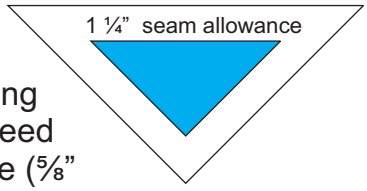


Think of it this way: you need to allow a ¼" for each 90 degree angle. A rectangle, has two 90 degree angles width-wise. You will need to add ½" to the finished width measurement: ¼" + ¼" = ½". Lengthwise it's the same situation: ½" is added to the finished length. This will give you the cutting size.

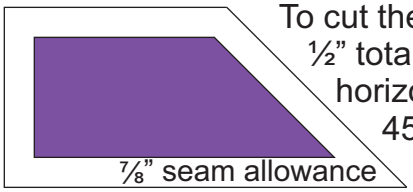




Things are different when you are cutting out a triangle. If you are cutting a triangle where the straight of grain is vertical (or horizontal) on the two shorter sides, you will need to add a ⅞" total seam allowance: ¼" for the right angle, and ⅝" for the 45 degree angle. By the way, this is called a Half Square Triangle because it's made by cutting a square in half diagonally. So, if you have a half square triangle with a finished size of 2", you will need to cut a 2 ⅞" square in half diagonally.

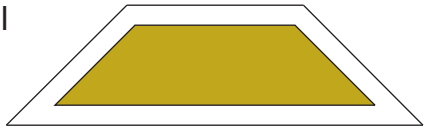


If you need the striaght of grain to fall on the longest edge of a triangle, you will need a quarter square triangle. It is made by cutting a square into quarters diagonally. You will need to add 1 ¼" to the finished size of the triangle (⅝" for each 45 degree angle). So, if you need the finished size of the triangle's longest edge to be 3", you will need to cut a 4 ¼" square into triangles diagonally.



To cut the Trapezoid on the left you will need to add ½" total vertically, and a ⅞" total seam allowance horizontally: ¼" for the right angle, and ⅝" for the 45 degree angle.

The Trapezoid on the right uses a ½" vertical seam allowance and a 1 ¼" horizontal seam allowance: ⅝" for each 45 degree angle.

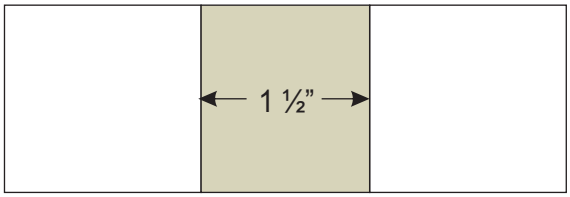


Suzie's Quick Tip: ¼" and scant ¼" seams

If you are sewing squares and rectangles together, a ¼" seam isn't a suggestion, it's imperative!

Here's a quick way to check out your seam allowance:

1. Cut out (3) 2" squares.
2. Sew the squares together end to end, using a ¼" seam allowance.
3. Press the seams, and then measure the center square. It should be exactly 1 ½" wide. It is really important that this measurement is exact. This will insure that the quilt block is the correct size, and that the seams in your quilt block meet perfectly!

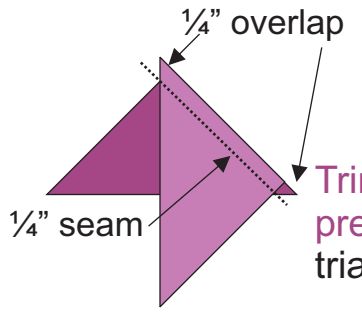


If the center square is off - even just a tiny amount, adjust your needle position, and try again. You'll be glad that you've spent the extra time doing this. In the long run, it will save time because you won't have to fuss with your block pieces in order to make them fit!

If you are sewing triangles together, a Scant ¼" Seam is often better than an exact ¼" seam.

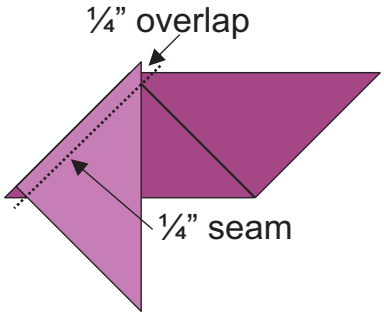
Here's a quick way to check out your seam allowance:

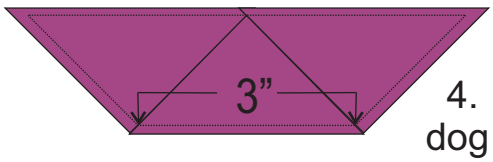
1. Cut a 4 ¼" Square into 4 pieces diagonally. ☒



2. Sew two triangles together along the short edge, right sides together.

3. Press the seam open. Trim the dog ears after pressing. Then add a third triangle to the left hand side.





4. Press the seam open and trim the dog ears. Measure up ¼" (seam allowance), and measure the long edge of the center triangle at the seams. It should be exactly 3" wide. If the measurement is off - even just a tiny amount, adjust your needle position, and try again. It is really important that this measurement is exact. This will insure that your quilt blocks are the correct size. You'll be glad that you've spent the extra time doing this.