

How to Cut and Sew Bias Strips

What is bias grainline? Bias is the diagonal direction of fabric created when the lengthwise grain is folded to line up with the crosswise grain. (Want to know more? See our tutorial “What is a Grainline?” It has the 411 on how and why.) A bias strip is a strip of fabric cut on the bias grainline.

Why is the bias grain important? Grainline direction allows fabric to hang and move as planned. Bias grain has the most give; it is great for slinky evening dresses and drapery swags that fold into soft deep pleats. It is also perfect for binding strips that are used to fold around the fabric edge on quilts; this softly folded binding forms perfect mitered corners.

Why cut bias strips? Strips become other stuff! They can be joined to form one long strip, which in turn can be folded to make binding or filled with cord to make piping or spaghetti straps. It's very cool! There are tools to help with making binding, and spaghetti straps. But first you have to cut it. It's easy! Here's how:

Finding the bias grainline:

1. Find the bias by folding fabric diagonally, lining up the selvage with the crosswise grain. This will form a triangle. The fold is the bias grainline.

TIP:

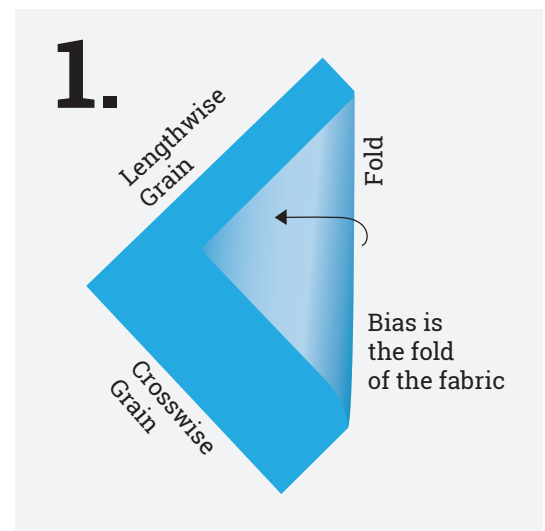
For smaller pieces of fabric, use the lines on your cutting mat as a guide. No folding necessary. Line up fabric edges to crosswise and lengthwise grid marks on the mat. Place your ruler along the 45° diagonal line and cut the fabric. The 45° line is the bias line on your cutting mat.

You will need the following to cut:

- Your fabric
- Rotary cutter
- Grid-marked ruler
- Cutting mat

You will need the following to sew:

- Sewing machine
- Thread to match fabric
- Straight pins—any style
- Iron
- Ironing surface



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Cutting:

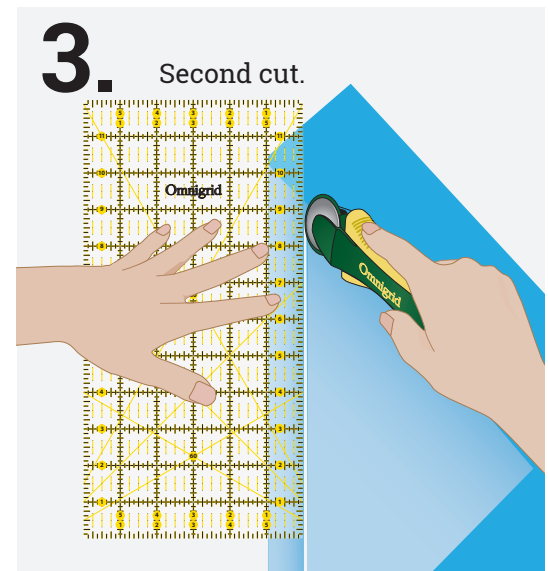
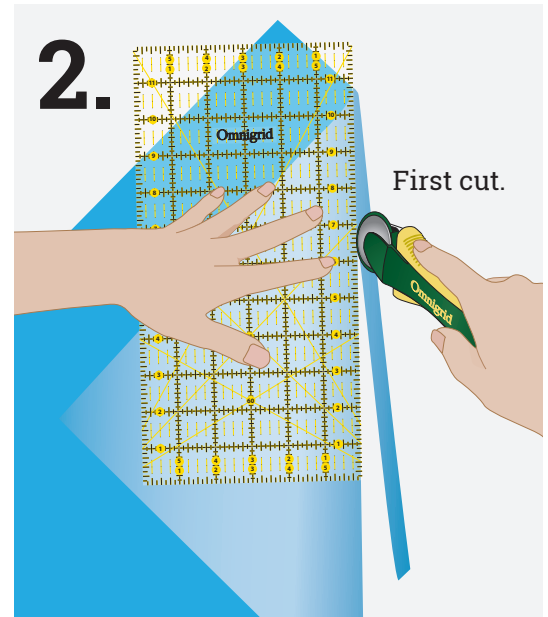
2. Lay folded fabric on your cutting mat. Place grid-marked ruler over fabric so edge of ruler is parallel to fold. Use your rotary cutter to trim off the fold.

TIP: To most accurately trim the fold, use your ruler to measure and mark an equal distance along the fold (about 1/8"). Cut on this line.

3. Turn your work so ruler is only over newly cut edge of fabric. Decide what width you need for bias strips – 1", for example. Line up desired ruler line (1" line) so it is flush to cut bias edge. Edge of ruler will then be 1" from original cut edge of fabric. Use rotary cutter to cut first strip at required width.

SAFETY TIP:

Rulers can slip. To prevent accidents, press down evenly with one hand while you use rotary cutter to cut with the other hand. You can also use Invisigrip™ on underside of your ruler. Invisible, and grips – just like it sounds!



TECHNIQUE TUTORIAL

4. Slide ruler over so same ruler line (1") lines up with this new cut edge. Use rotary cutter to cut second parallel strip. Repeat, cutting parallel strips of same width until you get as many strips as you need.

CUTTING TIP:

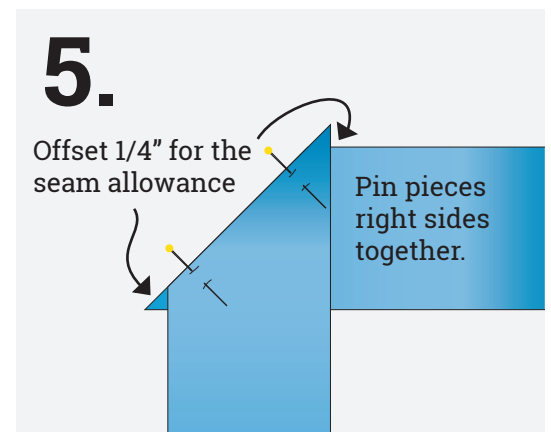
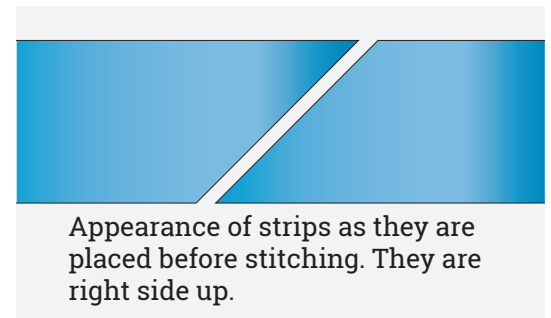
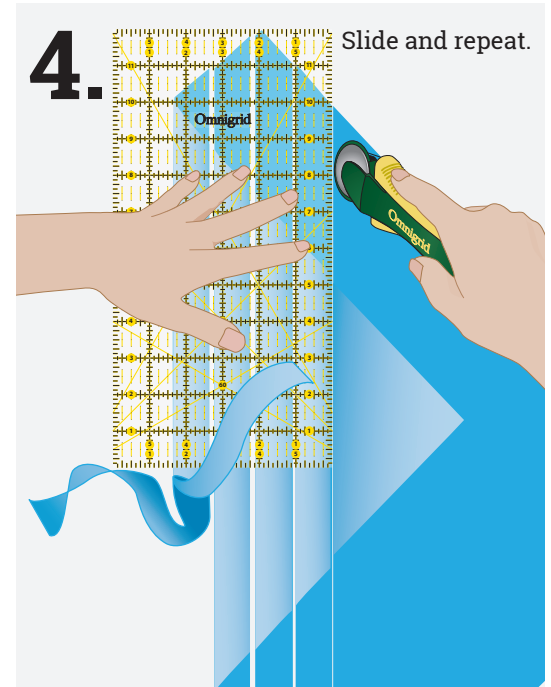
If your ruler is shorter than the desired strip length, slide the ruler as you cut. To do this, use the rotary cutter to cut fabric strip to length of ruler. Then, with ruler still in place, slide ruler to uncut section. Always maintain pressure on the ruler in the area being cut. To do this, move the hand holding the ruler by walking your fingers to a new position across from the rotary cutter. Do not lift your hand or the rotary cutter.

FAQ:

How many strips do you need? Add up all edges to be bound, or total length of bias project. How many strips will your fabric piece make? See our Bias Yardage Chart for a guide.

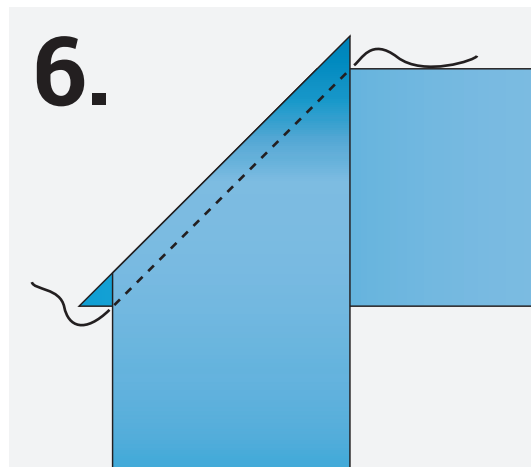
Sewing:

5. To create a long bias strip, pieces must be joined together along short diagonally cut ends. To join strips along diagonal edges, turn strips at right angles to each other and pin ends right sides together. Offset the short ends by 1/4". When stitched and pressed flat, the finished strip will have a nice straight edge!

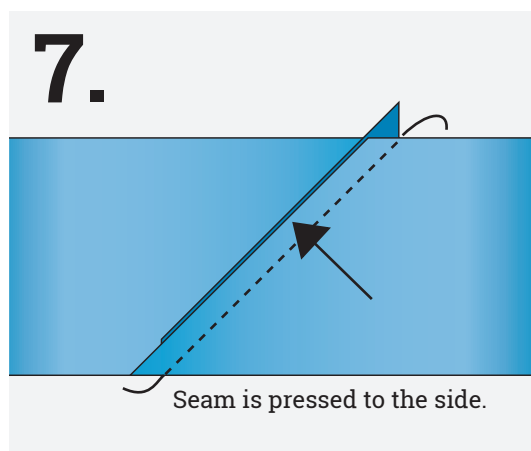


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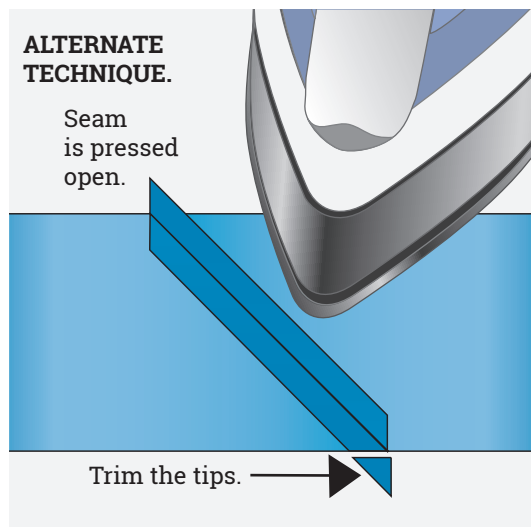
6. Stitch 1/4" from short diagonal edges.



7. Press seams to the side. If you are planning to use a bias tape maker, press seam away from the iron. Then trim off all tips that extend from the bias strip.



ALTERNATE TECHNIQUE:
Note: While pressing the seam allowance to the side is the most common practice, if you are using heavy fabric you may wish to press the seam open. This will create less bulk. (This is important if you are making welting.)



TIP: If you plan to make single or double fold bias binding, use a Bias Tape Maker. See our tutorial "How to Use a Bias Tape Maker" for great tips!

