

# Rotary Mat Q & A

1.126

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## SEW-lutions Guidelines

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Listed here some frequently asked questions about rotary mats. For specific information on mat types and care, see Guideline 1.125.

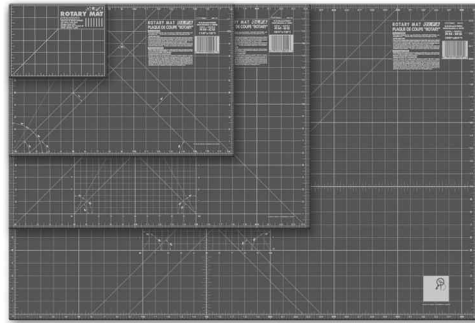


Photo courtesy of Olfa.

### **Q: Should I purchase a hard-surface or self-healing mat?**

In deciding between hard-surface and self-healing rotary mats, consider the inherent differences. Hard-surface mats are rigid and rugged—the blade doesn't affect the mat surface as you cut. They are also less likely to warp, making them a good choice for frequent travel to classes. Self-healing mats are thinner and flexible—the rotary blade actually cuts the surface during cutting, but the cuts disappear.

Cutting on a hard-surface mat may take less pressure than cutting on the self-healing mat, where the blade actually cuts into the mat surface as well as through the fabric.

### **Q: My new mat has a strong smell. What can I do?**

A: Wipe the mat with a soft cloth and a solution of warm water and dishwashing liquid. Let it set for five minutes, then rinse and towel dry. Repeat the process if necessary. Store it in an open area as opposed to a closed cabinet.

### **Q: When is it time to replace my rotary mat?**

A. If the mat has a buildup of glue or dirt that can't be cleaned; if repeated cleanings

have obliterated the printed guidelines (if you use them when cutting); or if the mat is warped, it's time to get a new mat.

### **Q: My mat is warped. Is there any way to repair it?**

A: If the mat is warped solely because it was not stored flat (for example, if it has been leaning against a wall and is curved), lay it flat for a few days, and it should even out.

Mats warped by a combination of heat and improper storage cannot be repaired. However, placing the mat on a flat surface under weights (heavy books, for example) may flatten it somewhat. The repaired mat can be used for cutting paper or as a protective surface for punches and other tools, but don't trust the measurement grid's accuracy, even if the repair looks good.

Another suggestion is to cut the damaged mat into smaller sections, using undamaged portions as portable cutting mats for classes or travel.

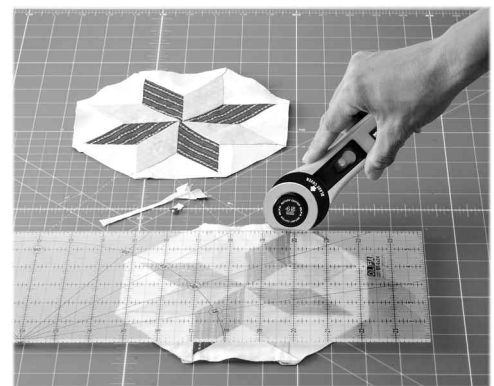


Photo courtesy of Olfa.

### **Q: Why are there measurements on both sides of my mat?**

A: Most mats that offer measurement guidelines on both sides have them in different colors and in different increments. For example, one side may have 1" line spacing and the other side may have 2" grids and/or different angle markings.

**Q: How big of a cutting mat do I need?**

A: The answer depends on your cutting space and the type of work you do. Some sewers like to cover their entire tabletop with a mat so they can cut anywhere; others prefer to have a designated cutting space as a portion of their work area. Keep in mind, that most quilting fabrics are 45" wide, so it's good to have a mat that's at least 24" across so you can cut folded fabrics without having to stop and adjust positioning. Some mats are available in pieces that fold out or join together like a puzzle so you can use a larger area when the project warrants it.

**Q: What sizes do cutting mats come in?**

A: Common sizes of rotary cutting mats include: 5" x 5", 6" x 8", 12" x 12" and 12" x 18"—all of these are great for small cutting tasks and carrying to and from class.

Other sizes include 12" x 24", 18" x 24" and 24" x 36", perfect for portable use in your sewing or quilting studio.

If you want to cover a tabletop with a protective cutting mat, consider these sizes: 24" x 70", 35" x 70" or 40" x 70", depending on the size of your work surface.

Sizes vary by brand and by the type of mat surface (self-healing or hard-surface) so check around to find the right one for your needs. 📏



*Photo courtesy of Olfa.*