

# Making Bias and Bias Binding

9.230

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## SEW-lutions Guidelines

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There are a number of types of bias tapes (see Guideline 6.185 Bindings and Tapes for more information), many are used for fashion apparel and others used for quilting; many can be used for both. Ready-made bias tape comes in limited color ranges and usually in solid colors, though a few prints are offered seasonally. By making your own bias, the world is your oyster in terms of fabrics to select from, width and usage.

Bias is inherently flexible and can be shaped with a steam iron into gentle or tight curves. It can be used to encase and finish a raw edge, or be applied flat as a trim or accent. Depending on the width, flat bias can also be used to cover seamlines.

Almost any fabric can be used for bias. Lengthwise or crosswise stripes are especially fun since they appear diagonal when cut on the bias. Care needs to be taken when using fabrics with nap to ensure the nap goes the same direction when bias seams are joined. To firm up soft fabrics before cutting strips, spray them lightly with starch or a pressing medium.

### Bias Types

Often used for stained glass appliqué and for trim bands, single-fold bias is simply a wider strip with both long edges pressed under to the fabric wrong side (1).



Depending on the width, single bias can also be used for casings to hold elastic or drawstrings, or as a substitute for a fabric facing.

Double-fold bias is most commonly used

for binding and finishing edges (2). Once each side of the strip is pressed under, the bias length is folded in half to encase the raw edges. The lower portion may extend slightly beyond the upper portion to allow it to be machine stitched in place over thick insert, like quilt batting.

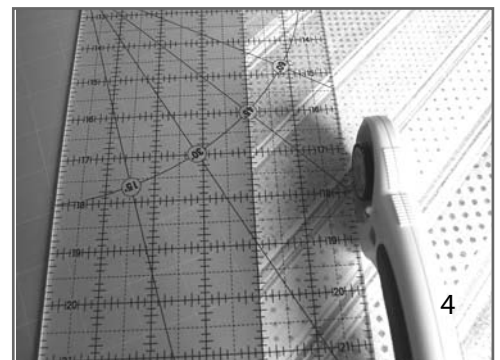


Quilt binding is simply a strip of wide bias folded in half, leaving the two raw edges to match up with the quilt edge (3). They will be enclosed when the binding is sewn to the quilt and flipped to the wrong side for finishing. Traditional quilt binding is cut 2 1/4" to 2 1/2" wide, depending on the batting thickness.



### Cutting Bias

Use a ruler with a 45° line printed on it and align that marking with the lengthwise or crosswise fabric grain. Use a rotary cutter to slice the fabric into strips of the desired width (4).



If you'll be using the bias as double-folded binding, cut the strip four times the finished width, plus two seam allowances. For example, for a ½" finished binding, cut strips 2 ½" wide, allowing for two ¼" seam allowances. If you're binding something thick, add additional width to accommodate the thickness.

To make single-fold bias, cut the strip the width of the finished trim plus two seam allowance widths for turn-under.

## Seaming Bias Strips

Rarely can bias be cut in just one strip; more frequently the diagonal strips need to be seamed together to make a longer length. The most inconspicuous seam is a diagonal one as opposed to straight across the bias width, unless you're seaming different colors together for a rainbow effect, then a simple crosswise seam is apropos.

To create a diagonal seam in bias, match the seamlines on adjacent pieces and stitch across the width at an exact 45° angle (5). If there's a pattern that requires matching, pin accordingly. Press the seams open and trim to 1/8".



Gently press the seamed strip, being careful not to stretch it.

## Finishing the Edges

There are several ways to finish the fabric edges to make bias tape. The easiest, but not the quickest, is to carefully press under the long edges ¼" using a steam iron. As you turn and press, be careful not to burn your fingertips with the point of the iron. This method is the most difficult and time consuming to obtain even width tapes.

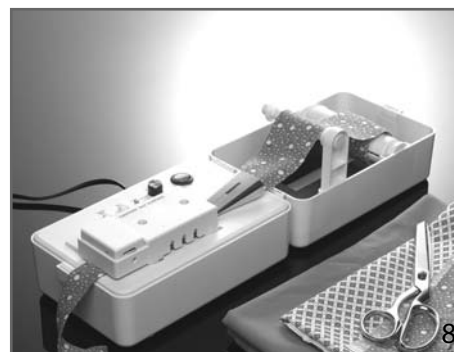
**Bias Bars** - These are long thin strips, able to take the iron heat, that form a template for pressing the bias (6). Bias bars come in widths from 1/8" to 1" and can be made of steel or plastic. For very crisp bias edges, steel is preferred. To use the bias bar, simply center it on the fabric strip wrong side and press the bias edges snugly over the bar. Slide the bar along the fabric strip length as you go.



**Bias Tape Makers** - Bias tape makers can be used to speed the pressing process for single-fold bias. These come in various widths and three types—one that incorporates a strip of fusible web into the bias as it's made, and the others which do not. A simple bias tape maker is used by inserting the strip end into the bias tape maker, then pinning the end of the bias to the ironing board (7). Pull the tape maker along the strip length, pressing the bias edges as they emerge from the tape.



The most sophisticated bias tape maker is electric and does the pressing and feeding automatically once the flat strip is threaded into it (8). Like its manual counterparts, various size tips are available for the



machine, depending on the bias width needed, and temperature settings can be adjusted depending on the fabric type. 🖨️