

TUTORIAL ON PARTIAL SEAMS

By Kathy Y.

Why should you even use partial seams?

First, you cut all your strips the same length. This might seem trivial. But with the example I am showing, I cut all my strips 10.5". Depending on the usable width after removing selvage, I could often cut 4 10-½" strips from the WOF with no waste. When I remove the selvage, I don't always cut all of it off if the fabric is a bit narrow. I cut just enough so the selvage will be inside the ¼" seam allowance. On the rare occasion when I could only get 3 strips, the leftovers can be used for smaller blocks. Also, let's say I have 12 blocks. Then I can just go ahead and cut 48 strips the same length and not have to worry about re-measuring and re-cutting after I add a strip to each side like you would for a log cabin block.

Second, THERE ARE NO SEAMS TO MATCH when you sew your blocks together. To me, this is really the best advantage of all.

So, I'm going to show you how to sew partial seams.

One comment: I need to tell you to ignore the first round of neutral strips sewn on the sample block in the photos. I did them in the old-fashioned way before I decided to add another round using the partial-seams method. So the first round of neutrals is part of the "starting" block. And, honestly, it was only because I didn't want to deal with matching seams that I even decided to add the 2nd round of neutrals.

First you need to determine what width to cut your strips. To determine the width, you use the same method as you would for making a regular block. In this example, I wanted 12" finished blocks and I'm starting with an 8" finished block size. Since there will be one strip on each side, my width is 2" finished so I cut 2 ½" width strips

Next, you need to determine the length to cut your strips. Simply add the finished size of the block you are starting with to the finished size of ONE strip width and add ½" seam allowance. Since my starting block size is 8" finished, I add that to the 2" finished width strip and get 10". Now I add ½" seam allowance and know that I need to cut my strips 10 ½".

Now that you have your block and strips, you simply need to sew the strips to the blocks. The first strip is where the name “partial-seam” came from. You will place your strip on the block and start sewing as you normally do. Notice that your strip is longer than your block. You will need to stop sewing before you reach the end.



So just how far do you sew? I place another strip at the bottom of the block to use as a guide. I like to be able to lay that 2nd strip flat against the block so I know where to stop sewing, before I reach that 2nd strip. Another method is to fold your first strip back like you would for making binding, and finger press a crease into the strip, marking the place to stop sewing.



Now take your block and first strip to the sewing machine and begin sewing your first seam allowance. Stop sewing when you get to the stopping point from the previous step.



Now that you know where to stop sewing, simply lift your presser foot, rotate your block 90 degrees and sew off into the seam allowance, shown below. This secures your line of sewing.



Now you are ready to sew the second strip to the block. If you have measured correctly, the strip should be the right length to cover both the block and the first strip that you sewed on. Be sure to sew your second strip on the side of the block where the first strip is sewn in place, as shown in the photo. Repeat this step for the 3rd and 4th strips.



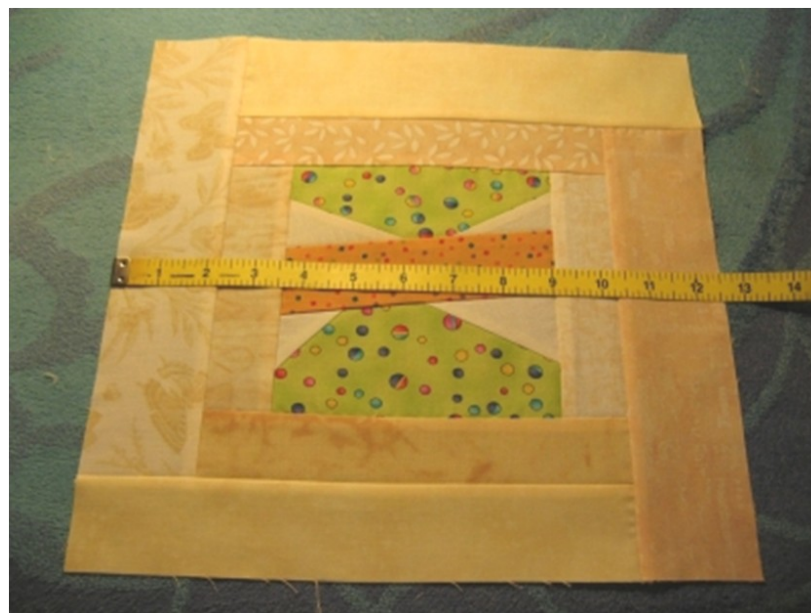
Now you are ready to finish the first seam. Your block should look something like this:



Since that first strip probably got a bit wrinkled, I like to press it before I finish sewing it—but it's not absolutely necessary.



If you measured and cut correctly, your block should measure your desired unfinished width.



WOO HOO! Looks good.

Now, let's measure the other side.



So what happened with the 2nd measurement? If you look closely, you'll see that one of my strips isn't as wide as the others. When I'm cutting my strips and get down to the last of my fabric, I will just cut it as wide as I can and toss it in a scrap pile. Obviously, I cut a strip and put it in my pile for these blocks. So, what to do now? I can either square up all of my blocks to 12" unfinished or just remake the ones that were off and use them for another project. Hopefully, you will be more careful than I was and not have to make this decision.

Hope you enjoyed this tutorial and maybe even learned something.

Happy quilting,
Kathy