

QISS Club Quilt Builder Deck Series - Episode 2

Mastering Cutting Accuracy

Welcome back! In this episode, we're learning all about cutting accuracy. Before we start cutting our beautiful fabrics, we need to ensure our tools and techniques are set up for success.

The Story Behind the "Penelope Quilt"

I have dedicated this quilt to Penelope, the beautiful daughter of George (our marketing guru) and his wife Jess. Penelope was born very early but is now thriving. Just like her, this quilt is a journey of growth and joy!

Cutting Accurately

Many quilters struggle with points that don't match or blocks that end up the wrong size; the culprit is often the tools we use - specifically our rulers.

Rulers: The Foundation of Precision

- **The Line Thickness Problem:** Check your rulers! On some brands, the inch lines are much thicker than the $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch or $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch marks.
 - *The Test:* Lay your sewing thread on the ruler line. The line on the ruler should be no thicker than the thread itself. If the line is thick, you don't know whether to cut on the left or right side of it, leading to inaccurate seams and blocks.
- **Consistency is Key:** If you use multiple rulers, stack them on a light coloured surface and stand directly over them to check if their measurements align perfectly. If they don't match, do not use them together in the same project. Stick to one brand if possible.
- **Ignore the Mat:** Never use the grid lines on your cutting mat to measure your fabric. Mats and rulers often differ slightly. Always rely solely on your ruler lines for alignment.
- **Non-Slip Grip:** The rulers I use have a rough, engraved surface on the back to prevent slipping.

Rotary Cutters

- **I prefer the Clover 18mm cutter** for cutting out blocks. Larger blades tend to push the fabric forward as they rotate, creating distortion. The small blade creates less drag, resulting in higher accuracy, especially on diagonals.
- It's best to check the sharpness of the blade before starting a new project, and also a good idea to take the cutter apart and clean all the lint and fluff out from under the blade.

Rotary Cutter Maintenance:

- **Blade Refills:** When you buy a refill pack, the blades are often stuck together. Ensure you split them apart so you don't accidentally put two blades in your cutter!
- **The Lugs:** When assembling the Clover cutter, ensure the blade cutouts sit perfectly over the two little "lugs" or posts. If they aren't seated correctly, you will shave the lugs off and ruin the cutter.
- **Oiling:** Clean your cutter regularly & add a tiny drop of sewing machine oil to the blade to keep it sharp.
- **Safety:** Always close your blade immediately after cutting!

Fabric Preparation & Cutting Triangles

- **Press First:** Always iron your fabric to remove creases before folding. I like to press with steam or spray with water to get all the creases out.
- **The Fold Test:** Fold your fabric selvage to selvage. Hold it up and check the fold at the bottom. If there is a "twist," slide the layers until it hangs flat. This prevents "doglegs" in your cut strips.
- **Cutting Triangles:** We will be cutting many squares in half, and the cutting direction matters!
 - **Half-Square Triangles (HST):** Cutting a square in half diagonally once. This puts the bias on the long diagonal edge.
 - **Quarter-Square Triangles (QST):** Cutting a square in half diagonally twice (an 'X' cut). This puts the straight grain on the outside edge and the bias on the inner edges.

In the next episode, we will learn how to use the Colour Balance Tool to select our fabrics, and then we will start cutting out our blocks.

See you then! Pauline