



ONE OF THE JOYS OF QUILTING is that the supplies needed can be as simple as scissors, needle, and thread, or more complex with specialty tools designed for a specific purpose. There are literally hundreds of items to choose from to make quilting tasks easier, more accurate, or more fun. Whether you're a gadget-lover who wants every tool, or a minimalist looking to acquire the basics, knowing what the tools are, what to use them for, and why they're useful is essential to quilting success.

SCISSORS

Quilting requires a good pair of scissors. Most quilters use several pairs, each designed for a different purpose. Choose your cutting tools with care, making certain they are of the highest quality you can afford. It's better to have two or three sharp pairs of scissors than a drawer full of seldom-used, dull pairs.

Choose your scissors and shears from the following.

Thread clippers (A): Use for cutting threads. Single style used by both left- and right-handed persons.

Craft scissors and knife-edge straight trimmers (B): Use for cutting threads and trimming fabric edges. Left- and right-handed styles available.

Embroidery scissors (C): Use for thread cutting. Left- and right-handed styles available.

Appliqué scissors (D): Use for close trimming; special duckbill protects underneath layers of fabric. Left- and right-handed styles available.

Knife-edge bent trimmers or shears (E): Use for general cutting and sewing. Bent handle and flat edge provide accuracy when cutting on a flat surface. Left- and right-handed styles available.

Spring-action scissors (F): Small and large sizes available. Ideal for use by persons with weakened

hands or for lengthy cutting sessions. Single style used by both left- and right-handed quilters.

TIP: In a pinch with no scissors in sight? Use nail clippers to cut your thread.

ROTARY-CUTTING TOOLS

Although scissors are still often used for cutting fabric, the rotary cutter and mat board have revolutionized the industry and streamlined the process. To rotary-cut fabrics you need a ruler, mat, and rotary cutter (see Chapter 5—Cutting for information on how to rotary-cut).

ROTARY CUTTERS



Rotary cutters come with different types and sizes of blades and a variety of handle sizes. Try out the cutters before buying to find the grip and size that work for you.

A rotary cutter will cut through several layers of fabric at one time. Because the blade is sharp, be sure to purchase a cutter with a safety guard and keep the guard over the blade when you're not cutting.

Rotary cutters are commonly available in three sizes—28 mm, 45 mm, and 60 mm. A good first blade is 45 mm. The 28-mm size is good for small-scale projects, miniatures,



and corners. The 60-mm cutter can easily and accurately cut up to six layers of cotton fabrics.

Specialty blades, such as the 18-mm size, are used for cutting curves, miniatures, and appliqués; trimming seams; and cutting templates. Pinking and wave blades are used for novelty effects.

ACRYLIC RULERS

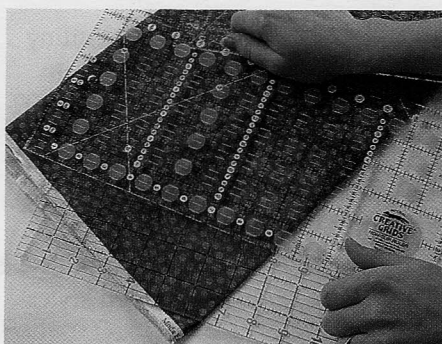
Accurate measurement is important for accurate piecing. To make straight cuts with a rotary cutter, choose a ruler of thick, clear plastic. Look for clear markings and accurate increments by measuring the ruler. Check to see if the 1" marks are the same crosswise and lengthwise.

Rulers come marked in a variety of colors. Try different rulers on cutting surfaces to see which is most easily visible for you.

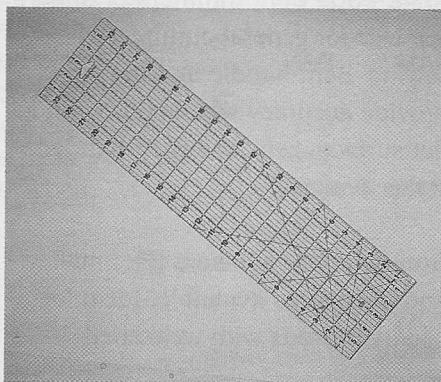
There are rulers for every type of project and cutting need. Some rulers are almost like templates in that they create squares or right triangles in varying sizes. Some triangle rulers enable you to trim the points before joining the pieces together. If possible, try out rulers before you buy them or ask for a demonstration at a quilt shop and understand how to use them to get

SAFETY TIP: Rotary-cutter blades are extremely sharp. Develop a habit of retracting the blade after each cut. Just brushing your hand against an open blade can cause serious injury, as can dropping a rotary cutter with an open blade and striking your foot.

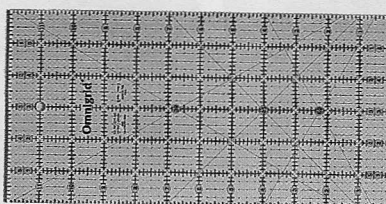
the maximum benefit from your purchase.



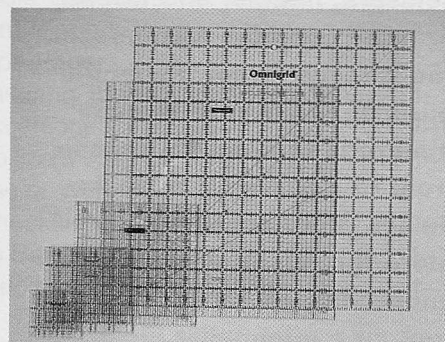
Rectangular rulers, such as a 6×24" ruler marked in 1/4" increments with 30°, 45°, and 60° angles, are a good beginner's purchase. As you become more proficient you may wish to purchase additional acrylic rulers and templates in a variety of sizes and shapes.



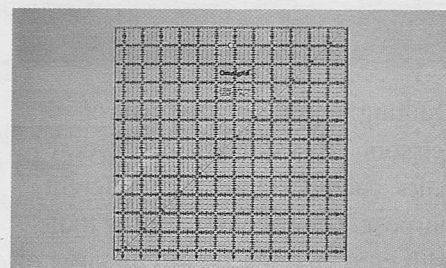
A good second ruler is the 6×12" size. It is easier to handle than the 24" ruler and can be used for smaller cuts and to make crosscut strips. It can also be used with the 6×24" ruler to cut 12" blocks or to make straightening cuts.



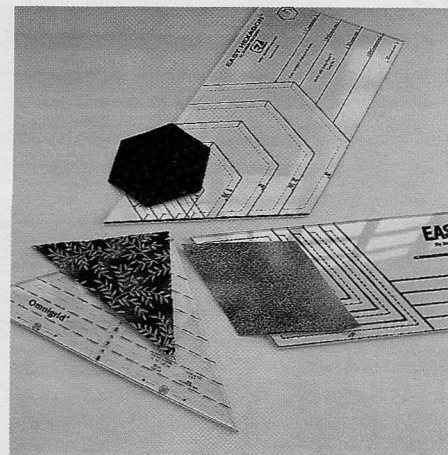
Square rulers, good for secondary cuts and cutting and squaring blocks, are available in a variety of sizes.



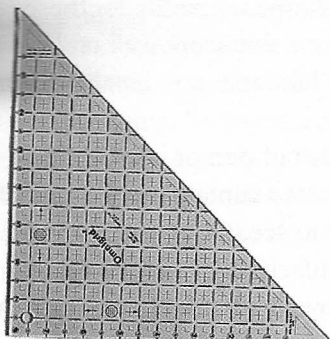
For squaring up large blocks and quilt corners a 12½" or 15½" square ruler works well. This ruler can also be used for making setting triangles.



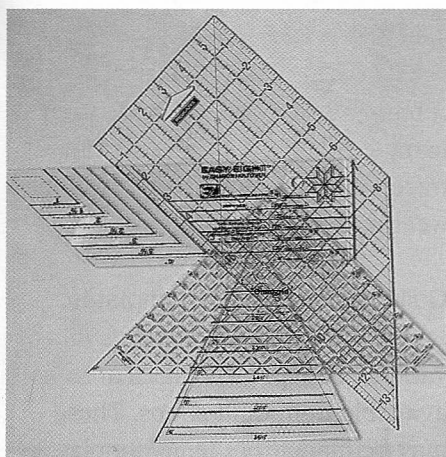
There are many rulers available that make cutting triangles, diamonds, and hexagons easy.



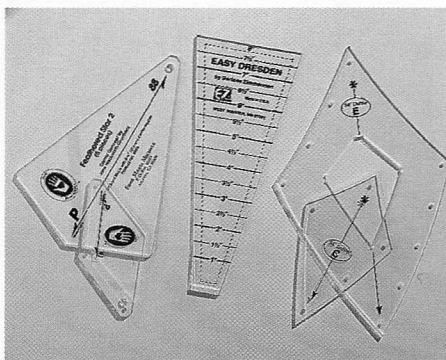
45° triangle rulers are useful for cutting half- and quarter-square triangles, mitering corners, and for cutting some diamonds and parallelograms.



60° triangle rulers are helpful for cutting equilateral triangles, diamonds, and hexagons.

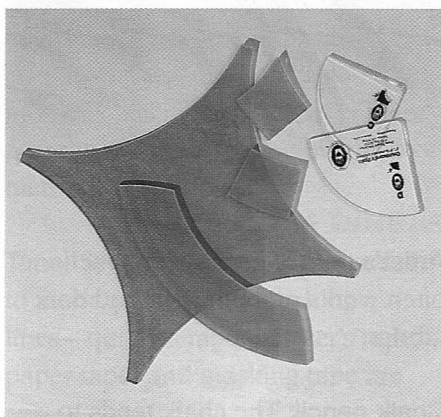


Specialty rulers and templates have been developed for cutting fans, arcs, Dresden Plates, Kaleidoscopes, some star patterns, and more.



TIP: Have a project that calls for a specific size of square or rectangle? If the size is right, consider using a specialty triangle or square ruler instead of making a separate template.

Curved rulers and templates help cut Double Wedding Ring and Drunkard's Path pattern pieces.

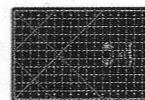
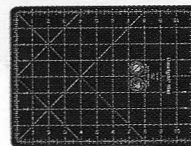
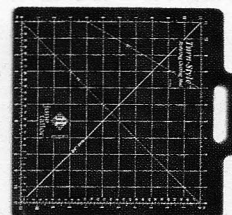
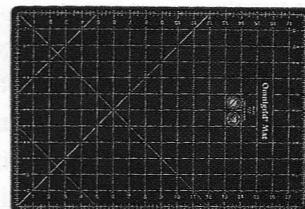
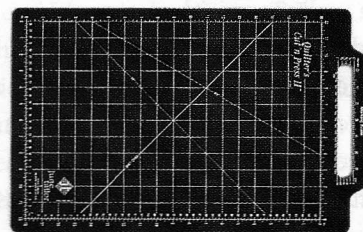
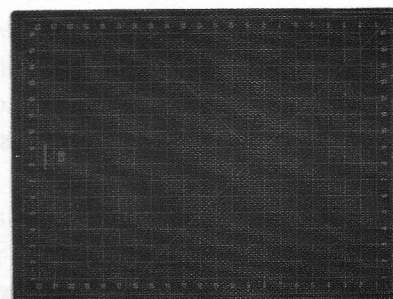


ROTARY-CUTTING MATS

A rotary cutter should always be used with a mat designed specifically for it. The mat protects your work surface and keeps the fabric from shifting while you cut. Often mats are labeled as "self-healing," meaning the blade does not leave slash marks or grooves in the surface even after repeated usage. Many sizes, shapes, and styles are available, but a 16×23" mat marked with a 1" grid, "hash marks at 1/8" increments, and 45° and 60° angles is a good first choice. For convenience, purchase a second smaller mat to take to workshops and classes.

Cutting mats usually have one side with a printed grid and one plain side. To avoid confusion when

lining up fabric with preprinted lines on a ruler, some quilters prefer to use the plain side of the mat. Others prefer to use the mat's grid.



TIP: Due to possible variances between manufacturers, it's preferable to use one brand of ruler throughout a project.

It is important to change needles frequently as both kinds become dull with use. If a machine needle strikes a pin or the machine bed, it can develop a nick or burr that can tear your fabric.

SEWING-MACHINE NEEDLES

The notions wall in your local quilt shop or sewing center can be intimidating if you're not sure what you need. There are dozens of sizes and shapes of sewing-machine needles, each designed for a different task. Understanding the terminology associated with machine needles can take the mystery out of making your selection and make your piecing and quilting go smoother.

Change needles at the start of a project and/or after 8 hours of sewing.

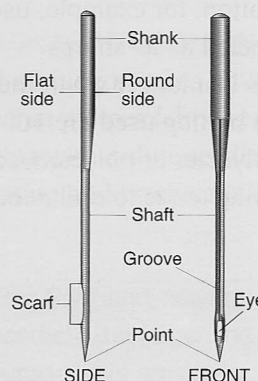
MACHINE NEEDLE SIZES

When looking at a package of machine needles, you will often see two numbers separated by a slash mark. The number on the left of the slash is the European size (range of 60 to 120); the right-hand number is the American size (range of 8 to 21). Sizes 70/10, 80/12, and 90/14 are most commonly used for quilting. A lower number indicates a finer machine needle.

MACHINE NEEDLE POINTS

The needle point differentiates the type and purpose of a needle and is a key characteristic to consider

ANATOMY OF A MACHINE NEEDLE



Shank: the part of the needle that goes into the machine.

Shaft: the body of the needle that extends below the shank.

Front Groove: the indentation on the front of the needle that allows the thread to lie close to the needle as it runs toward the bobbin. A deeper front groove can protect heavier thread from excess friction.

Scarf: the indentation on the back of the needle where the stitch is formed. When the bobbin shuttle swings into the scarf, it hooks into the looped thread on the needle to form the stitch.

Point: the tip of the needle. Select the point size based on the fabric being sewn.

Eye: the hole the thread passes through. Select the eye size based on thread type and weight.

THREAD AND COORDINATING MACHINE-NEEDLE SIZES

	60/8	70/10	75/11	80/12	90/14
Piecing and binding cotton fabric with cotton thread			•	•	
Piecing flannel					•
Quilting with monofilament thread	•	•	•	•	
Machine appliqué	•	•	•	•	
Sewing batiks, silks, or high thread-count fabrics with cotton thread		•			
Embellishing with decorative threads				•	•
Adding binding and borders			•	•	