

Technique Sharing Workshop  
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The elusive quarter inch seam allowance

A perfect quarter inch seam allowance starts with careful cutting. I cut to the outside of the line on a ruler. If I cut to the inside I can be short about an eighth of an inch in the completed block. Not much you may say, but it adds up.

If you measure your seam allowance, after sewing two fabrics together, from the thread to the edge you are not accounting for the space the thread and the fold over take up.

To check your seam allowance cut two one inch by four inch strips. Pair them right sides together. Press before you open the seam, then open and press again. This sets the stitches. This will help you avoid the dreaded tuck. Your two pieces should measure one and one half inches. Press, open up and measure.

If you are off here are some hints to help you.

Sew slowly straight on and straight off your fabric. Don't take your eyes off it to pick up the next patch.

Put the needle in the down position then bump your fabric against the needle then against the right hand side. Don't push the fabric against the right hand side, just line it up.

Put your left hand fingers on the thread as you start sewing. Another way to go on and off straight is to use a small piece of fabric to start and stop, sewing on it first and then sew off at the end.

Use an 80/12 needle with a sharp point. Change your needle every 8 to 10 hours of sewing. I change at the beginning of a new project.

Use a thin thread. Aurifil is a thin thread also Sew Fine and Masterpiece from Superior. Mettler has a fine embroidery thread that is a two ply, most are three ply.

On some machines you can move the needle position one click to the right. I found this helpful on my Janome. A straight stitch throat plate might be helpful to you.

Using a ruler you can add masking tape to your machine bed. Put the ruler down and roll the needle down to the quarter inch mark. Avoid putting the tape over the bobbin cover. Make the tape long enough to start the fabric away from the needle. This helps with going straight. Be persistent. Quality does matter.