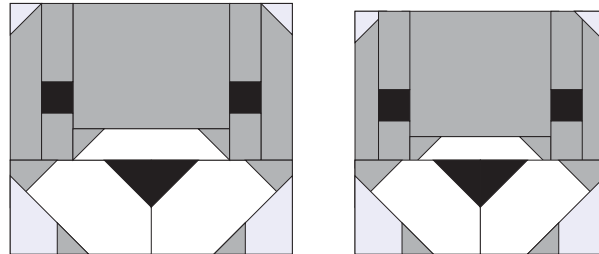


The 1/4" seam

There are SO many ways you can configure your machine (or should I say, your brain?) to sew a perfect 1/4" seam. While many projects could be successfully completed with a 1/4"-ish seam, it is super important in my character patterns that your 1/4" seam is indeed 1/4".

To explain this, take a look at the diagram below:



The diagram above is from my Kidding Around - Goats in Pajamas pattern. On the left is what the completed goat head should look like, completed using a true 1/4" seam allowance. The final dimensions of this unit are 4.5" x 4". On the right is the same block sewn with a 1/4" seam allowance that is a bit on the large side...just a bit. Even though it would appear that it wouldn't make much of a difference, the final unit actually measures 4" x 3.8". Now imagine we produce an entire row from the quilt with 3 goats, that 0.5" difference in each goat head unit would become 1.5" across the row, and this is only taking into account this small part of the block.

While it is true that these differences could be compensated for in other ways, or other parts of the quilt to make them work, wouldn't it just be easier to sew with a true 1/4" seam allowance?

Here are my 2 favourite ways to do this:

1. Use the edge of your presser foot as a guide.

This method is probably the one I most use when producing my patterns. First you find your favourite presser foot, and you want to move your needle to the right so that the distance between the needle and the right edge of the presser foot is 1/4".

Once the needle is moved, I like to test the seam allowance. I do this by cutting 3 - 1" strips of fabric, they don't have to be very long, only a couple of inches. I then sew these three strips in a sequence, as shown, lining up the raw edges of the strips I am sewing with the right edge of my presser foot. Once stitched, I press the seam allowances open (as I recommend you do for all my character patterns). If your seam allowance was a true 1/4", the middle strip should measure out perfectly to 0.5".

If the middle strip measures more or less than 0.5", adjust your needle accordingly and test again. Once the correct measurement is achieved, make a note of your needle position so that you do not have to test this every time you sew.

*Note that even sometimes special 1/4" presser feet can still not be a perfect 1/4", so if you use one, I would still recommend you test it out.

2. Mark the 1/4" with tape.

I recommend this method to anyone who knows that they will forget to move their needle positions when they turn on their machine. For this method, you will want to mark a line with painters tape, or washi tape, 1/4" away from the default needle position of your machine.

Once marked, test the seam allowance just as I previously recommended, however, this time you will be lining up the raw edges of your fabric with the left side of the tape. Once tested, you can adjust if necessary. That tape can live there until you pull it off!

As mentioned, these are just 2 ways you can set your machine up to sew perfect 1/4" seams. Do you have a favourite way of doing this yourself? Feel free to share!