

## Rotary Cutting Tutorial Series

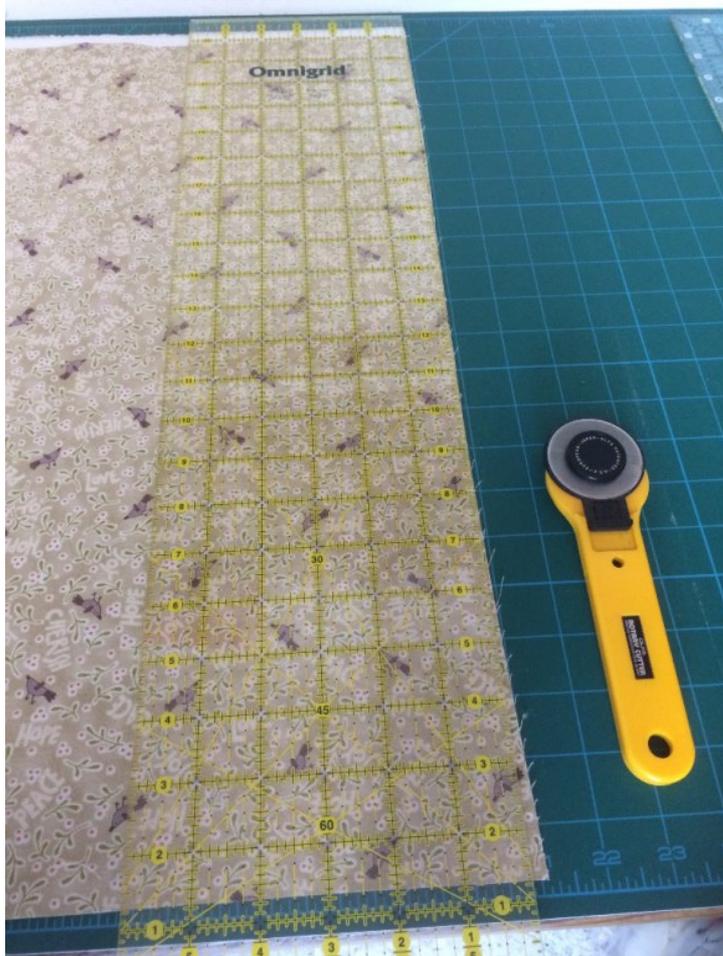
### Part Two – Straightening fabric

Most instructions tell you to cut strips on the straight grain or to cut bias strips - but how do you find these? It's relatively easy if your fabric still has its selvage - the straight grain is at right angles (lengthwise grain) or parallel to the selvage (cross grain). The cross grain has slightly more 'give' than the lengthwise grain. The bias is at 45 degrees to the straight grain and is very stretchy.

We usually cut our strips at right angles to the selvage (on the lengthwise grain). Try to leave the selvage on your fabric for as long as possible - only cut it off once you are cutting shapes from the strips you have cut - as this will make it easier to straighten the fabric next time you need a cut a strip or two from it.

If you have yardage then fold it in half so the selvages come together. Hold it up and away from you then shuffle the selvage edges along until the fabric hangs straight and the fold at the bottom has no ruckles. Hold on tight to those selvages and place the fabric onto the cutting mat with the fold towards you and the bulk of the fabric to the hand you don't cut with (the left if you are right-handed; the right if left-handed). You may need to turn the mat so that the whole length is on the mat - it makes this first cut much easier.





If you have a fat quarter - this is half a width of fabric and should have one selvage - don't fold it, just place it on the cutting mat so the selvage is away from you and the bulk of the fabric is to the hand you will hold the ruler with.

From now on yardage and fat quarters are cut in the same way. So . . . Deep breath. Stand up over the mat (try to have it at a comfortable height - a kitchen worktop is ideal if you are doing a lot of cutting) so you are in direct line with the edge you wish to cut. Place the ruler on the fabric so that one line of the ruler lines up with the selvage (this may be a bit hit and miss and some selvages can be a somewhat wavy - take an average) - if you managed to get the yardage hanging straight then the fold should also be on a straight line of the ruler, but don't obsess about it.





cutter from the mat.

And breathe.

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Fat quarters have been cut from a machine wound bolt (and some are pre-cut) so the bottom edge is rarely parallel with the selvage.

Move the ruler until you are cutting just enough fabric off the edge to straighten it.

Start with the cutter on the mat, hold it at about 45 degrees (or whatever you find most comfortable), remove the guard, make sure the blade is snug against the ruler, that your fingers are out of the way . . . another deep breath . . . And . . . with a firm and even pressure roll the cutter along the edge of the ruler to trim that excess fabric away. You may have to 'walk' your hand up the ruler to keep it by the cutter and to keep the ruler firm and straight.

Once you have finished the cut and reached the end of the fabric put the guard back over the blade and lift the