

Rotary Cutting Tutorial Series

Part Three – Cutting strips

Most rotary cut shapes are cut from a strip so being able to cut straight accurate strips is a vital skill. In the last tutorial we got as far as finding and cutting a straight edge on our fabric and this week we will cut a strip (or two) from it.

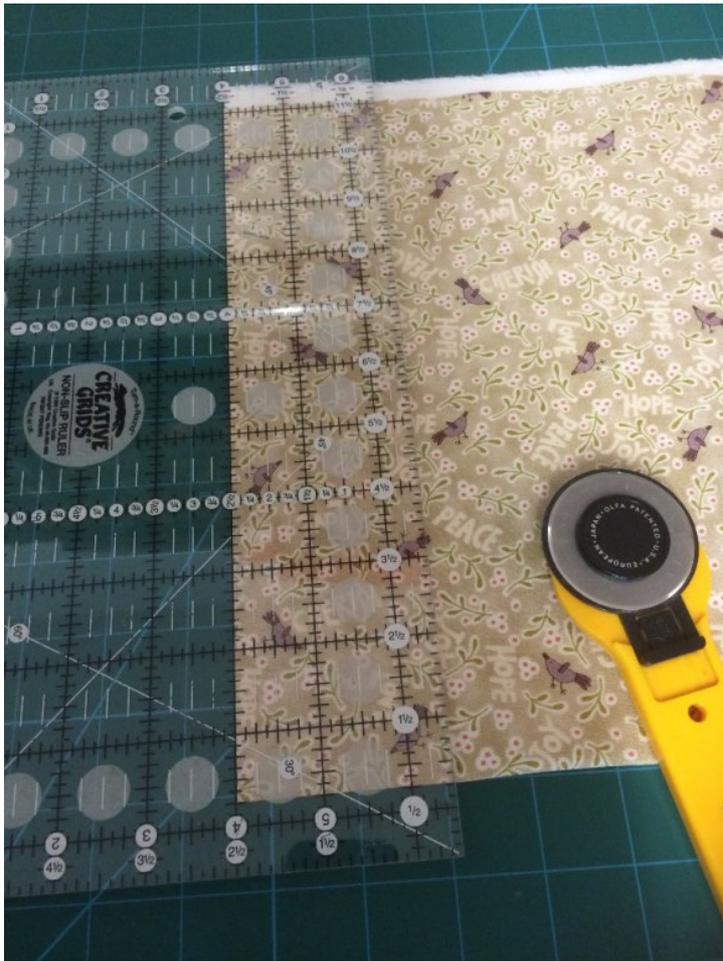
Before you cut check that the edge is straight - something happens to fabric left out overnight and all those beautiful straight edges turn wavy and frayed. We blame the fabric imps.



Now turn the mat with the fabric on it so that the bulk of the fabric is now to the hand you cut with. You can turn the fabric but be very careful that you keep those straight edges together if you have yardage as somehow, even with fat quarters, the mere act of picking it up seems to stretch it all out of shape.

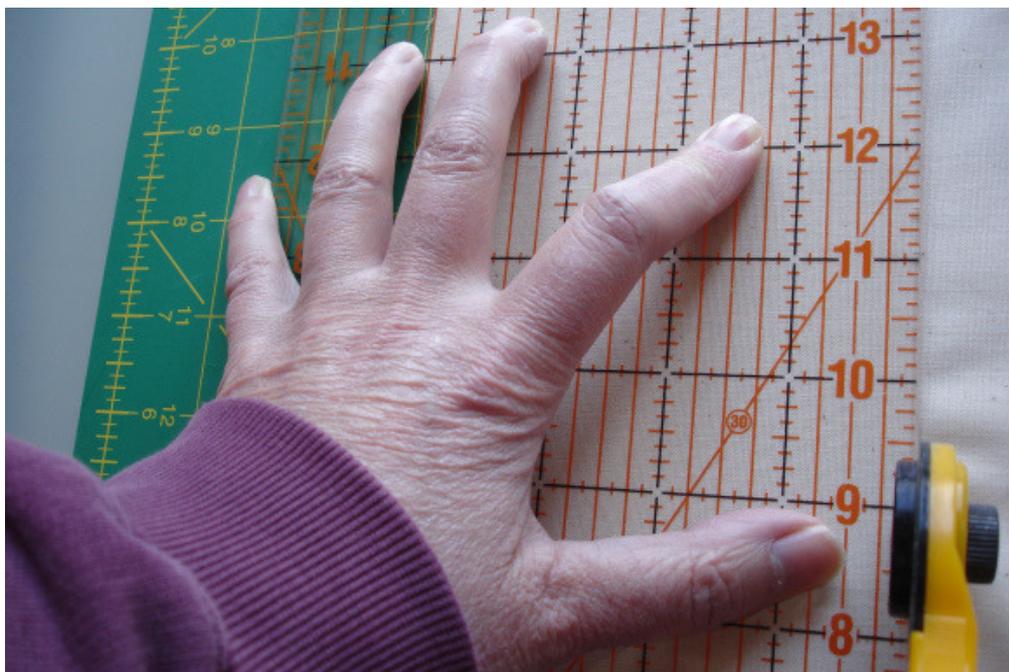
Fold the fabric up again making sure those straight edges are aligned exactly (or as near as you can possibly make it).

Decide, work out, or look up the size of strip you need to cut. If it is two and a half inches (a very common measurement) then find that on your ruler.



Place the ruler on the fabric so that the required measurement is against the straight cut edges. The fold of the fabric should be towards you.

Hold the ruler firmly, fingers out of the way!



Place the cutter on the mat and remove the guard. With the blade snug against the ruler roll the cutter with a firm and even pressure along the ruler to cut the strip. You will be going through two or four layers but with a sharp blade this shouldn't be a problem.



Remember you will cut more evenly, more surely and more accurately if you are standing in front of the ruler edge where you are cutting. Never be tempted to cut across yourself and never, never cut towards you - not only is it not very accurate (the ruler and fabric move and you can't gain enough pressure) but the consequences of the blade slipping and cutting into you are potentially catastrophic.

You can download a handy list of [Chris and Barbara's Dos and Don'ts](#) for rotary cutting here.

The instructions above are for using the ruler to measure and cut strips. This is the way Chris does it. Barbara uses the mat for measuring and the ruler as a straight edge guide for the cutter. Both methods are equally valid - whichever method you use however, be consistent as rulers and mats are slightly out of sync with each other (even different makes of ruler never quite line up exactly). There may be only microns of difference but over several seams those add up and decrease the accuracy of your piecing.

Why not find an old sheet, or some fabric you really don't like, and use it to practise cutting strips. As with everything, the more often you do it, the better and more confident you become.

© Chris Franses and Barbara Chainey, 2015