

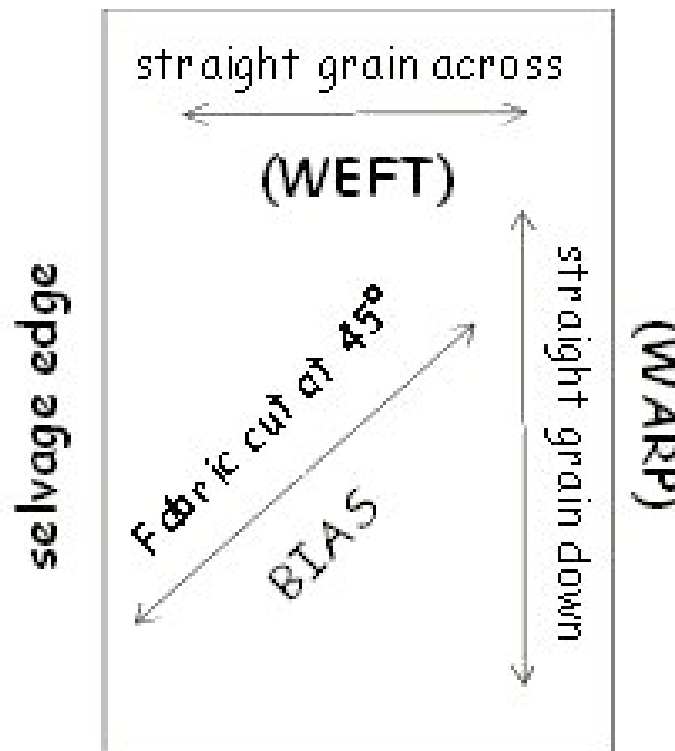
No.1 FABRIC

GRAIN OF FABRIC IS IMPORTANT

The straight grain (warp) of fabric is the direction up or down of the weave of fabric. There is very little or no stretch in the fabric when pulled on the straight grain.

The bias or cross grain means going diagonally at 45° across the weave of the fabric. There is considerable stretch when the fabric is pulled on the bias grain.

Across the grain (weft) means selvedge to selvedge. There is a little more stretch in the grain across the fabric than in the grain up and down the fabric.



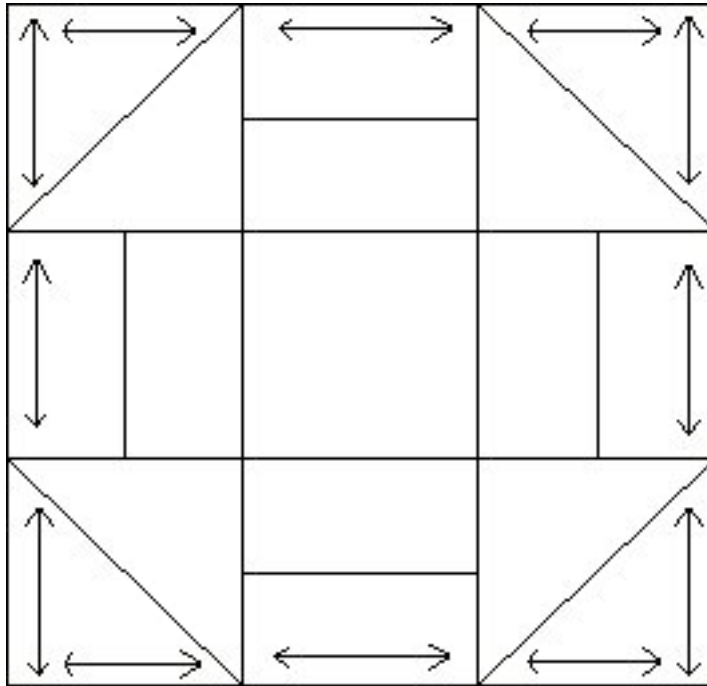
When we say cut on the straight grain it is generally accepted that for patchwork the fabric is either cut on the straight or the across grain.

It is very easy to stretch fabric when sewing or pressing so it is advantageous to have at least one edge cut on the straight grain.

Keeping the outside edges of a block, wallhanging or quilt on the straight grain means you will have a finished piece that will hang properly. Outside edges can become really ruffled because the fabric has stretched during sewing.

REMEMBER: on the edge keep it straight – in the middle you can fiddle.

Of course if you need to cut out a fancy pattern or object from a piece of fabric to place within a block then the above becomes null and void – go for it, just take a bit more care when you piece.



CHOOSING AND PREPARING YOUR FABRICS

CHOOSING FABRICS

100% cotton fabric is the easiest and kindest to use for patchwork, applique and quilting. Choose patterned materials carefully – large prints can over-dominate while small ones tend to merge into each other – try to balance the size of fabric pattern within each block i.e. small, medium and large prints. Always aim to have the edges of your block finish with fabric on the straight grain – this will help to eliminate distortion. Do not use the selvage edge in your patchwork.

WASHING AND IRONING FABRICS

I like to wash all my fabric before cutting, this ensures it is pre-shrunk and colourfast. Wash in hand warm water as if you were washing wool, no need to use fabric softener. After spinning gently dry naturally if possible. If it is necessary to use a tumble dryer use a low temperature and remove the fabric whilst still damp, it will iron better and helps to avoid permanent creases.

When pre-washing very small pieces of fabric put them into a muslin or mesh bag and wash as usual (those little mesh bags you get with some washing tablets work well here).

When ironing washed lengths of fabric fold and iron it the same way that it originally came off the bolt, that is selvage edges together. You will always know where the warp and weft grains are:-

Weft = straight grain **across** the fabric from selvage to selvage

Warp = straight grain **down** the length of the fabric

Spray starch is good for pieces to be appliquéd – it helps to keep creases in and gives a better edge to the shapes.

If you do find that a fabric bleeds, wash several times in hand warm water then try adding a handful of salt to the final rinsing water. If however the fabric still bleeds and you really must use it, cut a small sample off each fabric to be used in the project and put them all together in a small muslin or mesh bag and wash together – sometimes the colour run does not taint other fabrics at all or in the alternative you will see how it will change the others!?

TIP

Here's a tip from my friend Janette Fairer - You can now buy a product called "Colour Catcher by Glo Care" it is similar to sheets of fabric conditioners you put in the tumble dryer - use one of these in your washing machine when washing your fabrics any colour run should adhere to the colour catcher and not taint the fabrics.

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