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3 Common Problems With Pre-Cuts (+ Simple Solutions)

By **Stephanie Palmer** on October 8, 2017[♡ Add to Favorites](#)

Pre-cut fabrics (like jelly rolls, fat quarters and charm packs) can make your quilting life so much easier. But sometimes pre-cuts may have problems, and it's helpful to know some troubleshooting tips and tricks when working with them.



Hometown Call Me Contemporary Quilt Kit

THE PROBLEM: PINKED EDGES

Some pre-cuts like charm squares, layer cakes, and mini charms, are pinked (zig zagged) to keep the fabric from unraveling. You're not sure how to deal with pinked edges to get an accurate 1/4" seam.

THE SOLUTION

Don't cut off those pinked edges! Just measure from the outer points of the pinked edges as if they are the straight edge of the fabric, and then trim to the desired size if needed.

When aligning your fabrics for sewing, use those outer points of the pinked edges as the edge of the fabric so that your 1/4" seam allowances will be accurate.

THE PROBLEM: CROOKED CUTS

The pre-cut is crooked (not a true square or rectangle) or not true to size.

THE SOLUTION

If you get home and discover that your newly purchased pre-cuts aren't true to size, first, don't be afraid to let the seller know about your problem. They will most likely thank you for identifying a manufacturing-based problem that may affect other customers; and, you may be able to return them.

If you can't return them, the best option is to save that stack of pre-cuts for a pattern that requires a smaller piece. For example, if your layer cake squares measure 9 3/4" instead of a true 10", choose a pattern that requires that layer cake to be trimmed down a bit. The pre-cuts still will make your life easier than working with yardage, even if you end up making a few extra cuts.

THE PROBLEM: OFF-GRAIN CUTS

The pre-cut is cut off-grain, and you end up with stretchy fabric and can't match your points as easily.

It can be hard to tell whether your pre-cut is on grain or not, and most likely, this type of imperfection will only be noticeable to advanced quilters or show quilters. In fact, to begin with, many prints are not even printed on grain.

Here's the gist of the problem, if you're curious: When your fabric is not cut on grain (meaning it's cut on the bias), that means the fabric will stretch, which could lead to fullness in some areas of your quilt top. This, in turn, can make it difficult to quilt (pleats and folds in your quilting). Fabric

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that is cut off-grain can also stretch, making it difficult to easily match your points.

THE SOLUTION

Starch your fabric! A little starch, like the kind you buy in the grocery store, can go a long way to fix stretchy fabric. This is a quick and easy fix that anyone can accomplish.

Also, don't be afraid to just save those off-grain pre-cuts for a pattern that does not require that you match points.



MORE QUICK TIPS FOR WORKING WITH PRE-CUTS

- When you shop, bring a mini tape measure with you. Measure the pre-cuts to make sure they're true to size before you buy.
- Don't wash pre-cuts. If you do, they will fray and unravel and may shrink inconsistently.
- Measure your pre-cut pieces before you start stitching.
- If you have a problem with an excessively fraying jelly roll, use it for a [scrappy binding](#) instead of the body of the quilt.
- To make your life easier when cutting, stack up to six pieces of fabric at a time, and use a brand new 60 mm rotary cutter (instead of a 45 mm rotary), so you can cut the thicker stack more quickly.
- If you sometimes forget all the common pre-cut sizes and names, or need help keeping all your pre-cut projects organized, check out [The Quilter's Planner](#). It has calendars, project planning pages, and a full reference section that lists information (like all the types of pre-cuts you'll find in the quilting world). It also comes with 14 patterns in a magazine, many of which are pre-cut friendly!

The truth is, if you're making a quilt to cuddle or gift, most minor problems with pre-cuts will not be noticeable. Sure, if you're making a show quilt, your points need to be perfectly matched, and any imperfection may be noticed (and judged). But the vast majority of us can sit back and enjoy the fact that some very clever person discovered a way to make fabric a lot easier and more fun for the average quilter to work with each day.

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9 COMMENTS



liz n.

October 8th, 2017

Regarding not pre-washing pre-cuts: I do. I just fill the sink or a large mixing bowl with water and a bit of soap, let them soak, gently agitate by hand, then rinse them and toss them in the dryer on the lowest setting.

They don't shed nearly as much of those linty bits as they do if you try to wash them in a washing machine, and I will never not pre-wash my fabrics. (The one time I didn't, the quilt ended up needing a wash, and fabrics shrank and bled.)

[Reply](#)



Alanah Crump

October 8th, 2017

Great tips. Thank you ?

[Reply](#)



Christina in FL
October 8th, 2017

Thank you for some great tips! I adore my 60mm rotary cutter and use it often. Love the tip about measuring precuts before buying from the store. Thank you!!

[Reply](#)



Annie
October 8th, 2017

Great tips. Those pinked edges can often drive me batty. I have not noticed crooked cuts but have had off-grain and the starching is a terrific solution. Precuts save so much time for me, I can produce many more quilts by not having to do the measuring and cutting for the most part. How far we've come and how much more enjoyable quilting is these days, no more paper grocery bag templates, no more using scissors (God bless the person who thought up rotary cutters), so much, much more that made my love of quilting all the more so.

I love Craftsy and so appreciate ALL of your tips in every category. Don't know how I survived before you entered my life!

[Reply](#)



Cindy M
October 8th, 2017

"To make your life easier when cutting, stack up to six pieces of fabric at a time, and use a brand new 60-degree rotary cutter (instead of a 45-degree rotary), so you can cut the thicker stack more quickly."

I think you mean 60mm and 45mm rotary cutters here. Could be confusing for new beginners



[Reply](#)



Carol Bejtlich
October 8th, 2017

Great tips. When using jelly rolls, I keep a lint brush and my Swiffer nearby to clean up. Some are worse than others as for fraying, but the convenience outweighs any problems.

[Reply](#)



Chris K.
October 8th, 2017

You mean a 60mm rotary cutter, not 60 degree. Good article, though.

[Reply](#)



Joyce
October 8th, 2017

Good tips, thank you. My biggest pre-cut woe was a package of charm squares I ordered on line. Several of the squares in the middle of the pack were only halves. I let the supplier know but never received a reply from them. Don't buy from them anymore.

[Reply](#)



Ruth Wilson
October 11th, 2017

If you find a partial piece or two in your pack of pre-cuts, be sure to count how many whole, perfect pieces you have. Whenever I've found a partial piece, it's been an extra- the manufacturer just threw it in as a little bonus gift, and I already had the right number of whole pieces.

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