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Anything but pointless: how to keep triangle points pointy

Posted by Jenny Wilding Cardon on June 19, 2017, in quilting & sewing, patchwork, quilt tips, quilting 101, quilting tutorials

If you struggle with keeping the points of your triangles pointy when sewing them into your quilt blocks, Pat Sloan has a simple solution for you—and it works for *any* type of triangle piecing.



Union Square quilt from Pat Sloan's Teach Me to Sew Triangles

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All you need are two pins and Pat's triangle tips below to get pointy points that won't get lost in your seams. Follow along and you'll never be pointless again!

Preserving the Points

Excerpt from Pat Sloan's Teach Me to Sew Triangles

After taking the time to sew crisp and consistent triangles, it would be a shame to lose your points in the seams of your blocks. By following a few helpful hints, you can easily maintain sharp points when sewing the units together.

1. Begin with units that have been sewn and trimmed to the correct dimensions. If one or more of the units is not the correct size from the start, the problem will only multiply when you sew them together. Using a clear gridded ruler (not the grid on the cutting mat), measure each unit to be sure it's the correct size.

2. Place the two units to be joined right sides together. Whenever possible, arrange the units with the intersection facing up so you can see it as you stitch. After lining up the units, place a pin directly before and after the intersection rather than directly at the intersection. This secures the layers and makes it easy to remove the pins without disturbing the precise alignment point.



3. Begin stitching the units, but note that an exact 1/4" seam-allowance width will actually guide the needle directly into the triangle point. To keep a sharp triangle point, it's important to account for the bulk of the fabric fold along the seamline, also known as "turn of cloth."



If the seam allowance is too wide, the point will be chopped off when you press open the units. Save the point by sewing slightly outside of the intersection, just a thread or two into the 1/4" seam allowance.



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4. Press the units flat before unfolding them to warm the fabric and set the stitches. Open the units and press the seam allowances away from the triangle point to reduce the bulk underneath it. Notice how the point lines up with the seamline without getting lost within it.



Get tons more triangle tips from Pat in her book *Pat Sloan’s Teach Me to Sew Triangles*—13 triangle techniques and 12 terrific triangle quilt patterns await you! Get Pat’s trio of “Teach Me” books and expand your quilting skills, which will also (we promise!) expand your quilting fun.



Do you insist on pointy points, or are you a “done is better than perfect” kind of quilter who can live with flat-top triangles here and there? Tell us in the comments!

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52 Comments (leave a comment)

I demand pointy points and have used your technique successfully for many quilts.

—*Patricia MacDonald on June 19, 2017*

I love perfect points, but usually am willing to accept a few renegades.

—*Sandy F. on June 19, 2017*

I like pointy triangle points. My goal is to have the points. I use Pat's scant 1/4 stitch also. Good tip.

—*carol on June 19, 2017*

I am not always successful with my points, but I am getting better. Pat's techniques are better than what I am doing now.

—*Joel Sellers on June 19, 2017*

I do insist on having the points PERFECT when sewing triangles. If I can't fix the point, I will cut another pattern piece and start over. Somehow I always fall back on something my Mother taught me when I was just a child. "If you are going to do something, do it the best you can make it." That is what I try to do.

—*Barbara Pryga on June 19, 2017*

I am careful about points but the odd one does get away on me.

—*Peggy on June 19, 2017*

I'm working on preserving my points, but do not usually re sew if I see an error. I especially like the idea of two pins around the intersection – bet this will help a lot! Thank you!

—*June on June 19, 2017*

I aspire to perfect points that do not get cut off. However, reality means that some are less than perfect. I keep trying and am improving. Quilting is fun and shouldn't be overly stressful!

—*Donna Irmis on June 19, 2017*

I must have pointy points or I am not a happy camper. I figure what's the point of even making triangles if the points are lost. Sometimes being a perfectionist gets in my way, but I have learned to live with it.

—*Jani on June 19, 2017*

Boy, do I need to perfect my points! I have been sewing for years, yet sometimes they turn out just the way I want and other times I am saying to myself, oh, no! Making perfect points is not easy.

—*Cynthia Fedak on June 19, 2017*

Well – life is too short to sweat a few non-pointy blocks in a quilt. I have too many quilts I want to make in this lifetime!

—*sonja on June 19, 2017*

I have been known to rip and rip to get my points right – but depending on the project, I have also let it go! I would love tips on getting the perfect point so I don't have to rip rip!

—*Patty on June 19, 2017*

I insist on pointy points and will rip my stitches to achieve them! I keep hoping one day I can relax my standards and embrace "finished is better than perfect" but I don't think it's in my DNA.

—*JoAnn O'Rourke on June 19, 2017*

I try to make points perfect and it bugs me when they are not, so I will unsew as needed. It may take me longer but I am happier.

—Janet A Moyer on June 19, 2017

I want my triangle points, can't leave flat-tops.

—Beth Andrepont on June 19, 2017

Thanks for the tip! I prefer perfect points and this is something I will try the next time.

—Cecilia on June 19, 2017

I'm obsessive about pointy points. I can't tolerate flat-topped triangles or seams that don't match. I will redo them until they're perfect. Thanks for this tip, hopefully it will cut down on my ripping out seams time!

—Linda K on June 19, 2017

I am definitely a "get-er-done" person but it always is a big hit when the points come out right.

—Cindy McVey on June 19, 2017

I feel that imperfections are part of the charm of the quilts I make. Although I love my points to be pointy, I can accept the occasional flat-top.

These are great tips to have in my sewing box!

—Janet G on June 19, 2017

I try for perfect points, but I am not obsessive. I've gone through the rip and re sew phase, but as I've aged, my standards have relaxed. I will accept the occasional flat-top provided it is minor.

—Sandy May on June 19, 2017

I am a "done is better" person, though there are limits to the degree and number of cut off points that are acceptable to me. Also, I am very careful to not point out my mistakes to others!

—Susie on June 19, 2017

I'm somewhere in between. I always try for pointy points, but if it doesn't happen I can live with something less than perfect.

—Vera Florea on June 19, 2017

I am a "done is better than perfect" quilter, unless it is off by a lot. Then I will attempt one retry to correct. If it isn't better I move on and hope the recipient isn't too picky or observant.

—M Elsey on June 19, 2017

I'm more of an "it has to be perfect" kind of quilter, which is part of the reason why I have a lot of UFO's!

—Therese on June 19, 2017

I try for perfect points... and if they aren't, I rip them out and try again!!!!

—Vickie Bell on June 19, 2017

I find myself using far too much time trying to get points and intersections "just right". Wish I could be a bit more relaxed about the process.

—Nelle on June 20, 2017

I live by the Galloping Horse Rule: if you can't see a mistake as you gallop by on a horse, it doesn't matter.

—jill ellis on June 20, 2017

Definitely a "done is better than perfect" but I'm trying to be a little more precise. Most of my quilts are made to be used & abused (aka, heavily loved) so I really don't sweat the details.

—Heather V on June 22, 2017

Have not sewn triangles yet ... still make my way up from squares and rectangles! Thanks so much for the information here.

—bookboxer on June 23, 2017

All points must be pointy! I'll keep doing it over until it's right. It really helps to use a 50 weight thread for your piecing, to reduce the bulk in the seam.

—Barbara K on June 23, 2017

I'm with you, Heather. It's the love that goes into it. If I want it perfect, I'll buy one from Walmart.

—Virginia on June 23, 2017

I want pointy points for sure and appreciate these tips! Thanks for the giveaway too!

—Gloria Cotten on June 23, 2017

I usually have done is better point, but I want pointy. Loved all of her suggestions for perfect.

—kathy on June 23, 2017

I try for having my points being sharp but after years of either my mom or hubby looking at all I make with a fine tooth comb, I now could care less if a few points are a little less than perfect. Having lived with nothing EVER being good enough one gets to where you don't care because no matter how much ripping and resewing, there would still be something wrong. So done is better than perfect and the quilt will still be loved. And I don't show my work until it's finished.

—Cindy on June 23, 2017

Pointy points are a must and I'll unsew until I get them right !

—Jean on June 23, 2017

Pointy points are all good, but I make quilts to be used, not admired. Only other quilters notice whether points are off, and they're not getting quilts from me.

—Fran Gardner on June 23, 2017

Have had hit and miss points. Found the above tutorial VERY informative. Could get the pointy points following these instructions. Thanks..for tips and tricks... always open to any help that I can retain...lol...(getting another yr. older later in the month)..

—Kathy on June 23, 2017

Thank you, thank you. I love sharp points but, I followed all those directions by people who said make sure you sew right over where the lines intersect. They never took into account that you take up fabric when you fold over. I don't know why I never saw your instructions before. I guess I needed one of your books or classes. Again thank you, thank you, thank you.

—Cathy W on June 23, 2017

I love when I have perfect points but I do not stress about it if not all of the points are perfect. thanks for all the tips!!

—Renea Yarolim on June 23, 2017

I do my best, but done is definitely better than perfect.

—Carol on June 23, 2017

I vote for pointy points. I will even make my seam allowance a little crooked just to have the points.

—Louise Mease on June 23, 2017

I would rather float a point than cut it off! However, I find that sometimes I must come closer into the intersection to achieve perfection.

—Linda Towers on June 24, 2017

I have lost points alot, but your tips help. However, since my eyes arent perfect, neither are my points. I just chalk it up to being human, and when beginners see my quilts even with bad points, it inspires them to try it anyway!

—Madeline Wallace on June 24, 2017

Thank you so much for your very helpful information!! I love pointy triangles but have been known to accept less than perfect! Once the quilt is finished, you usually don't notice a few little slip-ups!

—Kathy on June 29, 2017

Can't wait to get my hands on this book. Love Pat's designs and instructions.

—SueRogers on July 20, 2017

I try... I really try... But I have to accept imperfections more often than I like. I am usually a bit OCD about little things but I have decided I never get anything DONE if I spend all my time picking over little things! So I am learning Done is better than Perfect! After all, I am not entering a judged competition. I am just quilting something comfy!

—JanG on July 24, 2017

I love pointy points but I don't always achieve them.

—AnnaMarie Werner on April 13, 2018

Love my pointy points...I try. Sometimes I give up and go with almost pointy. But I keep trying to improve. Love the two pins tip!

—Mary on June 10, 2018

I'm half and half, depending on the project. If it's something I'm giving away to friends and family (most of whom don't sew or quilt), I'm usually OK with Done-is-better-than-perfect as long as the mistake isn't glaring.

If I'm making a piece to sell, my OCD goes through the roof and I'll rip anything apart to do over.

Your tip for points is terrific and will save me a lot of double work.

Thank you!!!

—Laura G. on September 4, 2018

I try for perfect points but if they aren't perfect, neither am I or the person receiving the quilt. Life is too short to worry about pointy points. But I will try this method next. If I unpicked and reseeded all my errors (characters) I would never finish a quilt. I'd still be on my first one.

—Dianne on October 18, 2018

I always try for perfection with all my quilting and the points. Thanks for the tip. However, the gals in my sewing group have told me...."Do `ya want it perfect....or do `ya want it done!". That has seen me through many projects!

—Barb on October 19, 2018

I have a whole quilt that I named it "pointless". Should have read this first. 😊

—Rita Honz on February 16, 2019

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