

Continuous bias tape

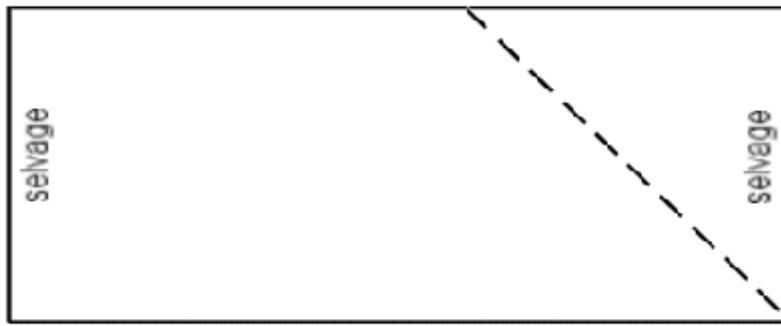
explanation, directions and pictures by Shelley Rodgers (pirate_sr@hotmail.com)

Directions of making continuous bias tape

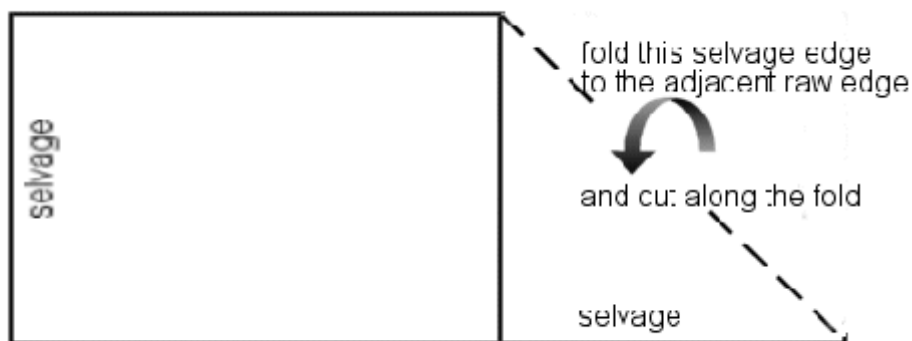
For talking purposes, let's say you have 3/8 yard of fabric to make bias strips. This is 13.5" (more or less) by WOF (somewhere between 42"-44"). This is a rectangle. Literally all of the instructions I've seen for making continuous bias strips have you start out with a square of fabric. They have you cut your yardage from the rectangle that you buy it as and cut it down to a square. This is nonsense to my way of thinking. Just what are you supposed to do with the fabric leftover from the cut?? I say leave the fabric as a rectangle, so you can get the most bias strips possible. If you have a square of scrap fabric, these instructions will still work.

Directions:

1. Lay out fabric in a single layer. You are going to eventually cut along the bias edge on one side, as shown here by the dotted line.



2. Fold one selvage end over to an adjacent raw edge to form a 45° angle (the bias). Cut along the bias edge. You now have a triangle that is separate from the rest of the fabric.



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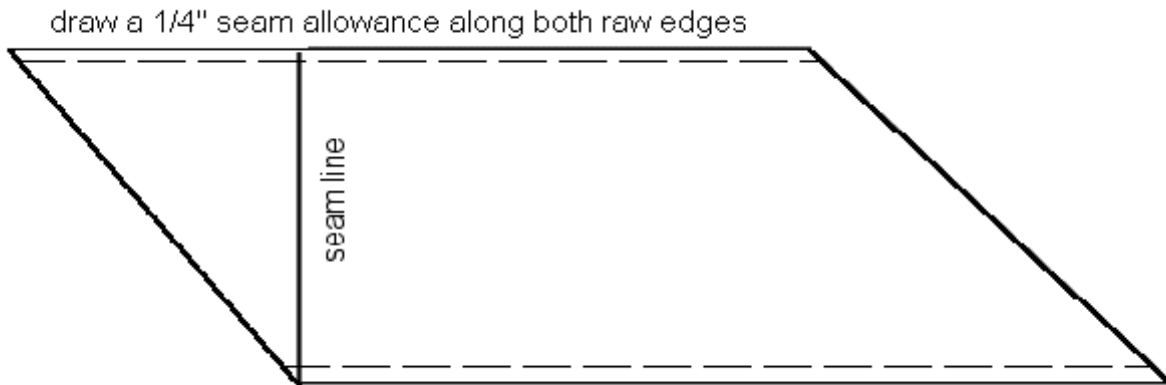
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3. Sew the selvage end of this triangle to the other selvage edge on the other side of the fabric. This is a simple straight-of-grain 1/4" seam. Press open. Doing this uses the triangular pieces on the ends and eliminates waste, so you can use the entire piece of fabric. You now have a parallelogram.



sew the selvage edges together in a plain seam. Press open.

4. Using whatever marking device you want (I happen to use a regular #2 lead pencil), draw the 1/4" seam line on both of the long (raw) edges of the fabric on the wrong side of the fabric. It really doesn't matter what you use, just as long as it doesn't bleed or spread. You are eventually going to be sewing along this line, so the marks are not going to show on the right side.

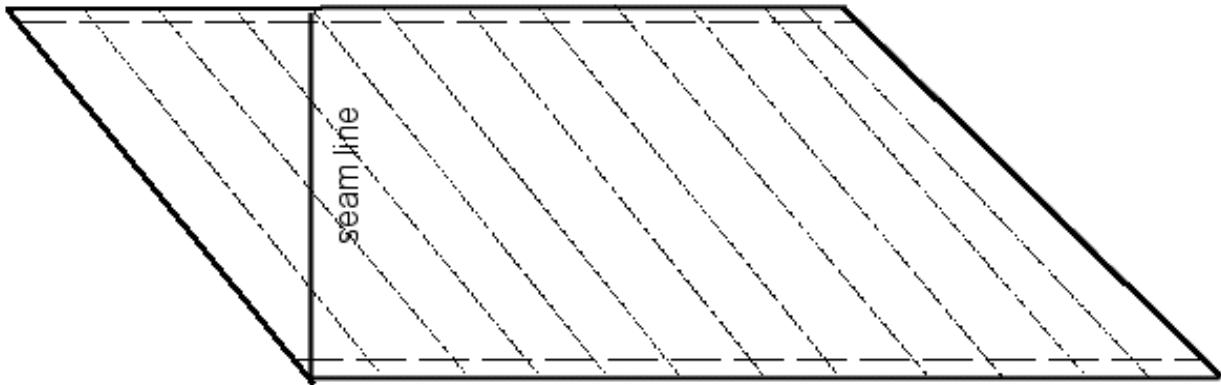


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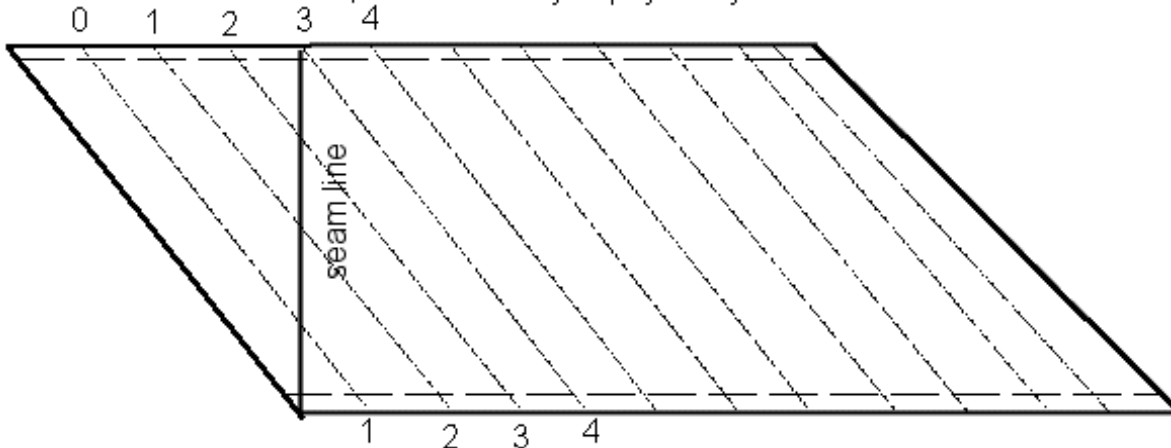
- From one 45° edge, start drawing lines on the wrong side of the fabric, parallel to the cut 45° edge. The distance between the lines will be the raw width of your bias tape that you need, not the finished width. You need to be able to see these lines; don't worry if the marker is permanent or not .. you are going to be cutting on these lines. You should end up with a piece of fabric with parallel lines that looks like the picture below. These lines should cross the 1/4" seam allowance line, which is extremely helpful because they create the vital intersections that you need to match up.

draw lines parallel to the bias edge with whatever width you need



- Here is the key to the whole thing: on one long edge, number the intersections from the number 1. On the other long edge, start numbering the intersections from the number zero. You can either do this mentally or when I first did it, I actually physically wrote the numbers on the fabric in the seam allowance. You are going to disregard/ignore the intersection numbered 0. The reason for ignoring the 0 intersection is to create an offset .. if you don't have an offset, you will end up with nicely sewn circles and not continuous bias strips. :-)

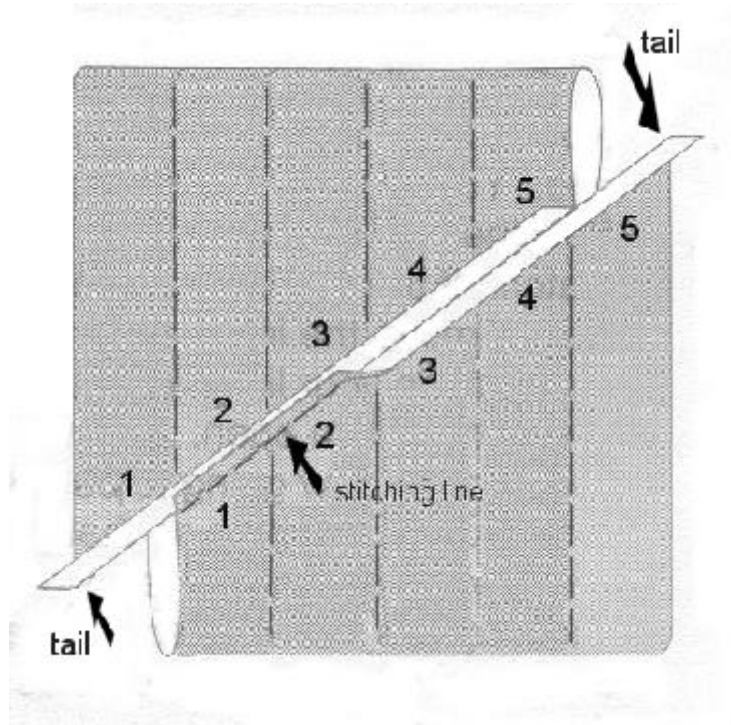
number the intersections, either mentally or physically draw the numbers on the fabric



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7. The right sides of the fabric will be facing each other. From the wrong side, stick a pin through the intersection numbered 1; since the right sides of the fabric are facing each other, the pin will now go through the other intersection numbered 1 from the right side of the fabric. Slide the both edges of the fabric down to the pin and secure at the intersection. You will have a TWISTED piece of fabric. This is OK.



8. Now, match up the other intersections of the same numbers: 2 with 2; 3 with 3, etc. all the way to the end. The intersections are the important landmarks to match. If the fabric between intersections isn't exactly the same, you need to stretch/scrunch it to fit. Do not move the intersections! (The reason the fabric might not be the same is because you might have drawn your lines inaccurately). You will end up with a "tail" on each end of the twisted tube. (See above) This is important!
9. Sew the 1/4" seam that you have just pinned.
10. Press this seam open. You will need to manipulate and turn the fabric tube as you press the seam line because the seam line is now going to be going around in a spiral.
11. Shake out your fabric so that you have a nice looking tube. You should have "tails" on each end.
12. Be brave! Have courage! Now you are going to CUT along those lines you drew, starting at one tail (it doesn't matter which one). If you marked the intersections correctly and sewed the seam line correctly, you will be cutting in a spiral and end up with a lovely strip of continuous bias tape. If you messed up someplace, you will end up with worthless rings of fabric.