The Bias Binding Guide

By The Haby Goddess

The ins & outs of creating & applying Bias Binding.

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Finding your bias grain

Let’s start with a quick lesson on how to find the bias grain of your fabric.

These two images show the grains that make up a piece of woven fabric.
- Selvedge / Straight Grain
- Cross Grain / Lengthwise Grain
- Bias
  - By taking the selvedge corner and dragging it across your fabric (like the right hand image), you have created a right angle and bias grain. If you pull on the bias grain you will find it has a lot of stretch.
  - Straight grain binding is when the strips of fabric are cut on either the crossgrain or selvedge grain. It has little or no stretch and is not recommended for curves.

The difference between single fold bias & double fold bias.

- **Single fold bias** is a single strip of fabric with both wrong side raw edges folded over and pressed (red bias shown left).
- **Double fold bias** (polka dot bias shown left) is single fold bias that has been folded again. The folded edges are facing inward and will not be seen.
- You measure the bias from the front right side of fabric.
- Common sizes for commercial single fold bias are 12mm, 18mm & 25mm.
Handy tools to make the job easier.

Being able to make for your own bias tape/binding will give you the freedom to mix and match trims in your favourite fabrics at any width you require.

Having these tools available will make the task ahead much easier.

- Cutting mat
- Rotary Cutter
- Large clear ruler
- Steam Iron (with the steam turned off!)
- Bias makers are optional

How much fabric will I need?

This will depend how wide your strips are going to be.

- The smaller the bias measurement across your piece of fabric (refer to finding your bias grain diagram), the more joins you will have. Therefore, the larger the bias measurement, the less joins.
- Remember, when you use a large piece of fabric you may be left with large triangles that can be harder to find use for.

How wide to cut your strips.

- Your strips need to include the front measurement plus the two folded flaps on the reverse side.
- The two flaps usually measure a little less than the total front width to create a small gap.
- To make 20mm wide single fold bias, I would cut my strips 35mm wide (7.5 + 20 + 7.5)
What type of fabric to use?

- You can use many different types of fabrics, but the most common are polycotton & cotton.
- Make sure the tape/binding is a suitable match for other fabrics you are using within your project.
- Does it have the same care instructions?
- Does it have the same shrinkage rate?

Cutting your fabric strips.

- Fold your fabric over in half so you have a large triangle shape. Your straight grain edges will need to be square and the bias edge will be closest to you.
- Fold your fabric like shown in the images above. By bringing each outer corner over to the centre. This makes it much easier to cut if it is a large piece of fabric.
- Remember the first row is folded so cut a very thin strip to remove this fold.
- Now you are ready to cut your strips.
- Using a clear ruler will make it easier to cut even strips.
Making your bias.

There are two ways to make the bias folds, either by hand with an iron or a bias tape maker.

- Turn the steam function on your iron off.
- I prefer to use a spray starch as it helps to hold the folds.
- It’s simply a matter of carefully folding over the raw edges and pressing as you go.
- It is fine to do one side and then the other or both at the same time.
- And there you have beautiful bias! If you’re not going to sew with the bias straight away, wind it carefully around a piece of card to keep the edges folded.

Using a bias tape maker.

- Bias tape makers are available in a number of different sizes. Most common are 12mm, 18mm & 25mm. This is the finished size of the front face of a single fold bias.
- Use a pin or a sharp object in the slit on top of the maker to get the bias started by pushing fabric out the other end.
- Feed fabric through wide end evenly.
- Turn your steam setting off on the iron and press as you gently pull to bias maker in the other direction.
Joining your bias strips

Your bias strips are cut and ready to join.

- When joining the strips together, lay the right sides together and cross each other as pictured.
- When sewing the stitching, you must go from the top left hand corner to the bottom right hand corner. A great way to check is to place a pin in the direction you are going to sew and turn the bias in so you can see if you have it the correct way.

- Trim back your bias so you are left with two neat seam allowances and press open.
- Re-fold your bias so the flaps met the original fold and press.
- The front view should be neat like the picture above.
Sewing on your bias binding - Technique 1

One of the main problems of sewing bias binding onto fabric is catching the back. I’ll show you a trick so that it catches every time.

• Start by placing your opened bias fold to the edge of your fabric. Right side of your bias will be placed against the wrong side of your fabric.
• Pin.
• Sew along the fold line with a straight stitch

• Turn over so your right side of main fabric is facing up and press bias away from the edge.
• If you turn your fabric back over it should look like this.
• OK, the trick to making sure your second row of stitching catches the back bias edge is all about the first stitching line and not the bias itself.
• Make sure your second row is above the original stitching line (towards the fabric edge). If it falls on top or below it then it won't catch at the back.
• Do this by pressing your bias top edge just a smidge over the stitching row - this keeps everything straight as well.
• Sew your top row on the right side of your fabric like a top stitch about 1/8" (not as close as an edge stitch about 1/16") . Your stitching must be above the original row of stitching.

• This is how it will look both front and back.

Here is a link to a YouTube video I produced for Sew School Online, showing this method.
This technique eliminates one row of stitching and thus saves time, but it can look messy if not done correctly. You usually apply double fold bias this way.

- The bias is folded in half and simply sits with flaps either side of the fabrics raw edge.
- Pin
- Add a single row of top stitch and you are done.
- As you can see from the images – the result is exactly the same.
- However if using single fold bias, I find a more even finish is achieved with two rows of stitching.
Add bias binding to curves

Adding bias to curves is just a matter of some clever pressing.

- Set your iron with the steam turned off (you don't want to burn yourself) and press the bias to the curve you are needing to sew.
- Pressing the bias into a curve shape will help you get a nice, neat finish.
- Normally you align your bias edge to the fabric edge. With curves I find it works better if your bias is overlapping the fabric edge a little. Because you can't see the fabric edge you must pin or you will run off.
- Sew on the bias as shown on the previous pages (in the first pressed fold).

- Once you have finished your first row, turn over and press bias away from the edge.
- Using the same method of applying bias as in the previous lesson, sew your second row of stitching. Make sure you sew above the first stitching line if you want the back to catch.
- Because bias has stretch, gentle pull the bias as you sew so it won't bunch your fabric at the curved end.
- Give your fabric and good final press.
How to achieve a neat corner.

- Sew your first row of stitching in the ditch of the bias fold (right side of bias facing wrong side of fabric) and stop at the end leaving a margin the same width as the bias fold.
- Fold your bias back so you have a 45 degree angle. Press a crease with your fingers.

- Make a fold at the fabric edge and bring bias back over
- Align your bias with the edge of your fabric in the direction you are about to sew.
• Pull back your bias to find your end point of stitching. This will then become your starting point for the next side.
• Starting at the point I showed you, sew along your next side.

• Clip the corner to reduce bulk.
• When you turn your fabric over it will naturally form a mitred corner on the under side.
• Pin your bias, following the rules mentioned earlier in this e-book.
• Fold in your corners like above, it will start to form naturally.

• Play around until the mitre forms a right angle with your fabric. Pin to secure.
• Sew the top stitching row as normal, placing your needle down into the corners and pivoting.
Finishing off your bias.

This section is best shown in a video.
Click on image to view.
Adding bias to the inside edge of a garment is one of my favourite finishes. It gives a professional look as no hems are left exposed. It’s softer against the skin than a seam plus bias trim doesn’t show from the front of your garment. It can also act as a casing for elastic. Great for around necklines, armholes, even hems.

• Start by sewing on your bias as normal. Open out the bias, right sides together and sewing in the first crease. Leave a bias tail at the beginning for joining your bias at the end.
• When you come to the end, cut an additional tail of bias and fold the two ends and mark where they should meet. Leave a tiny gap between the two (refer to Joining your bias strips).
• Open both pieces of bias up and match the dots and sew together as you normally would when joining bias.
• When turned over, if dots match then it should fit nicely.

• This is where the difference is.
• When you turn over your binding, instead of only going half way, take it all over to your wrong side of fabric and press it flat.
• Sew your topstitch which should evenly catch the binding underneath.
Bias Binding Gadgets.

There are many aids and gadgets designed for adding bias binding to sewing projects. Let’s take a look at a couple of them.

Using a binder foot attachment

Using a binder foot attachment for your sewing machine add bias using a single row of stitching (like we did in Technique 2.) All brands will have their own attachment so check with your manufacturer.

This foot is for a Janome Sewing Machine. I’m using a 12mm single folded bias in this example.

• Before attaching the foot to your machine, add binding down shaft.
• Pull binding through - leave a tail the approximate length shown
• Remove the lower section of your regular sewing foot and add attachment with the binding in place.

• Add fabric between the bias tail and begin to sew.
• Using your left hand, position the fabric & binding together before they are fed through the binder.
• Going slow is the key.
• The result was great. It added the binding evenly on both sides.
• The only tricky part was finishing off. It’s fine if you’re running the binding off in a straight line to the end of the fabric. If you were needing a join the binding, it becomes a little harder to finish off.
• I would also recommend practising on a scrap piece before doing trying this on your project.
Using an electronic bias maker.

For those that use a lot of bias binding, then an electronic bias maker like this Simplicity Bias Tape Maker might be a worthwhile investment. Making bias this way is easy and fast - it's even and you won't burn your fingers on the iron. It folds into a nice compact case which is very lightweight.

How it works:
• There are different sized tips. I'm using a 1/2 inch (12mm) so my strips are about 1 inch wide.
• Pressing your strips beforehand is a good idea.
• Turn your machine on and set it to the correct fabric setting (you don't want to scorch or melt your fabric)
• Slip your strip into the slit of the winding buddy and wind on evenly
• Place it back into its holder
• Feed strip through tip. While it's not necessary and I didn't have one, there is a tool to help feed the strips into the tip. I would get one of these.
• Lift heater compartment
• Pull your strip through until it's past the roller
• Replace the heater compartment and make sure the green 'ready' light is showing.
• Hit 'run' and gently pull your strip through
• A beautiful pressed bias will result.
I hope this guide has given you the tools to create & apply your own bias binding.

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