

# CREATING CUSTOM BIAS TAPE



*There are several ways to achieve the stained glass look in fabric. The simplest we have found is using the fusible bias tape that is readily available in local quilt shops and fabric stores. It comes in many colors, including some new variegated shades and gold and silver metallic. The most commonly used one is probably the 1/4" black. The advantage to using this fusible tape is that it comes on convenient 5 1/2 yard and 11 yard rolls. It is easy to dispense and fuse to your project. Using a small craft iron makes it easier to fuse the tape while manipulating and positioning on the background surface.*

*If you prefer to make your own bias tape to achieve specific colors or fabrics not commercially available, it is actually very easy. We have created our own bias tape here using a batik fabric and on page ?? for the edging on the Broderie Perse pillow pleated border.*

*-- Barbara*

## **Fusing Materials Used:**

1/4" fusible adhesive tape (with paper backing)  
Glue stick or fabric glue (optional)

## **Other Materials Needed:**

100% pre-washed cotton fabric

## **Tools Needed:**

Mini craft iron (optional) or regular iron  
Pressing surface  
Spray starch (optional)  
Cutting mat, ruler and rotary cutter  
Bias pressing bars  
Clover Bias Tape Maker (optional)  
Threads to coordinate for piecing and quilting  
Tracing paper  
Light box  
3.0 Twin Needle (optional)

## Cutting the Fabric

*For ease of cutting bias strips, we suggest you cut the fabric in half across the width to make it easier to handle. You can also work with large fabric squares. Fat quarters are very easy to cut into bias strips.*

### Sidebar

**Bias Yardage Estimates:** Assuming 40" wide pre-washed fabric, you can cut approximately 200 yards of 1 1/2" bias strips from 5/8 of a yard of fabric. Fabric that is 3/4 yard in size will yield between 200 and 350 yards of bias strips. If you need more than that, 7/8 of a yard will yield between 350 and 500 yards. That should keep you busy for a while!

**End sidebar**

### Instructions

1. Line up the selvedge on a vertical line on your cutting mat. Place the 45 degree angle of your ruler on a parallel line and cut the first slice from the corner of your fabric.



*cutting 45 degree angle strip*

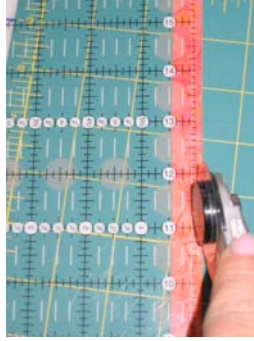
2. Determine the width of the fabric strip you will need for the bias tape and line up that measurement on the ruler with the cut edge of your fabric. Cut the first strip. Continue cutting strips, occasionally checking your 45 degree angle until you have sufficient yardage for your project.
3. When you have finished, you will have strips of varying lengths, according to the size of fabric you started with.

### Sewing the Strips

1. Fold the strips, wrong sides together and sew the long edge with a scant 1/4" seam.



*sew seam*



*trim seam*

2. Trim the seam to 1/8".
3. Trim the points off the ends.

### **Sidebar**



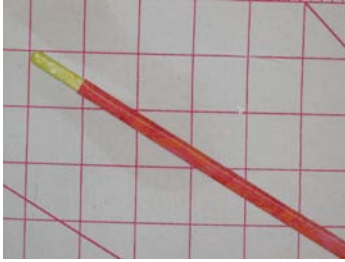
*bias bars*

For 1/4" finished width of bias tape, we cut the fabric at 1 1/8" and used a scant 1/4" seam. Experiment with widths from 1 1/8" - 1 1/4" and check with your seam allowance with your bias bar before cutting lots of strips. Adjust your cut size so that when sewn the bias bar will fit comfortably inside the strip, without too much slack. You can use the bias press bars to make bias tape in many sizes (they commonly are offered in sets of 1/8", 3/16", 1/4", 3/8" and 1/2").

**End sidebar**

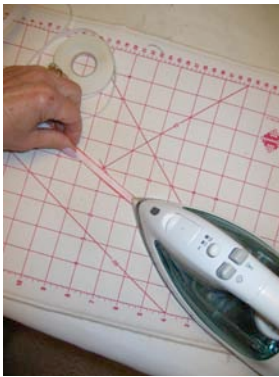
### **Preparing the Strips**

1. Place the fabric strip on the 1/4" bias bar, turning the seam to the top side and centering on the bar. At this point, it may be helpful to spray with a little water, sizing or spray starch, as it will help to create crisp edges and hold the seam in the center.



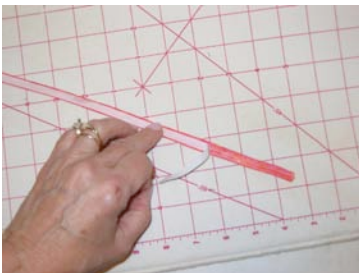
*sewn strip on bias bar*

2. Press the seam flat with a hot iron and allow it to cool a little before removing and putting on the next strip. Continue in this manner until all of the bias strips are pressed.
3. Following the manufacturer's instructions, fuse the 1/4" fusible hem tape or interfacing to the seam side of the tape with a mini or regular iron. Using the mini iron reduces the risk of burning your fingers while manipulating the narrow pieces.



*applying fusible 1/4" tape*

4. Allow to cool and remove the paper backing from the fused tape and you are ready to apply to your project. In a reasonably short amount of time you will have created yards of custom bias tape.



*remove tape*

### **Applying the Bias Tape**

1. Use a light box to transfer the design to the background fabric with a permanent marker. If the fabric is dark, use a chalk pencil. Since the bias tape will be covering over the marked lines, it is not necessary to use a washable marker.



*design*



*design & fabric on light box*

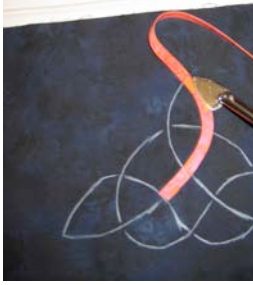


*tracing design*



*image traced on fabric*

2. When you are ready to begin fusing the bias tape in place, decide if there are areas that will be covered by tape from another direction. Fuse these areas in place first so that the raw edges will be covered when you apply the bias tape coming across that area.



*fusing bias tape*

3. If there are areas where the bias tape needs to be joined, try to make those joints in areas that will be covered with the tape still to be applied as in this Celtic design. Keep your design image handy for reference, because as you begin the fusing process you may lose track of which areas the tape should be under and which areas the tape should be over the top, especially when working with Celtic designs.
4. When you approach a place where you have to turn a corner, fold back the bias tape as you would when mitering a quilt binding. Fold back in the direction to be followed and continue fusing.
5. Continue fusing until you reach an area where the bias tape has to go under another piece. When approaching those areas, fuse the tape up to the point where they cross and then begin fusing again after they cross. This leaves an opening where you can lift the top tape and tuck the pieces for the underneath design in place.
6. If you run short in an area where you have to join two pieces of bias tape, try to make it under another area. If that is not possible, fold the end of the piece to be joined on a 45 degree angle and fuse it over the raw edge of the short piece. Do your best to make it look seamless. You may have to use a fabric glue stick or another fabric glue to hold the very end in place until stitched. Once everything is stitched in place, it should not be noticeable.

### **Stitching the Bias Tape**

The method we recommend for stitching the bias tape in place is to use a twin needle. If you do this, you will have to navigate the corners and turns carefully and reposition your needle as you make the turn. If you prefer to use a regular needle, you will have to stitch each edge individually.



*Stained glass effect achieved with black bias tape*

That's all there is to creating your own custom colors of bias tape. Experiment with different types of fabric for custom bias tape. Batiks, ombre-style prints, striped fabrics and small prints are all good candidates.

Not all designs using bias tape are continuous as this one is. There are many commercial patterns available for the "stained glass" fabric technique. You can create your own designs using coloring book pages or copyright-free clip art. You may want to use custom bias tape for covering individual applique shapes. In that case, each shape would be covered independently with small pieces of bias tape. For instance, leaves, bugs and flowers might be good candidates. Use your imagination and you will be sure to come up with lots of ways to use this easy bias tape-making technique.