

Are You Using Your Rotary Cutter Safely?

By [Christine Haynes](#) on January 24, 2018

<https://www.craftsy.com/quilting/article/tips-for-using-a-rotary-cutter/>

1. USE A RULER.

Give yourself a safety barrier between the blade of the rotary cutter and your hands by only cutting along the edge of a ruler. But not just any ruler will do — use one that's at least ¼" thick to give the blade something to cut alongside so it won't jump up onto the ruler, possibly hitting your hand.

Need help picking the right ruler? Check out [the 5 rulers we think every quilter needs](#).

2. CLOSE THE SAFETY.

Get in the good habit of closing the safety after each and every cut so that the blade is protected by the plastic cover. As you pull the cutter up from the fabric, close it right then and there so it can't fall to cut your fabric, bare feet, or even worse, a pet or child.

3. KEEP IT SHARP.

Anything sharp can dull with use, and the blade of the rotary cutter is no exception to that rule. When something sharp gets dull, it's a much more dangerous tool — you need to apply even more pressure, making the possibility of cutting yourself greater, since you are pressing harder than usual. Simply change your blades when they are dull to avoid this problem.

Get [Olfa 45mm refills here](#).

4. DISCARD BLADES SAFELY.

If you change your blade often, you'll soon have a round blade to have to throw out. But if you just toss that into the trash, you're bound to cut things along the way. I take thick tape and cover each edge of the blade with the tape before throwing it away so I don't accidentally cut myself.

5. CUT ON A MAT.

A [self-healing mat](#) helps the blade glide along the surface in an even motion, keeping the blade moving in a safe manner. If you cut on an uneven surface or one that will cause the blade to move unpredictably, this could result in the rotary cutter jumping and moving in an unsafe way.

6. REMEMBER THAT THE BLADE IS SHARP!

This is probably obvious, but do not underestimate how sharp the blade is. It's not just a craft tool — it's a round razor blade, and razor blades are to be handled with care. So be careful not to touch the edge or tap it on your skin, as it can easily cut you!

7. STORE SAFELY.

When the rotary cutter is not in use, be sure to store it somewhere out of reach for kids and anyone else that might not understand its use and sharpness.

8. CUT AWAY FROM THE BODY.

When pushing the rotary cutter, only ever push it away from the body and never pull the tool toward you. This can quickly go terribly wrong if you were to slip in any way and pull it into your body. Pushing it away from you moves the blade in a safe direction at all times.

9. STAND UP WHILE CUTTING

Only use a rotary cutter when in a standing position, so you can put your body weight into the cut. If you're sitting, it's hard to gain any leverage and it's also hard to see where the blade is going, which can result in a cutting accident.

10. CHANGE THE BLADE CAREFULLY.

Since you need to change the blades from time to time, be sure to handle the blade and cutter with care when switching from an old dull blade to a fresh new sharp one. Carefully undo the screw as instructed by your cutter's manual, and insert the new one.

11. MATCH THE BLADE TO THE PROJECT.

Rotary cutters come in many sizes and it's important to match the blade with the size of your project. For example, if you're cutting something small, it's dangerous to use a large cutter. The opposite is true as well, where using a small blade on thick layers will result in over pushing, and possibly an accident.

12. APPLY EVEN PRESSURE.

Cutting with too much or too little pressure can make for uneven cuts and inconsistency. The safest approach is to apply even pressure while cutting so you cut through all the layers and don't have to go back over any spots after the fact.

13. MATCH THE BRANDS.

To make sure the blade matches the cutter, be sure to use the correct size and brand as the original rotary cutter. If the blade and cutter do not match, this might result in the blade being too big or too small for the tool.

Editor's Note: This post was originally published in August 2014 and was updated in January 2018.

YARDAGE CHART

YARD INCHES

1/8 = 4 1/2"

1/4 = 9"

1/3 = 12"

3/8 = 13 1/2"

1/2 = 18"

5/8 = 22 1/2"

2/3 = 24"

3/4 = 27"

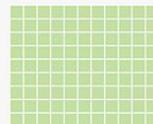
7/8 = 31 1/2"

1 = 36"

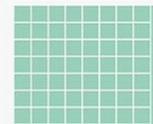
FAVEQUILTS

From a Fat Quarter

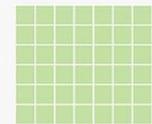
(18"x22") You Can Cut:



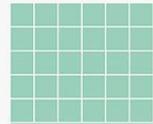
99 - 2" Squares



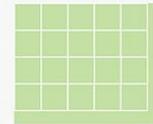
56 - 2.5" Squares



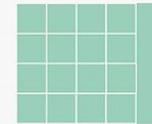
42 - 3" Squares



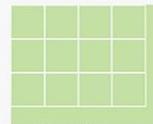
30 - 3.5" Squares



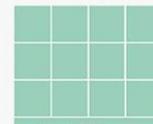
20 - 4" Squares



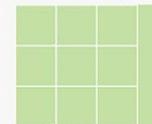
16 - 4.5" Squares



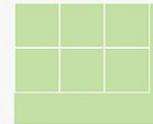
12 - 5" Squares



12 - 5.5" Squares



9 - 6" Squares



6 - 6.5" Squares

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Quilt Size & Yardage Chart

	Size Range Width x Height		Yards for Backing 45"-Wide		Diagram to Piece Backing		Yards for 2 1/2" Binding 45"-Wide		Mattress Top Size	Pillow Size	Pillow Case Size
	Minimum*	Maximum**	Min.*	Max.**	Min.*	Max.**	Min.*	Max.**			
Crib	30"x40"	48"x60"	1 1/4	3			1/4	1/2	26"x48" 27"x50" or 28"x52"	—	—
Throw	approx. 54"x72"		3 1/2				1/2		—	14"x20" Travel-Size	14"x23" Travel-Size
Twin	63"x87"	87"x114"	5 1/4	7 3/4			3/4	3/4	39"x75"	20"x26" Std.-Size	20"x30" Std.-Size
Full	78"x87"	102"x114"	5 1/4	9 1/4			3/4	1	54"x75"	20"x26" Std.-Size	20"x30" Std.-Size
Queen	84"x92"	108"x119"	7 1/2	9 1/2			3/4	1	60"x80"	20"x30"	20"x34"
King	100"x92"	124"x119"	8 1/4	11			3/4	1	76"x80"	20"x36"	20"x40"

*Minimum: Twin thru King, drop of 12" on each side and bottom

**Maximum (for thicker mattresses and/or taller beds): Twin thru King, drop of 24" on each side and bottom, plus 15" on top to cover pillow(s)

- Some fabric amounts have been rounded up to the closest quarter-yard measurement.
- All fabric amounts are based on 45"-wide fabric.
- Great care has been taken to ensure that these calculations are correct, but we cannot guarantee their accuracy and, in turn, do not assume any responsibility or liability for them.

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