

Squaring Up Blocks Too Small

by Karen Saari - pictures by Bonny Peters

No matter how hard we try to accurately piece, it seems we often end up with a wonky block. Yes, wonky is a technical term! It means you can tell that the block is not quite square at a glance. It's obvious. If the block ends up a little bit too big, it's easy to trim it to the correct size. So what happens if your block is smaller than the stated size?

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Test the permanency of your marker first on a scrap piece of muslin. Spray with water to see if it runs. If it doesn't run, then place another piece of scrap underneath it and press the wet pen mark to determine that it won't bleed. If this happens, use a different permanent pen.

Place the muslin with the drawn square on your ironing board and grab a box of pins.

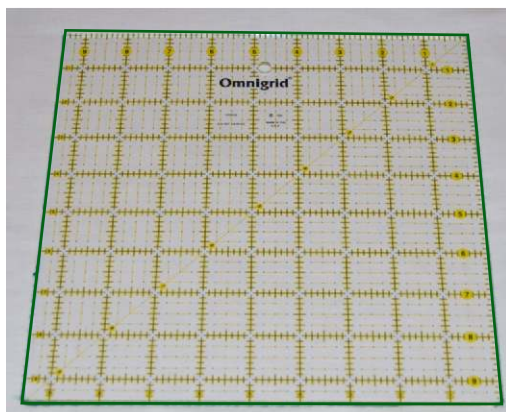
What if your block is supposed to measure 9-1/2" x 9-1/2", but actually has sides that measure 9-1/4" x 9-3/8"? There's nothing to trim!

The following directions will help you square the block and make it right.

In our example we are using a block that should measure 9-1/2" x 9-1/2" square, but you may use these steps for any size block that may need to be eased into the right size. Using a larger piece of muslin than the size needed, just draw a square using the accurate measurement of the unfinished block size.



1. On a piece of muslin, draw a perfect 9-1/2" square with a permanent marker. Make sure that your piece of muslin is at least 1-1/2" larger on all sides of the drawn square.



2. Pin the corners of muslin to the ironing board, outside of the drawn square, to anchor it down.



3. Lay your wonky block in the center of the drawn square. Spray lightly with water.

At this point, if you're not careful you can stretch your block into all kinds of unsavory shapes, so handle the block very carefully. Barely touch it with your fingers, gently patting it into shape.



4. Pin each corner of the block by matching the corners to the drawn square. Pin thru the ironing board cover as well as the muslin. All of the pins will be pinned through the ironing board cover as well as the muslin.



5. Pinning only the outside edge, pin the center points on each side. All pin-heads need to be pointed outward, making step 8 easier.



6. Carefully pin along the edges, patting the block into shape as you go. There can be as many pins as needed along the edge of the block.

7. When the block edges are even with the drawn square on the muslin, check the block one more time. If there are any puckers, spray lightly with more water and gently pat, smooth, and pin until they are gone.



8. Satisfied with the block now? Give the block a good spray with water, but don't soak it. Use your iron on a cotton setting to press the pinned block, carefully.

Pressing is an up and down motion with the iron. **Ironing** is a sliding motion. You want to **press** rather than iron since ironing can push the block out of shape.

9. Once you've pressed the entire block and it's good and hot, leave it alone. Let it cool there, pinned to the ironing board until completely cool and dry.



10. Unpin and viola! You'll have a square block measuring 9-1/2" x 9-1/2".