

Furling Your Seam Allowances

by Roxana Whitner

The word *furl* is a nautical term for the way the sails are rolled to make nice flat folds around the mast (as an umbrella wrapped up smoothly). In quilting, we are *pressing* our seam allowances flat rather than rolling them. You may be familiar with the technique by another name - popping, spinning, twirling, or twisting.

Furling decreases the bulky center intersection of seam allowances in a block. The intersection may not necessarily be at the center of the block, and a single block may contain several to furl.

The basic 4-patch provides the simplest example to demonstrate the technique. (Note: For illustrations, I chose contrasting thread and fabrics.)

1. Start with 2 (two) 2-patch blocks and press seams toward the darker side. Nest the seams and create a 4-patch.

2. Before you press the third seam of the 4-patch, turn it right side down and note the direction you pressed your initial seams.

3. To furl, finger press the seams in opposite directions in such a way your seams rotate in a circular motion (either clockwise or counter-clockwise). You may need to remove the outermost stitches to make it work.



4. As you open and furl the seam allowances, you'll notice a miniature 4-patch appears.



5. Press. Turn it over. Press again.



Look for opportunities to use the technique throughout your piecing. Your goal is to create a flatter top for quilting and thus improve the quality of your finished project.