As I travel around teaching, lecturing and judging quilts, I find the one common component they all share is binding. Because it is rarely taught, I find that many quilts could be improved with better binding techniques.

So in an attempt to remedy the situation, I’ve put together this little tutorial. I hope it helps those who need it, and will help improve bindings for all quilters out there who are willing to take the extra time to do them. Not only will it look fabulous, but your quilt will hang straighter when bound this way.

Prepare your binding as you usually do (bias or straight edge...it doesn't matter with this technique! I typically use a 2½” wide binding for my square quilts.

Once the binding is prepared and ready to sew on, you need to square up your quilt. (trim away the excess fabric and batting from the quilting process, and make sure your quilt is nice and square).

I like to start with a nice, clean edge on the quilt, like the one shown above. So...here we go.
See how the edge is a little puffy where you cut away the excess?

If you want your binding to go on smoothly, press the trimmed edges (I always use a HOT, dry iron.)

With a flatter edge like this, you are already teaching your quilt to hang straight!
I start applying the binding about \( \frac{1}{3} \) of the way down from an edge of the quilt. I do this because I'm already thinking about finishing the binding, and I don't want to be finishing the binding by doing a mitered corner.

As you see, I leave a long, (usually about 12-18") piece of the binding dangling. We'll deal with it later, so just let it hang there, and keep on going.
Using ONLY Elmer's School Glue (no other substitutes please*) and a tiny dispensing tip (available at most craft stores or on Sharon Schamber's website (http://www.sharonschamber.com/shopping_cart/accessories/accessories.htm), run a thin line of glue very close (⅛ inch) from the edge of the quilt. I generally do about 12" at a time.

The glue is basically a thick starch. It is water soluble so will not harm your quilt.

Next, carefully line up the raw edges of your folded binding to the edge of the quilt as shown.

*I only use White Elmer's school glue. I've tried 'clear' and 'store brands', too. None work as perfectly and consistently.
Now...with your hot, dry iron, press the binding in place where you've applied the glue. The glue will hold it beautifully while you finish gluing and pressing the entire length of the quilt.

Keep in mind, you are pressing, not ironing. What I mean by that, is you press the iron down onto the fabric...and don't move it around. Down, up. Down, up. Do not iron 'side to side' or the length of the quilt. You can cause distortion and stretching if you iron instead of press.
Next, I usually turn back the binding between gluing like this.

Run your next line of glue like this, then carefully unfold the binding to line up with the edge and press in place. Continue to the edge of the quilt.

Note: One of the neat things about this method is that once pressed, you can always lift up the glued binding and then redo the process.
Now that you've made it to the first corner, we need to get the mitered corner started.

This is a step that many quilters don't really think about, nor do they understand the importance of a sharp, mitered corner in order to get those ribbons at the shows! It's easy and impressive, so take the time and get those miters done right!
Fold your binding back, like this and press.
See how crisp that fold is pressed? That’s exactly what we want.

The next step is to sew down the binding for this edge; but I always find that when sewing on dark fabrics, I have trouble figuring out where to stop sewing. So...I take a couple of extra seconds and I mark my creased corner. Using a Clover chalk marker which I have re-filled with Pounce marking powder (I find that it stays on better and is easier to see). This way I know that when I reach that mark, I know it’s time to stop! I don’t have to look for the crease I made, as I’ve marked it!
Starting at the point we started gluing down the binding (about \( \frac{1}{3} \) from the edge) Start sewing the binding down. *Note, I do not change my stitch length from my normal, tiny 1.5 setting...)

Stitch all the way down until you come to the corner you marked.
In this picture, I removed the presser foot to show that the needle stops at the marked line.

Stop here, and remove the quilt from the sewing machine. I make sure to trim away loose threads around the corner. I like it nice and sharp, with no distractions.

Note that the presser foot was removed for illustrative purposes.

Next: we will make an easy, perfectly mitered corner.
Now that you’ve sewn to the marked corner, as shown, it’s time to turn the corner and begin the next side. Don’t forget to press the next edge of the quilt before you apply the glue! We want to keep it flat (see Page 2).

Fold the corner back up the way it was pressed to get the crease you sewed to.
Now fold it back down the next length of the quilt like this, and press the corner.

Starting at the corner, apply the glue, just as you did before, and press down. You’ll get an edge that looks like this.

Once the entire length of this edge is glued and pressed, sew it down, starting from the top edge. Remember that you’ll need to miter, fold, and mark the corners before you sew it, just like before (see Pages 7 - 12)
You will come to the last corner before you need to finish off the binding. Go ahead and glue and sew around the 4th corner. Start down the side, but only go about 6” and stop. Now you’ll have two loose ends you need to finish.

See how it looks once you go around the last corner? You’ve glued and sewed to this part.
Next, we will join the two pieces of binding. Open the binding, as shown here, with the seam open, turn it under and pin.

I pin a couple of pins to help with stability, while I prepare to make a mitered seam to connect the two ends of binding.

I do the same thing on the other end, leaving a nice open gap between the two pinned ends.
Now...take one side and fold back, and press as shown, with the opening at the bottom, like this.

Then, I run a very thin line of glue along the edge of the folded piece,
Just a thin little line of glue, at the edge, should do it.

Now... carefully lay the glued side down on top of the other binding piece, as shown here.
At this point, I like to make sure that the binding lays smoothly from the corner to the piece you’re attaching it to…. Then press down the just-glued binding piece.

See how neat it looks? I find this is a much better way for me to get a perfectly mitered joint.
Now, you will notice you have two dangly pieces that must be taken care of...so this is how we do that. First, I remove all the pins, and fold back the glued pieces, like this.

Because the fabric is dark, I find it easier to mark the sewing line like I did with the corners of the binding, using my little chalk marker. As you can tell by my ‘im-perfect’ markings, you don’t need to get too critical...just mark it so you can see to sew.
Now I just sew the seam closed, like this:

Gently pull the seams apart, releasing the glue so that the seams can be pressed flat; then trim to approximately a \( \frac{1}{4} \)" seam allowance.
Gently press seam open and trim away the little points on each side. I used a pair of scissors to trim.
Fold the finished binding back, so that the edges are touching.

Press the binding closed. Apply a bead of glue to the remaining loose piece and press. Then, sew the binding down. See? It was a bit of work, but look how perfect your binding looks!
With your binding completely sewn down to the quilt, it's time to turn it out for sewing down on the other side. I know, if you're anything like me, at this point you just want the quilt done already. Deep breath...you are almost done...really.

Lift the binding, (with the right side of the quilt still facing up) and press it away from the quilt, as shown.

Do this all the way around the quilt, until all the binding is pressed away from the quilt.
When you turn your quilt over, the binding will look like this.

Fold down the binding, as shown below, and press. Once it’s pressed, all the way around, you can start gluing it down, just as you did the front, prior to sewing.

For this step, I run the glue right along the sewing line, as shown.
Just as you did on the front, glue, press...glue press. When you reach the corner, you are going to want to press and glue in a mitered corner. Glue and press right up to the corner, shown below.
With the corner pressed like this, carefully turn the binding from the top to form the mitered corner.

Place a little dot of glue on the corner that will be folded over, and then run a line of glue on the sewing line.
Fold it down, as shown, and press.
See? Perfect mitered corners, every time!

Glue and press the remainder of the binding, until it is all glued down, all the way around the quilt.

NOW you're almost done! I hand sew the binding down on the back, using an invisible stitch.

I hope you found this helpful. I learned this technique from Sharon Schamber. It has made a huge improvement in the appearance of my finished quilts.

You can see more of Sharon's work at [http://www.sharonschamber.com/](http://www.sharonschamber.com/)

Deb

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