

## Proper Seam Pressing in Quilts

Author: Jan Myers

Pressing the seams in your [quilt](#) is one of the most important tasks for the completed work. A good press will mean that the quilt is assured a smooth flow from piece to piece both visually and to the touch. Most [quilters](#) will find that they have a style of pressing that suits them best, but before you find that style it is important to realize what pressing is not.

### What Pressing is Not

Pressing the seams in your quilt is not the same as ironing. Although you will be using an iron and an ironing board, it is absolutely critical to remember that you are not ironing (that is, running the appliance over the seam with gentle pressure) but just coaxing the seam down in order to seal it and make it less visible.

Pressing the seam is often thought of as a way of strengthening the seam, but this is not really the case. No strength is added to the seam itself by having it seam pressed down; instead, pressing the seam will mean that should any stitch come undone, the cotton batting in the quilt will not push up through the seam. This can be said to strengthen the integrity of the quilt somewhat, but it does not make the seam itself any stronger.

### What Pressing Is

Pressing uses the weight of the iron itself to create seam allowances that might otherwise result in lost fabric. In a work such as a quilt, which requires many pieces put together, lost millimeters on each piece can mean a big difference in the end product. Pressing [quilt blocks](#) as they are made eliminates this problem.

Pressing will also create a good loft which will come in handy when it comes time to attach the pieces. Finally, pressing will help give the quilt a uniform appearance and feel. The fabric should never cover the seam on a properly pressed quilt.

### Types of Pressing

There are two types of pressing; side pressing and open pressing. Side pressing is simply pressing the seams to one side, and is generally advocated by most [quilting](#) instructors.

Open pressing involves application of the iron both to the back and the front of the blocks. This can take twice as long as side pressing, but those who use it say that it greatly helps in the appearance of the quilt. This style is most appropriate when using machine stitched pieces, which are stronger than those done by hand; the stitch is less likely to come undone, and therefore hiding a hole will not be necessary.

### Pressing Technique

When you are pressing blocks in the full quilt, the seams should be pressed towards the dark patches. If your quilt involves a more intricate pattern, with spirals and compass shapes, then try pressing in a clockwise pattern; at the very least, make sure that your presses are all uniform in direction. This will lessen the bulk in the

middle of the pattern when all the seams are pressed.

Pressing seams is probably one of the duller aspects of quilting, but it is important to make sure that you do it accurately. It will help to maintain the integrity of the quilt and can also make piecing that much easier.

One last hint, don't use steam! The heat from the iron will be sufficient for pressing. Moisture may cause colors to run, and will make the blocks more susceptible to distortion.

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