



General Tips and Tricks for Successful Classes

Building good customer relations is a job that needs your care and attention each and every day. We at Among Brenda's Quilts are committed to providing you with all the help you need, in your store and in your class room. You can trust in our patterns to provide you with clear and concise instructions guaranteed to give your clients and your class participants great results.

The Teacher's Note's provide you with a step by step plan of action to keep your classes running smoothly, and the General Tips and Tricks pages below ,offer some new ideas and some refreshing reminders that will keep staff and teachers on the cutting edge!

Labeling the Fabrics and Pattern

A little bit of extra service goes a long way to keep customers coming back again and again. Keep inexpensive sticky notes available at the cutting counter for labeling cut fabrics for your customers. You might even staple the notes onto the selvage so they don't fall off.

Encourage your students to label their various patches as they cut them. Helping a student dig through their cut pieces in search of the one piece they need is a huge time waster in class. Bring a roll of masking tape to class. Give everybody a long section of tape and a pen to write with. They can rip off and label pieces of tape as they cut and stick them to their various patches. Tell everyone to avoid pressing on the masking tape as the adhesive might migrate onto the fabric.

It is a rare day when students follow the color selection shown on the pattern cover. Have them go through their pattern at the beginning of the class and substitute their colors in the pattern description. Use pencil in case of error or in the event they reuse the pattern at a later date. Have them make a color chart on a separate piece of paper by stapling a small swatch of their fabrics on the sheet. Label the color their swatch replaces on the chart. Tape the color chart to the wall in front of the students cutting area so they can refer to it as needed.

Cutting

Many students are reluctant to cut at home. Let's face it – nobody wants to ruin fabric with cutting mistakes. Talk to your students prior to class to find out who needs help

with their cutting. If there is a certain amount of pre-cutting to be done, set up some free shop time when you or a shop employee can give students some help prior to class.

Some patterns, especially my large bag patterns, have some very sizable pieces. Students will find it helpful to have either a large grid cutting mat and/or a 20 ½" square rotary cutting ruler. If they don't have this ruler be sure you have a couple on hand at your bag classes for their use.

Sewing

Chain piecing speeds up a class and lets students see their results fast. Watch your students and encourage those who don't use chain piecing to give it a try. Consider sewing as a fun assembly line procedure. Constantly look for ways to speed up repetitive piecing.

Before sewing a seam examine the piece you are working on. Does one side have more seams to sew over than the other side? If so put the 'seamier' side up under the presser foot. That way you won't twist seams as you sew.

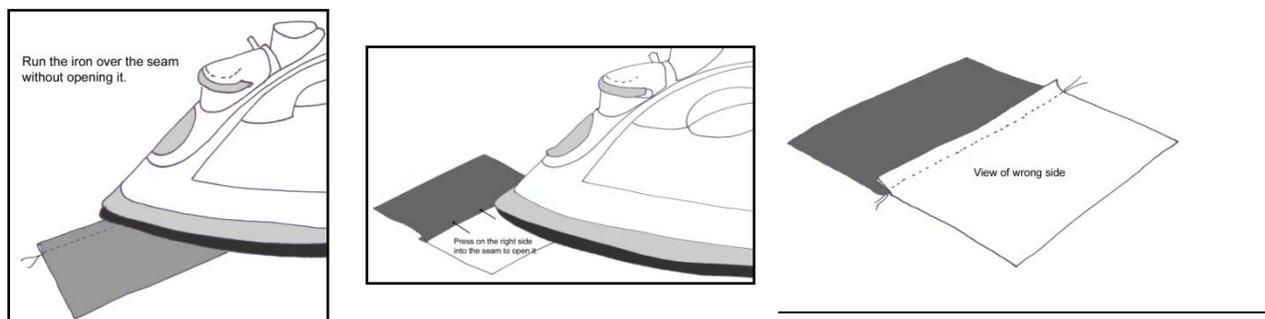
Pressing

Proper pressing makes a world of difference! Demonstrate the proper pressing technique to your students. Share the technique given below.

General Pressing Technique:

The first question to ask when using this technique is 'What color do I want to press towards?' Place that color, wrong side up on the ironing board. Generally this is the darker of the two colors.

Run the iron along the seam without opening it. This "sets" the seam so that the stitches are not as visible. After pressing the seam flat peel the darker fabric away from you to expose the seam on the right side. Press the seam open by working the iron upwards into the seam from the light to the dark patch. This technique will ensure that the seam is fully and accurately opened.



When the quilt top is finished encourage students to press it front and back. This will give a crisper more professional look to the quilt.

Seam Allowances

Most seam allowances in my patterns are $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Before any piecing is done take a moment to have each student sew their best $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance on a scrap piece of fabric. Check the seam allowances and make adjustments on a student to student basis so that seam allowances are as near to $\frac{1}{4}$ " as possible. Be sure to explain why seam allowances are so important in quilting.

Precision in cutting, seam allowances and pressing makes all the difference!

Safety

Explain to students why closing the blade on rotary cutters is so important. Often quilting class is a social time and a lot of people talk with their hands. Waving an open blade around the room is asking for trouble. Laying a rotary cutter blade open, on the cutting table, leaves students open for injury too. Take the time to be careful.

Create a Positive Environment In Class

Everybody needs a little reinforcement and encouragement. Beginner students especially need a little added tender loving care. Every student has a different level of tolerance for errors in their work. As teachers we sometimes have to learn to accept our students own criteria of what's acceptable. Remember to be tolerant of those who don't have as high a standard in quilting as you do. Gently show them how they could improve. Don't do a critique - be helpful.

Remember that most of your repeat students are looking at quilting as a recreational time. Some of them could easily make their projects at home but choose to be with you and other like-minded quilters in a happy, friendly setting.

Showing displeasure that a student did not buy their fabric at your store will only hurt your future business. I can sympathize with your predicament but always act in the most professional, friendly manner to all of the class participants.

Loyal customers are generally not the product of discount pricing, but result because your friendly shop provided the buyer with a feel good experience, the direct result of the great service you provided to them.