QUILTBLOX

Inspiring Creativity and Confidence, One Quilt at a Time

Quilt Block Troubleshooting Checklist

A quick reference for finding the cause when blocks don't measure as expected

1. Prepare the fabric

- ▫ Press (don't iron) out wrinkles and creases before cutting; make sure the fabric lies flat on the mat.
- ▫ Handle fabric gently so it doesn't stretch or distort, especially along bias edges.
- ▫ If using Best Press or another spray stabilizer, follow the product directions and test on a scrap first.

2. Check the thread and fabric combination

- ▫ Confirm the thread suits the project and machine. A 40-weight thread is generally thicker than a 50-weight thread.
- ▫ Consider the combined effect of thread bulk, fabric thickness, and seams that are even a thread or two off.
- ▫ When changing thread or fabric, sew and measure a test unit before piecing the whole quilt.

3. Verify the seam allowance

- ▫ Don't assume a quarter-inch foot guarantees a quarter-inch seam. Test your actual setup.
- ▫ Sew a sample with the same fabric and thread, then press it as you normally would and measure it.
- ▫ Check with a seam guide; adjust the needle position, guide, or fabric path if needed.
- ▫ Use a scant 1/4-inch only when it helps your method and produces the intended unit size.

4. Use guides and feed the fabric consistently

- ▫ Check that your 1/4-inch foot, fabric guide, or Diagonal Seam Tape is positioned correctly.
- ▫ Keep the fabric aligned with the guide; let the feed dogs move it instead of pulling or pushing.
- ▫ Recheck the setup after changing feet, needle position, materials, or machine settings.

5. Press for flat, accurate units

- ▫ Follow the pattern's pressing directions (to one side or open, as specified).
- ▫ Lift and lower the iron rather than dragging it, which can distort fabric.
- ▫ Check that seam allowances aren't folded or trapped and that intersections lie flat.
- ▫ Use a wooden clapper to help seams settle as they cool.

6. Trim and measure as you go

- ▫ Trim units to the pattern's specified size when instructed; check that they're square and correctly sized.
- ▫ Don't try to trim an undersized unit into accuracy. Stop and find the cause first.
- ▫ Measure completed units before joining them into larger sections, then check the block again.
- ▫ Confirm whether the pattern gives an unfinished block size or the finished size in the quilt.

If the block is still off, check these first

- ▫ **Too small:** Seam allowances are too wide or excess bulk in the seams
- ▫ **Too large:** Seam allowance too narrow; unit not trimmed; pattern measurement misunderstood.
- ▫ **Inconsistent:** Fabric shifting or stretching; changing seam allowance; cutting or alignment errors.
- ▫ **Units Fit, Block Doesn't:** Assembly seams, alignment, squareness, and cumulative differences across rows.

Reminder: *Accuracy comes from consistency, not perfection on the first try. Change one thing at a time, test again, and catch differences before they travel through the quilt.*

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