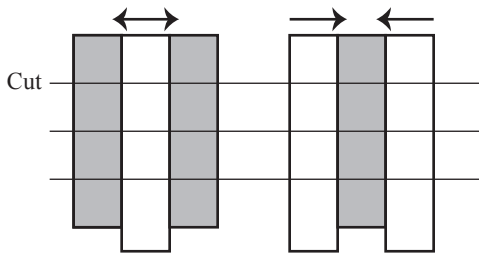


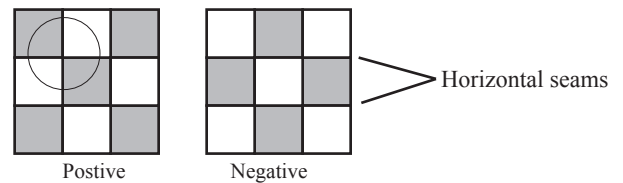
# Segmented Seam Allowances

For generations, quilt makers hand stitched quilt blocks together, point-to-point, leaving options for pressing seam allowances in the direction best suited for their needs. With the advent of the sewing machine, seamstresses zipped right through seam allowances and snipped threads at the “cutting” edge. Entering mid twentieth century was the rotary cutter with its endless possibilities: strip piecing, speed machine piecing, quick-cutting techniques, accurate acrylic rulers, self healing mats, quilts-in-a-day. It was better than driving through for fast food! A thoughtful study went back to “options for pressing seam allowances in the direction best suited for their needs.” Segmented Seam Allowances were born.

Four Patch and Nine Patch Blocks are ideally suited to learning the value of Segmented Seam Allowances. For instance, make a few Nine patch Blocks by sewing three short strips of equal width dark/light/dark together lengthwise. Make another strip set of light/dark/light strips of equal width and length. Press the seam allowances to the dark. Now cut these strip sets into units measuring the width of the original strips. This way the Nine Patch Blocks will be square--that is if your measuring, cutting and sewing are accurate. It looks like this:



Arrange and sew together these cut units into a few Nine Patch Blocks that will look like this:

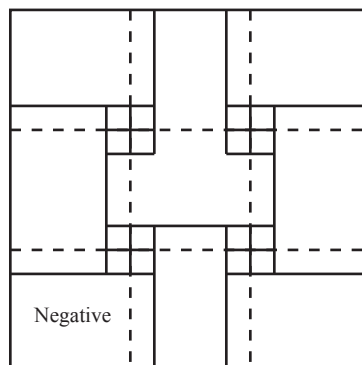
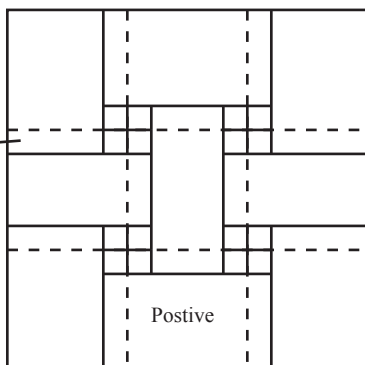


Notice the arrows indicating the direction in which to press the seam allowances. When the strip sets are cut and sewn together as indicated for a Nine Patch Block, the seams at the critical intersections go in opposite directions indicated by the circle. These are called “opposing seams.” Quiltmakers love keeping the points and opposing seams help that happen!

The vertical seams are pressed into their path by pressing to the dark when the strip sets are made. But the question remains, “How does one press the horizontal seams?” Pressing the horizontal seams either up or down is OK but can create tremendous bulk at the intersections (see the circle). UGH! Who wants to hand or machine quilt through that? Turn the Nine Patch Blocks to the back and try Segmented Seam Allowances. YOU. WILL. LOVE. THEM.

Carefully loosen the seam-allowance threads at each intersection and repress both seams in the only direction they will go. Don't cut the threads; just loosen them. Notice the little four-patch-looking seam allowance created at each intersection. The blocks will be flat, square, and very easy to quilt through. This technique can be employed nearly everywhere there are opposing seams. Hooray for Segmented Seam Allowances!

Do not press seams open. Press both seams together in the same direction.



Positive and Negative Nine Patch Blocks are another tutorial. They work well for Radiating Niine Patch, Color Wash, Checkerboard, Double Nine Patch, Charm Nines, etc. and Segmented Seam Allowances can be used very successfully.