

# THE ABC'S OF POINT TRIMMING

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I have been trimming the points of my triangles, diamonds, trapezoids, and other pointy shapes for 52 years (long before rotary cutting!). It started out as a misunderstanding. I was a self-taught quilt maker. The only thing I didn't have to figure out for myself was one rule from my mother: quilters use a ¼" seam allowance. I drafted paper templates on graph paper, with both seamlines and cutting lines. I noticed the extra deep seam allowances at the points of triangles. Having been told one thing and one thing only about quilt making, I didn't want to mess that one thing up. I figured out that I could follow the lines on the graph paper and blunt the tips of these points ¼" outside the point of the seamline. And so that is how I made my quilts, trimming off the points of pointy patches.

I went on doing what I was doing, thinking that was the way all quilters did it. Then I got to know a few other quilters and found out that was not actually the way most people were doing it. So the next time it came up in one of my quilts, I did not trim the points of the triangles. I found out the usual method made it more difficult to align patches for stitching than my own method did. It also left dogears sticking out past

my seam allowances, a risk for dark fabrics showing through the quilt and more of a challenge for sewing straight seams. I went back to my own method of trimming points. (And I told my friends to try it.) It really makes the sewing easier and more accurate.

Fast forward 9 years. I got a job as an editor at *Quilter's Newsletter* and, a few years later, at sister publication, *Quiltmaker*, as well. I shared my point trimming knowledge, and the magazines adopted that practice in their patterns.

Eventually rotary cutting came along, and 25 years ago I produced my Point Trimmer, a tool for trimming off points with a rotary cutter.

This year, I am introducing my ABC Point Trimmer. My old, printed tool had A, B, and C trims and a whole little booklet telling you how to use the tool. My new tool has A, B, and C trims, no printing (so it is less expensive!), and its use is more intuitive.

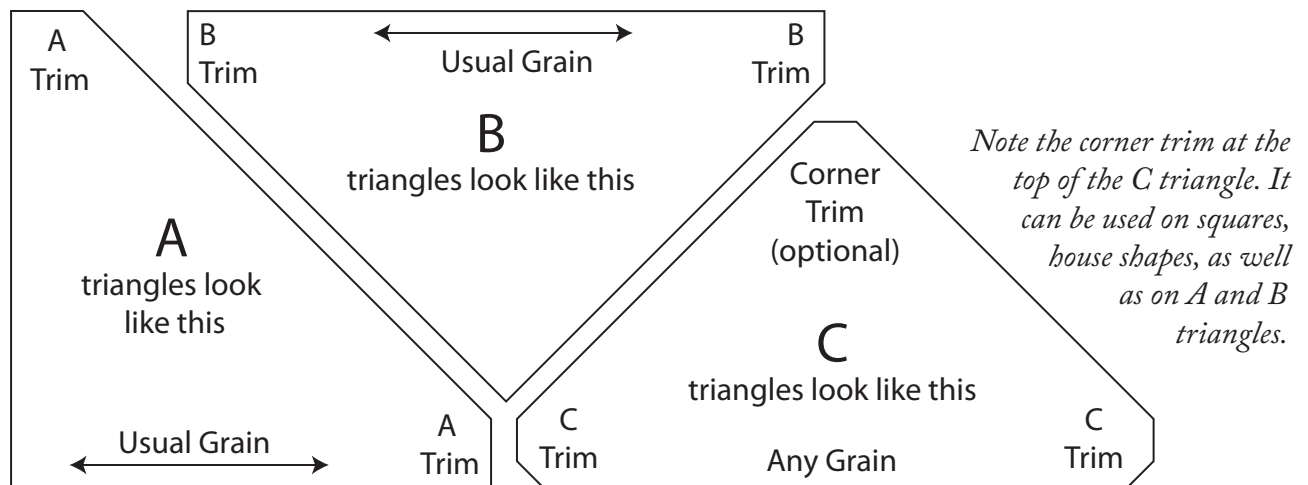
In this tutorial, I will teach you how to trim points for any situation, using either tool. I'll also teach you two different ways you can use your regular rotary cutting ruler to trim points if you don't have a point trimming tool on hand.

## A, B, and C Point Trims

The A trim is perpendicular (at a right angle) to the short sides of the triangle and is most often used on half-square triangles. The B trim is perpendicular to the long side of the triangle and is most often used on quarter-square triangles. There are exceptions. The C trim combines A & B trims and can be used for any situation. It is especially useful if you don't want

to think about which type of trim to use. My Point Trimmer and my ABC Point Trimmer tools have C trims. I don't believe other point trimmers do.

The figures below show triangles with A, B, and C trims. On pages, 3–8 I'll show you full-size examples of triangles with trims and neighboring patches of different types aligned for sewing.



## A Few Basic Points

The main point of trimming points is to help you align patches for stitching. You trim the points right after you cut the shapes, before sewing. A secondary advantage of point trimming is to eliminate dogears from seams and eliminate show through.

The correct point trim is the one that will align a patch with its neighboring patch when the two patches are placed face to face for stitching.

In the next few pages, I show how trimmed points of triangles align with neighboring triangles, squares, diamonds, Bow Ties, Snowballs, octagons, house shapes, half trapezoids, and full trapezoids. These are all of the most common shapes. Point trimming is also useful for other pointy shapes, like 60-degree diamonds, equilateral triangles, and Compass points. However, these shapes are less common and the trims need to be custom designed, depending on what two patches are next to each other. My original Point Trimmer, ABC Point Trimmer, and the alternative methods in this tutorial work for all of the common shapes I list above and show in the following pages. All of these shapes have 45-, 90-, or 135-degree angles.

Before we get too far, I would like to point out that A trims and B trims cut the same amount off the tip of a shape, and if you consider just the tip, and not the triangle or other shape connected to it, A and B trims can be the same as each other or mirror images of each other. Think of A and B trims as trims for 45-degree triangles because the way they relate to the sides of the triangles is how to tell the A trim from the B trims. That is why my tools outline a whole triangle for A and B trims. C trims are symmetrical and do not need whole triangles delineated.

Generally, you can cut half-square triangles with an A trim and quarter-square triangles with a B trim. This will allow you to make Flying Geese units and sew 4 triangles around a square. There are exceptions, such as the border triangles in Figure 27 on page 8.

As a general rule, diamonds should be trimmed with the C trim. My reasoning is this: When diamonds are sewn to each other, their trims need to be C trims or A/B opposites. I find it easier to trim like shapes alike within a pattern rather than trimming some diamonds

one way and some another way and trying to keep track of them.

If you just don't want to think about which trim to use, you can always use the C trim. When you use a C trim for all half-square and quarter-square triangles, at least one of the two parts of the trim at each 45-degree angle of the triangle will align with the neighboring patch, whether that shape has a 45-degree angle, 90-degree (square) angle, or 135-degree angle like an octagon or Snowball, or the wide angle on a full trapezoid, half trapezoid, house shape, or Bow Tie shape. Sometimes a small part of the trim may not align, depending on the shape to which you are sewing the triangle, and, in the case of a square, depending on whether you trimmed the tips off the corners. You can simply ignore the bit that does not align.

I show the examples on the following pages at full size so you can judge for yourself which trim you want to use in a given situation, and understand the trade-off between more work of more precisely fitted trims or less work of less precisely fitted trims.

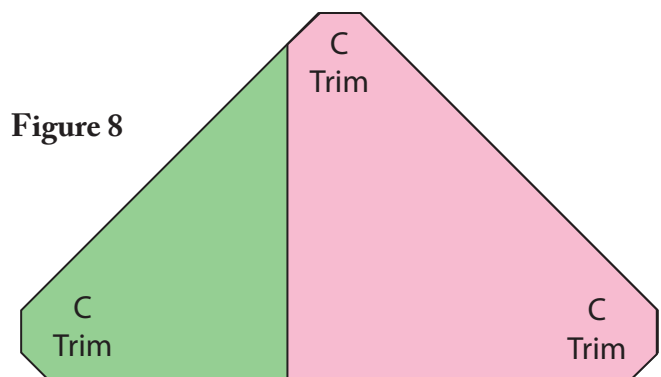
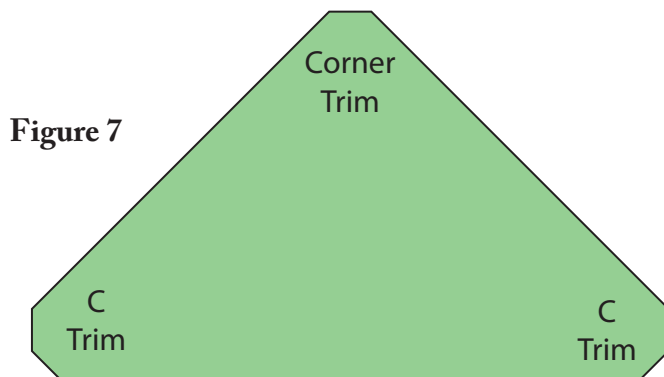
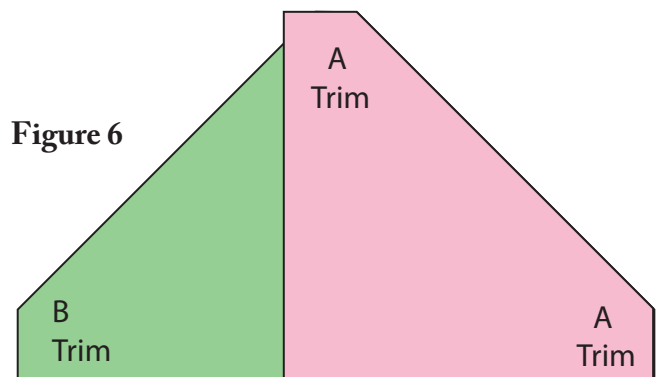
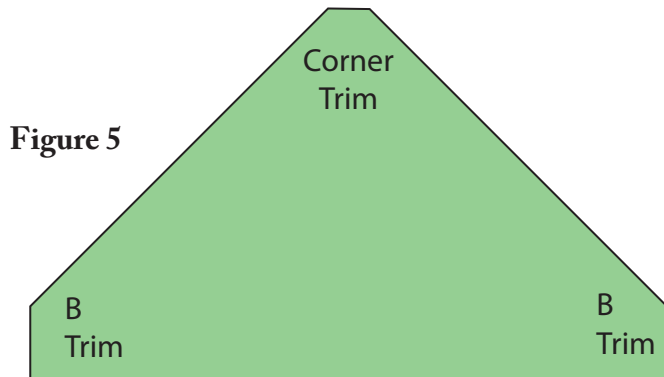
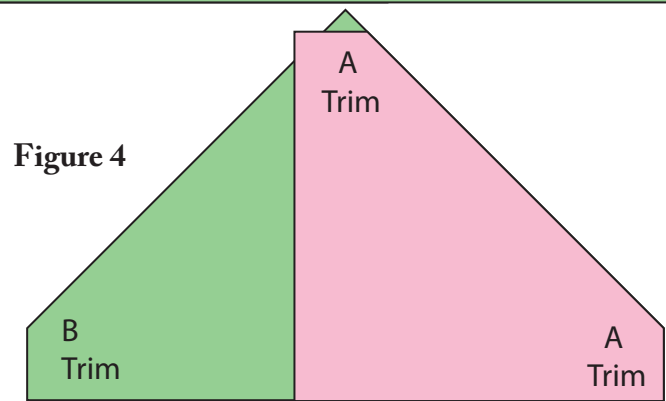
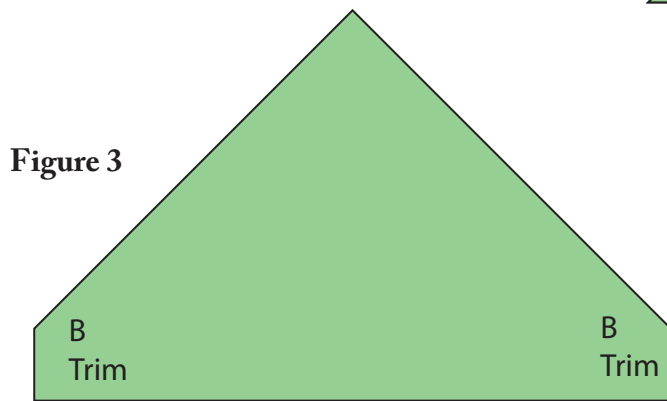
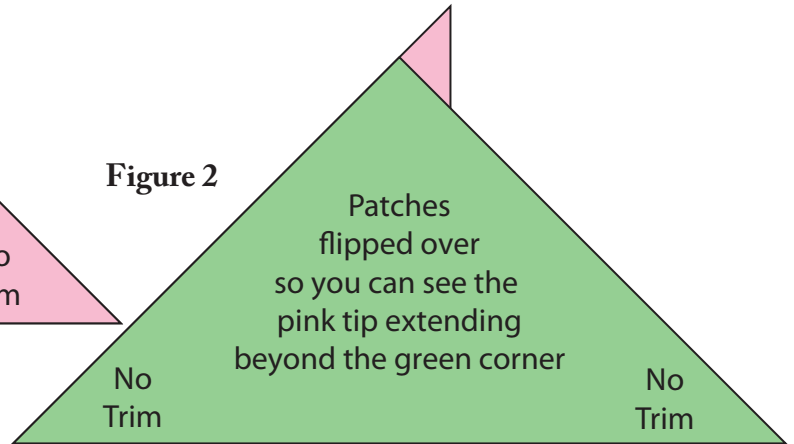
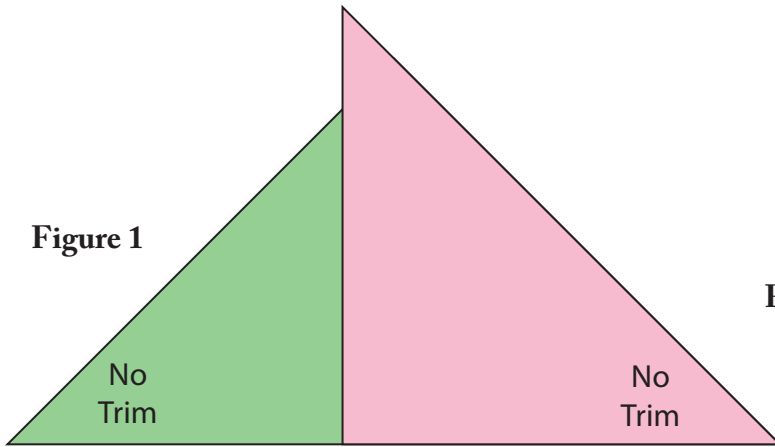
Let me give you an example of my own preference: I am a perfectionist, and I cut and sew with precision. I am comfortable sewing a triangle having A trims to another triangle having B trims but without corner trims (Figures 3 and 4 of the next page). That only gives me clues to the alignment at one end of the seam, but that is enough for me. The square corner of the green triangle will extend a tiny bit beyond the A trim of the pink triangle. I align the bits that match up and ignore the rest, understanding approximately how much the green triangle's corner is supposed to extend beyond the pink one. I could choose Figures 1 and 2, with no point trims at all. They align at one end of the seam, as well. However, I don't like this option because the big dogears are a bridge too far for me.

You may prefer Figures 5 and 6 or 7 and 8 in the same situation. I show you multiple options so you can work in a way that is comfortable and successful for you.

Note that if you do want to trim the corners off of the squares, any corner of my old Point Trimmer and the top of the Christmas tree shape of my ABC Point Trimmer can be used to do that.

Below, I show full-sized diagrams of half-square triangles (pink) aligned for stitching to quarter-square triangles (green) as you would do for a Flying Geese unit. The amount of point trimming work progresses from none for Figure 1 to the most for Figure 8. The

alignment progresses from perfect at both ends of the seam (Figures 7 and 8) to alignment at one end only, with dog-ears that may show through the quilt or may make it harder to stitch a straight seam (Figures 1 and 2). All options are viable. The choice is up to you.



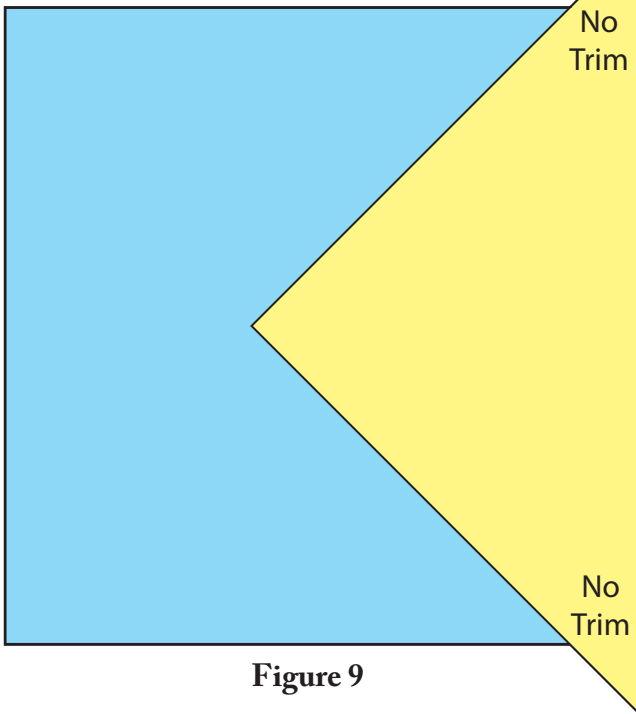
The next point trimming situation I show is stitching triangles to each side of a square. In the first example, Figure 9, there is no point trimming. You can see how hard it is to align the patches. I do not recommend doing this.

In Figure 10, the triangle is trimmed with B trims, and at both ends of the seam line, the patches align perfectly. This is the best way to do this.

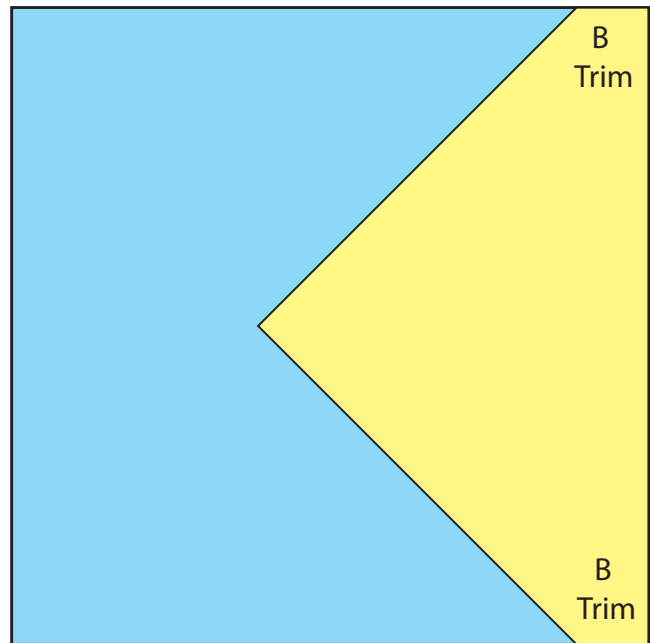
In Figure 11, the points of the triangle are trimmed with the C trim. Notice that the two patches do not align perfectly as they do in Figures 10 and 12. However, a part of each trim does align with the square, so

if you don't want to think about which kind of trim to use, you can use a C trim for everything and get the job done.

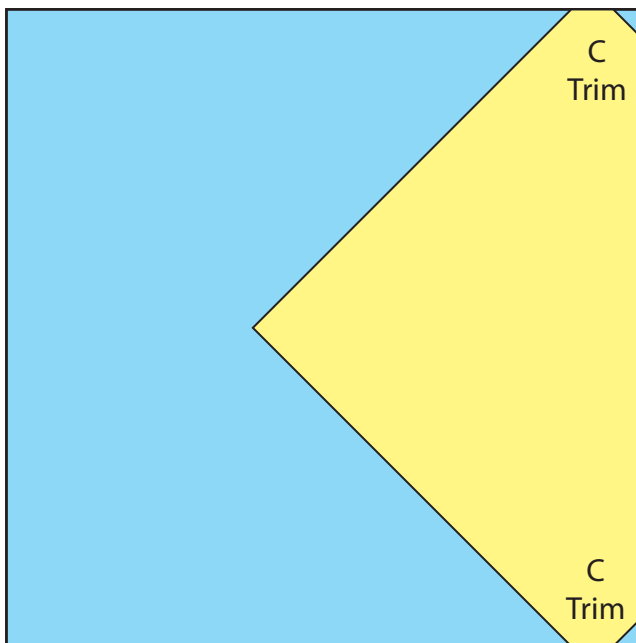
Figure 12 has the corners of the square trimmed as well, so it fits perfectly with the C trims on the triangles. This involves a bit of extra work. If you wish to use this method, use any of the four corners of the original Point Trimmer or the top of the Christmas tree shape of the ABC Point trimmer as a corner trimmer. Align the sides of the square patch with the sides of the tool and cut off a small triangle along the blunted corner of the tool.



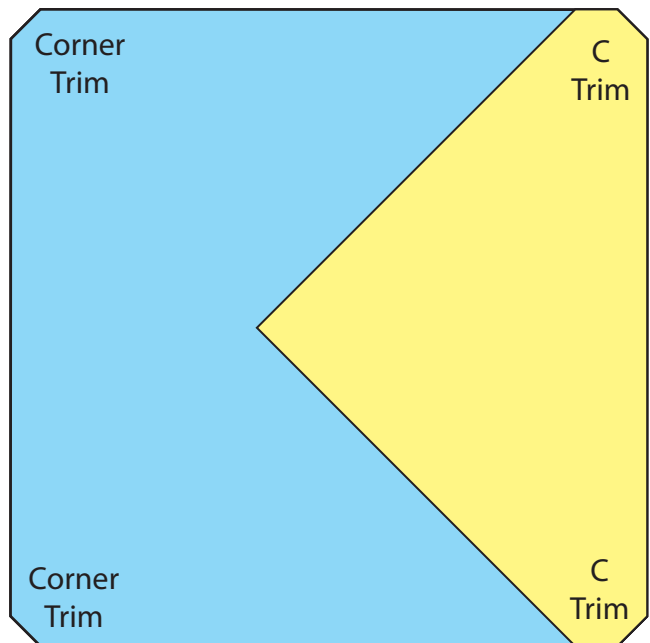
**Figure 9**



**Figure 10**



**Figure 11**



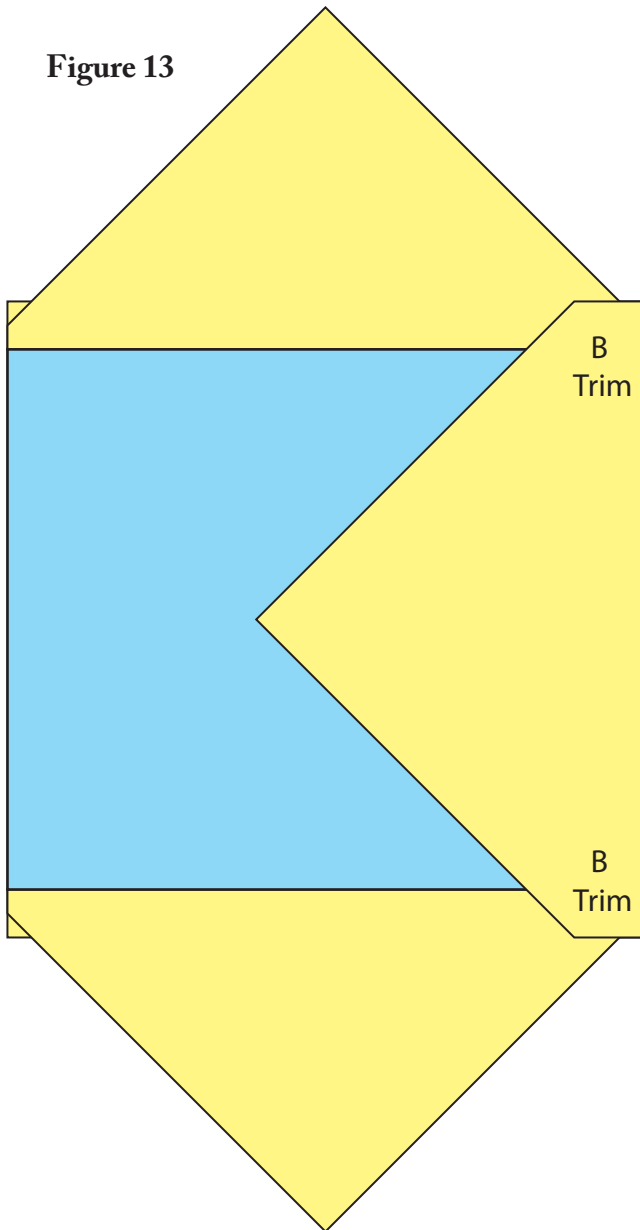
**Figure 12**

Figures 13 and 14, below, show the alignment of the third triangle added to the unit from the previous page. (The second triangle goes on the opposite side of the square and aligns just like the first triangle.) Notice in Figure 13 the tiny yellow triangles above and below the square on the left side. These are the seam allowances, pressed away from the center square. You will need to match the B trims to these seam

allowances. It is not hard to do, but it is less obvious because the seam allowances are on the back side of the unit.

See Figure 14. If you have trimmed triangle points with C trims and trimmed square corners with the corner trim, the seam allowances do not extend beyond the unit. The triangle's C trims match the unit's angles precisely.

**Figure 13**



**Figure 14**

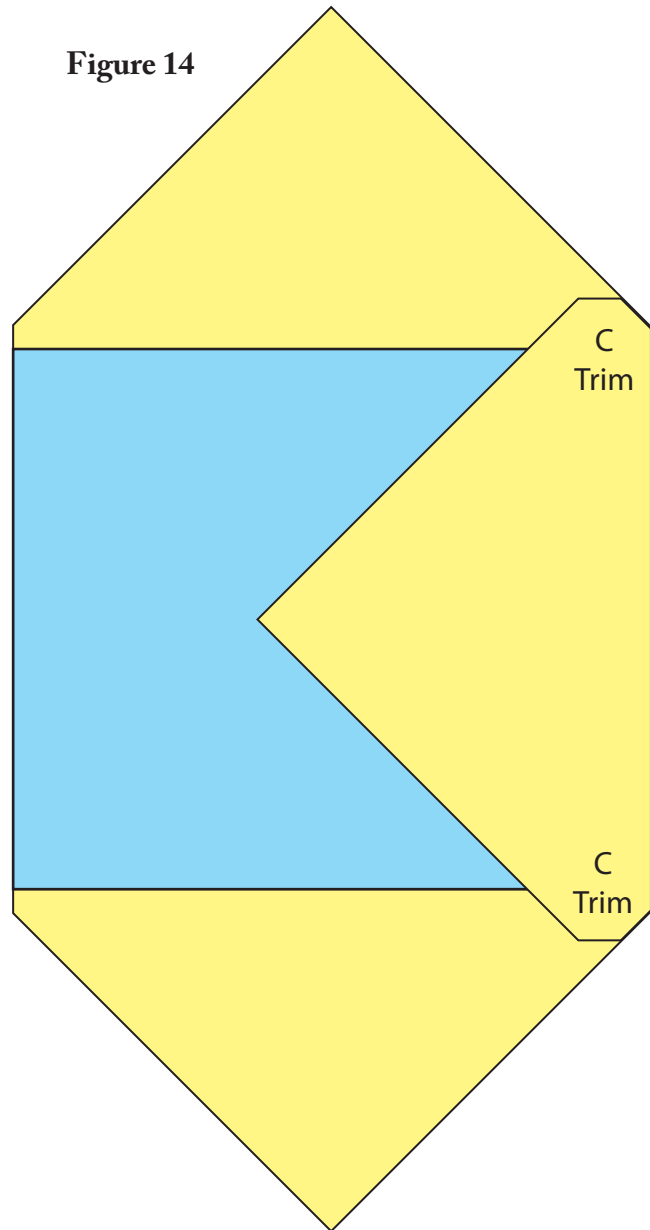
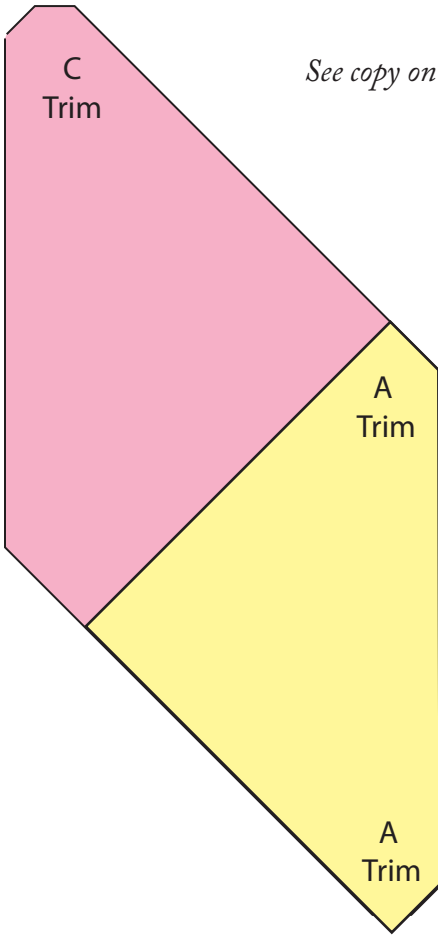


Figure 15, on the next page, shows the alignment of triangles trimmed with the A trim to diamonds trimmed with the C trim. Figure 16 shows the reverse side of Figure 15. This better shows the triangle's A trim extending slightly beyond one part of the C trim on the diamond. There is enough aligned to guide you in making the seam.

Figure 17 shows both triangle and diamond trimmed with the C trim for a perfect fit.

Figure 18 shows a diamond trimmed with a C trim aligned with a square. There is not much to guide you here: just one part of the C trim at the top end of the seam. Figure 19 shows the ideal fit when the square's corners are also trimmed with a corner trim.

Figure 15

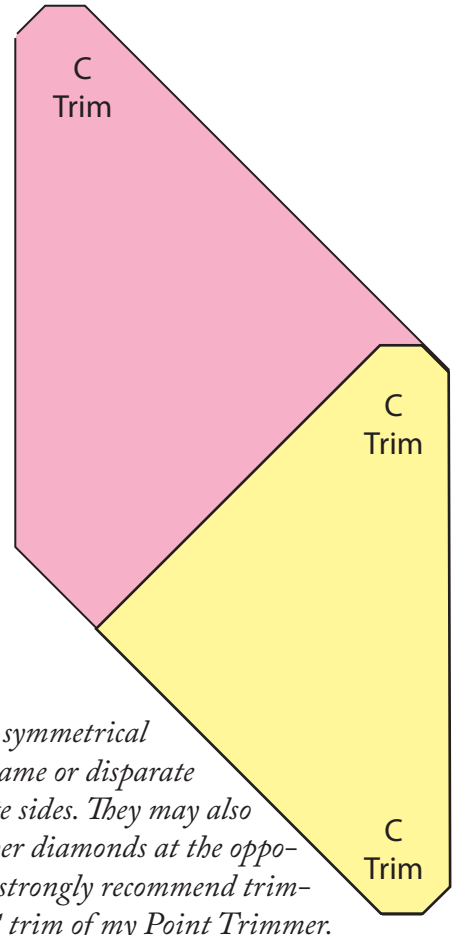


See copy on the bottom of page 5.

Figure 16



Figure 17



*Diamonds are symmetrical and can have the same or disparate patches sewn to opposite sides. They may also have their sides sewn to other diamonds at the opposite end. For these reasons, I strongly recommend trimming all diamonds with the C trim of my Point Trimmer.*

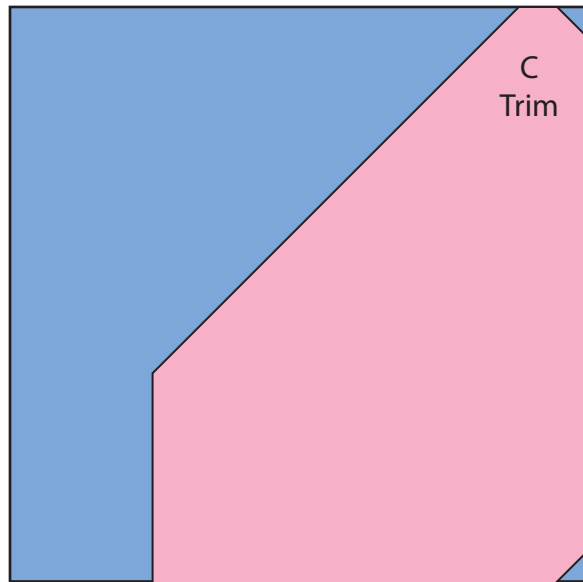


Figure 18

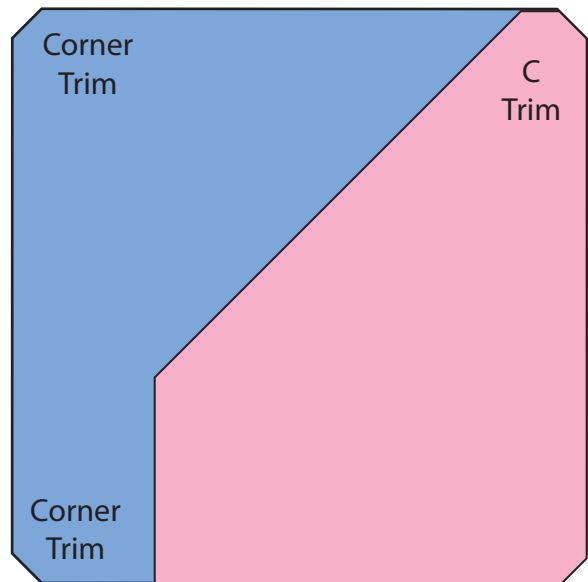


Figure 19

Figures 20–26 show true octagons, Snowballs, Bow Ties, and house shapes with half-square triangles aligned for stitching. All of these shapes have 135-degree angles, and the triangles that fit them can all be trimmed with the A trim. If you prefer to

use the C trim, see Figures 21 and 26; the C trims fit octagons and Snowballs the same way they fit the Bow Tie shown in Figure 21. The C trim is slightly better for house shapes; A is slightly better in the other examples.

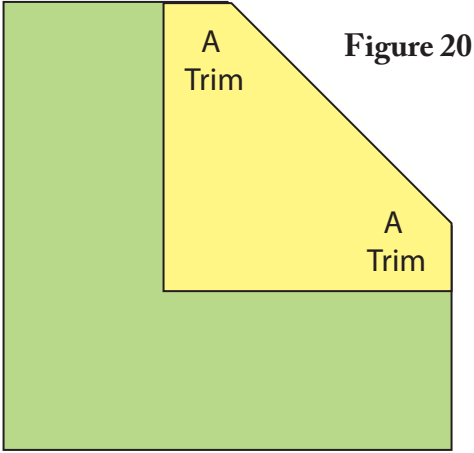


Figure 20

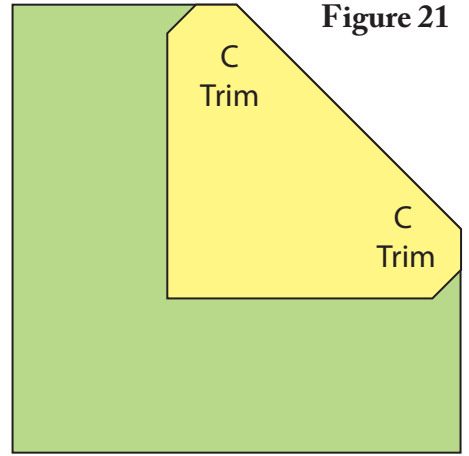


Figure 21

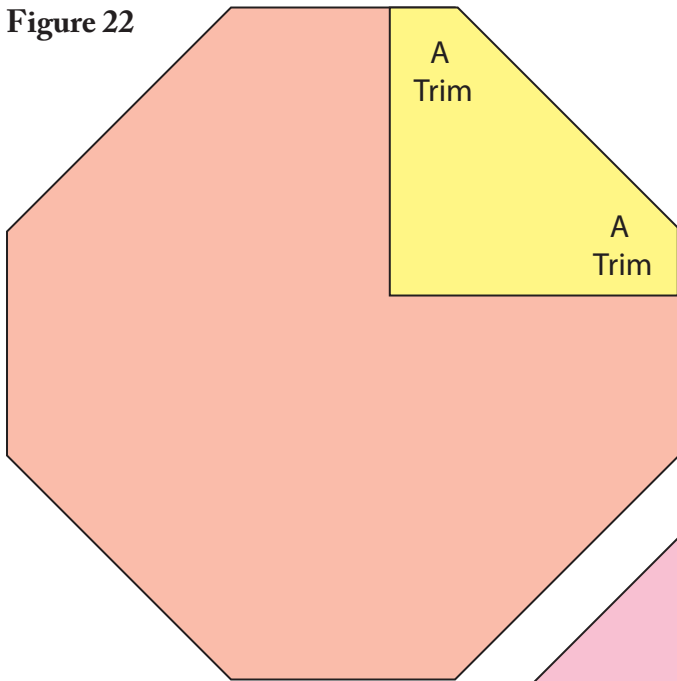


Figure 22

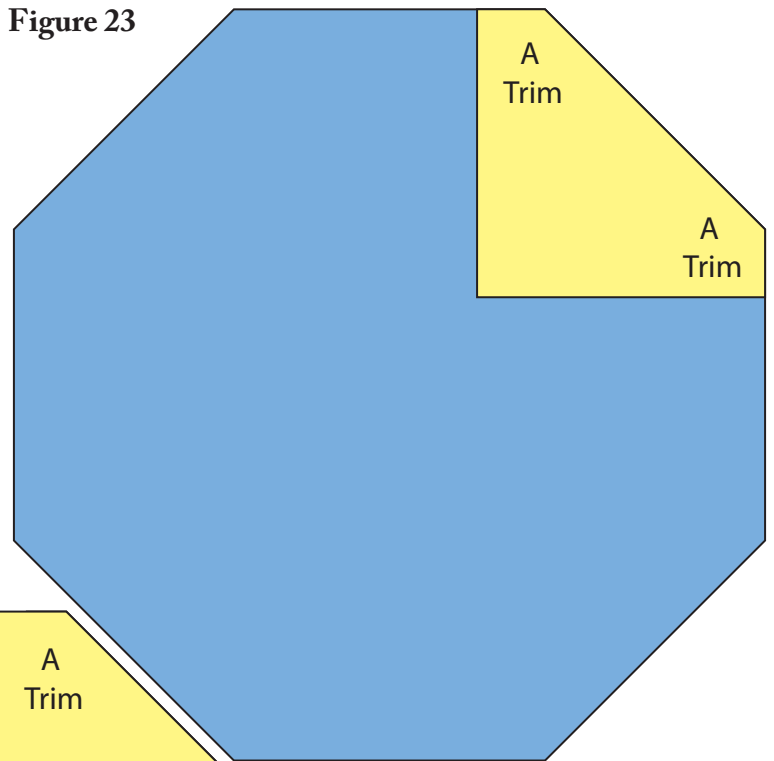


Figure 23

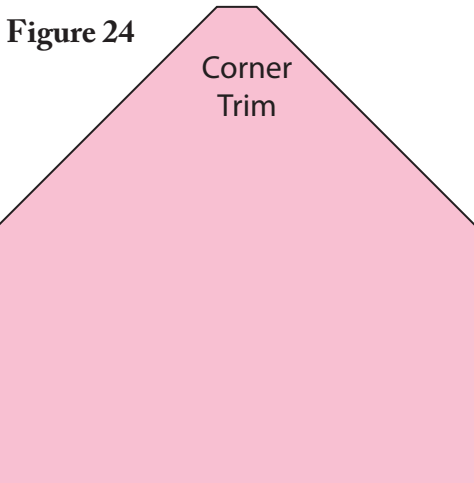


Figure 24

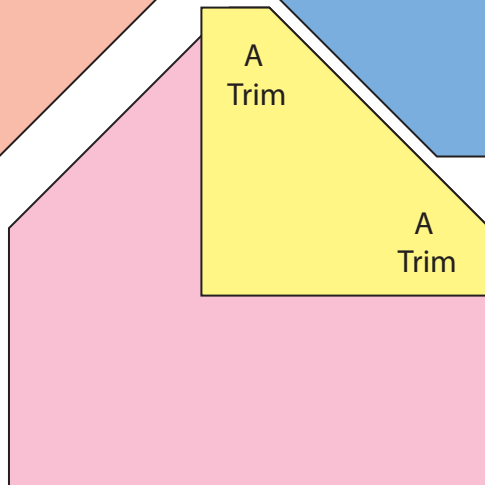


Figure 25

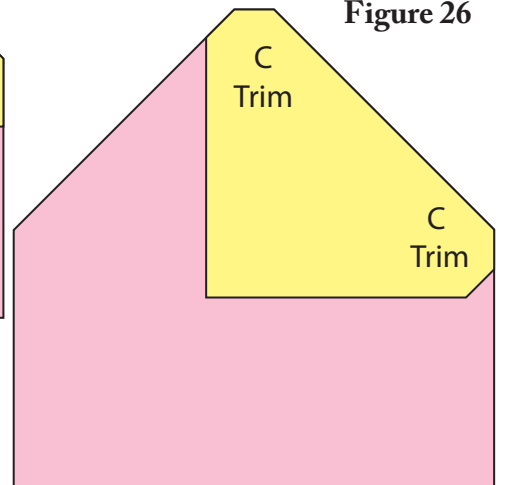
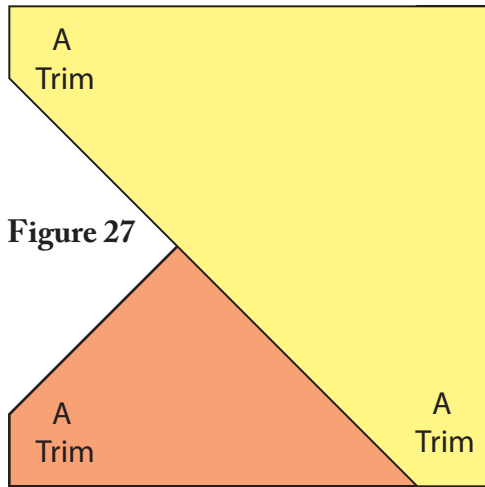


Figure 26

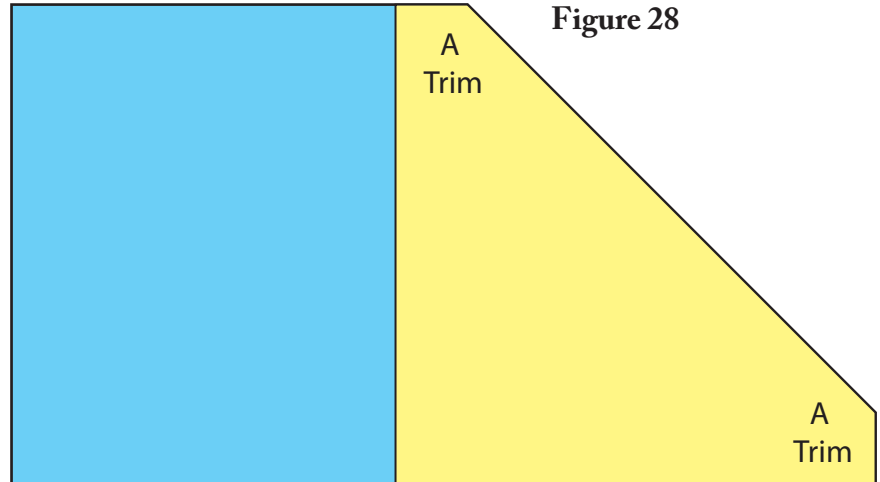
Figure 27 shows quarter-square triangles (with the long side on the straight grain) sewn to each other to form a border. Instead of the usual B trim, use the A trim here.

Figures 28–29 show a half trapezoid aligned with a triangle trimmed with an A trim. The same trims

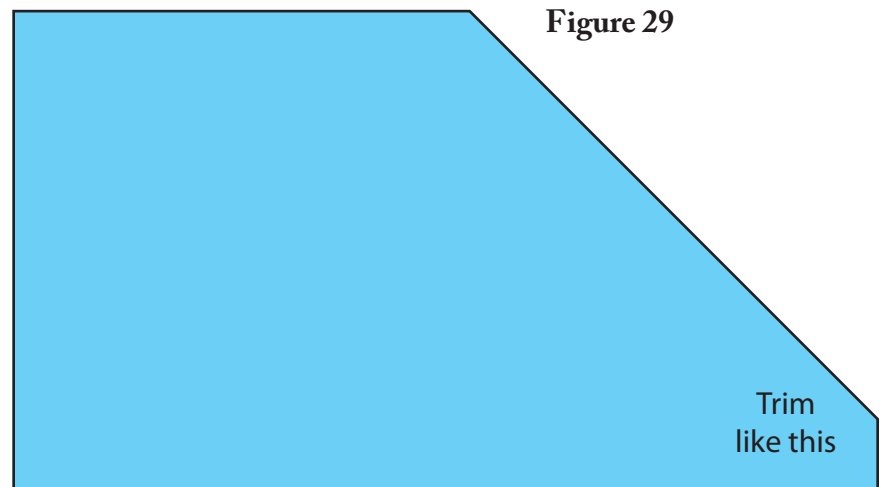
work just the same way for a trapezoid. Figure 29 shows a trapezoid and triangle, both trimmed with a C trim. The half trapezoid can also be trimmed with a C trim and paired with a triangle trimmed with a C trim in the same way I show them for the full trapezoid.



**Figure 27**



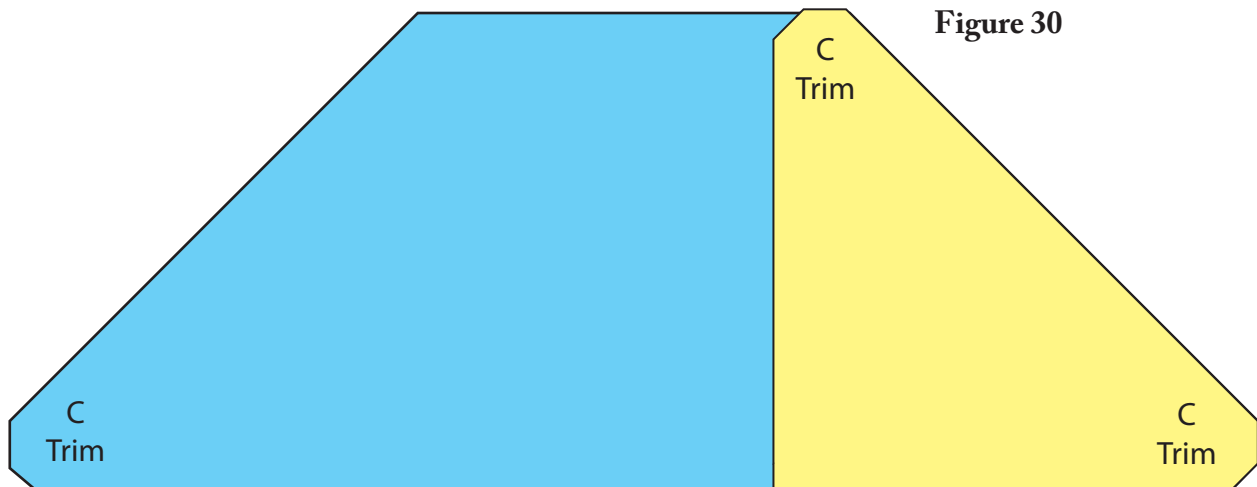
**Figure 28**



**Figure 29**

*Use Figures 28 and 29 to guide you in trimming points for half or full trapezoids paired with triangles trimmed with A trims. Use the diagram for the right side of a full trapezoid. Flip the full trapezoid over to trim the opposite end in the same fashion.*

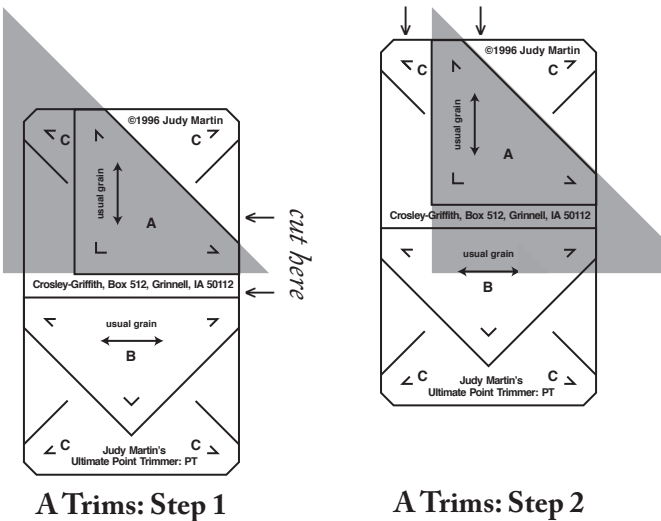
*Use Figure 30 to guide you in trimming points for full or half trapezoids paired with triangles trimmed with C trims*



**Figure 30**



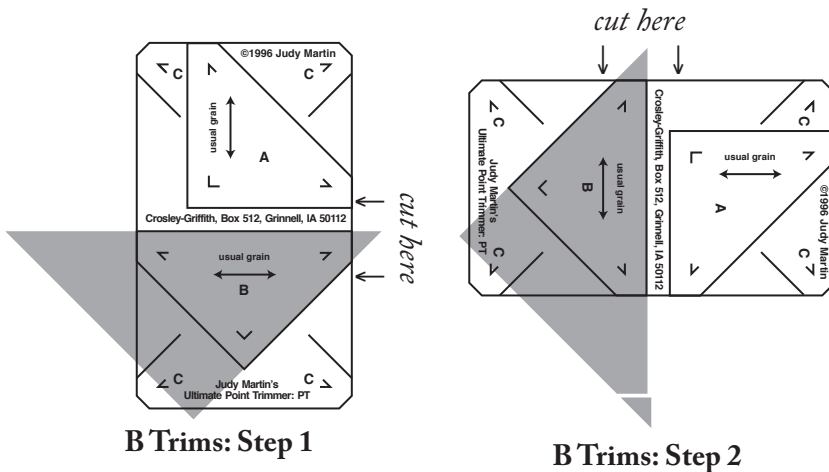
# Trimming Points with the Original Point Trimmer



## A Trims

Step 1) Align the bottom and right of the tool's A triangle with the bottom and right of the fabric triangle. Trim off the  $\frac{3}{8}$ " point that extends beyond the tool, following the edge of the tool.

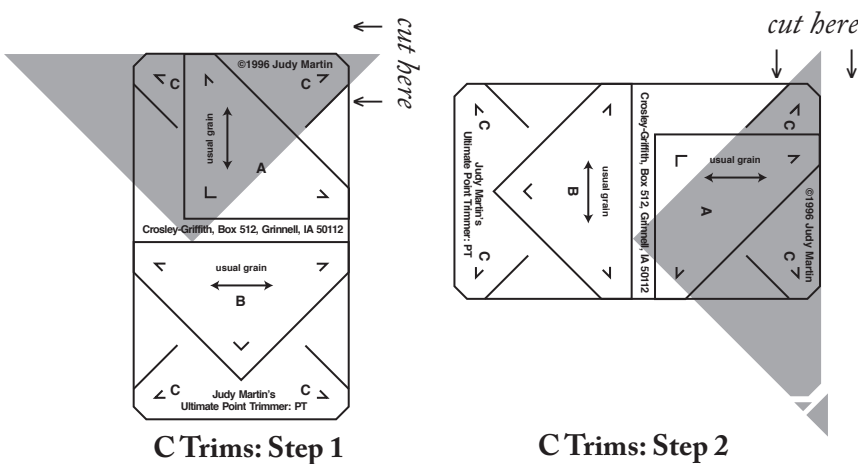
Step 2) Slide the ruler up and to the left to align the left and right sides of the tool's A triangle with the left and right sides of the fabric triangle. Trim off the point that extends above the tool, cutting along the top of the tool.



## B Trims

Step 1) Align the long side of the tool's B triangle with the long side of the fabric triangle. Align the lower right side of the tool's B triangle with the lower right side of the fabric triangle. Trim off the  $\frac{3}{8}$ " point that extends beyond the tool, following the right edge of the tool.

Step 2) Rotate the fabric triangle and tool as shown. Align the long side of the tool's B triangle with the long side the fabric triangle. Align the upper left side of the tool's B triangle with the upper left side of the fabric triangle. Trim off the point that extends above the tool.



## C Trims

Step 1) Align the top of the tool with the long side of the fabric triangle. Align the tool's C angle line with the lower right side of the fabric triangle. Trim off the point that extends beyond the tool in 2 short strokes along the corner of the tool.

Step 2) Rotate the fabric triangle and tool as shown. Align the short side of the tool with the long side of the fabric as shown at the right of the diagram. Align the C angle line at the top of the diagram with the upper left side of the fabric triangle. Trim off the point that extends above the tool in 2 short strokes along the corner of the tool.

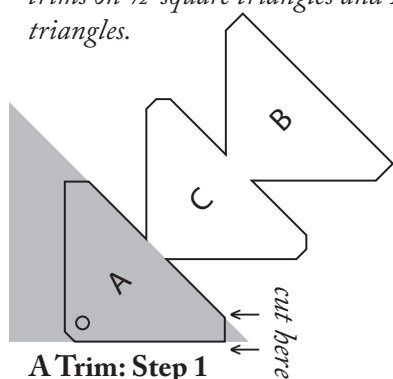
## Trimming Points Using My ABC Point Trimmer

Note that the tool works for all 45-degree angles in all sizes. You only concern yourself with 2 sides at a time, ignoring the side that does not align with the tool.

Choose the A, B, or C trim that will make your triangle align with the neighboring patch. For *Rising Stars* and *Evening Stars*, generally use A trims on  $\frac{1}{2}$ -square triangles and B trims on  $\frac{1}{4}$ -square triangles.

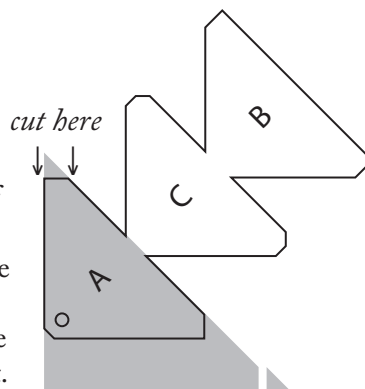


On the tool shown at left, you can clearly see how the triangles will look after trimming their points. I recommend affixing small stickers to label the tool with A, B, and C, as shown.



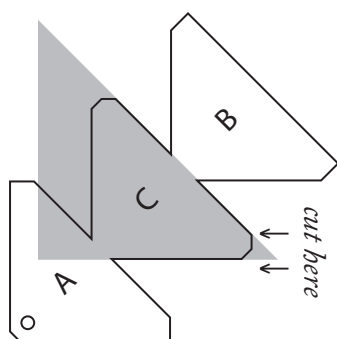
**A Trim: Step 1**

A 1) Align the A part of the tool with 2 adjacent sides of the fabric triangle. Cut off the tip along the tool's blunted point.



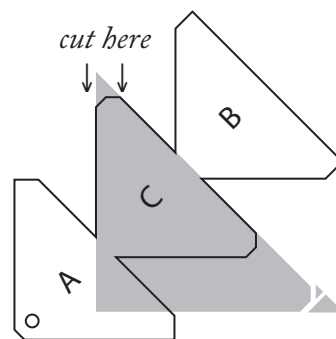
**A Trim: Step 2**

A 2) Slide the tool up to align with the other tip of the triangle. Cut off the tip along the tool's blunted point.



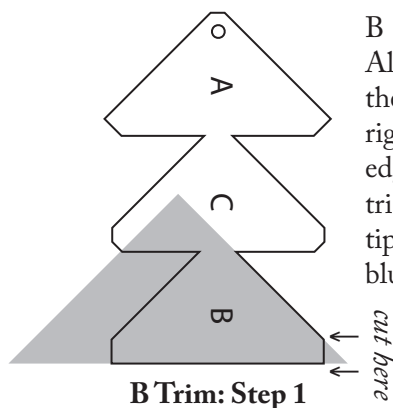
**C Trim: Step 1**

C 1) Align the C part of the tool with 2 adjacent sides of the fabric triangle. Cut off the tip along the tool's blunted point in 2 short strokes.



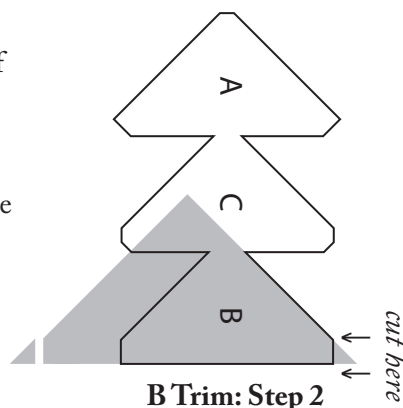
**C Trim: Step 2**

C 2) Slide the tool up to align with left and angled sides of the fabric triangle at the other tip. Cut off the tip along the tool's blunted point in 2 short strokes.



**B Trim: Step 1**

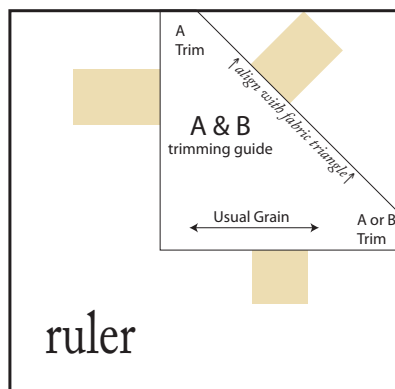
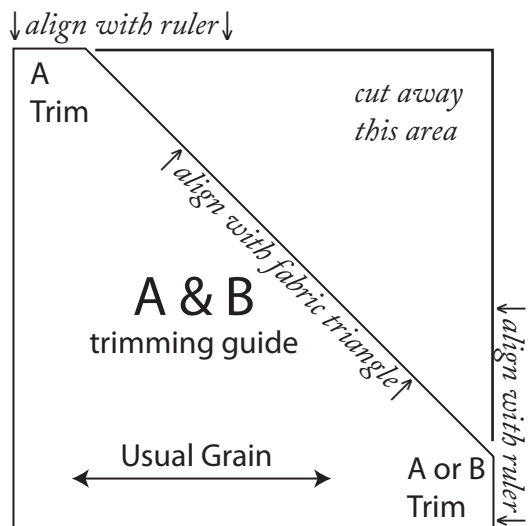
B 1) Align the B part of the tool with the right and bottom edges of the fabric triangle. Cut off the tip along the tool's blunted point.



**B Trim: Step 2**

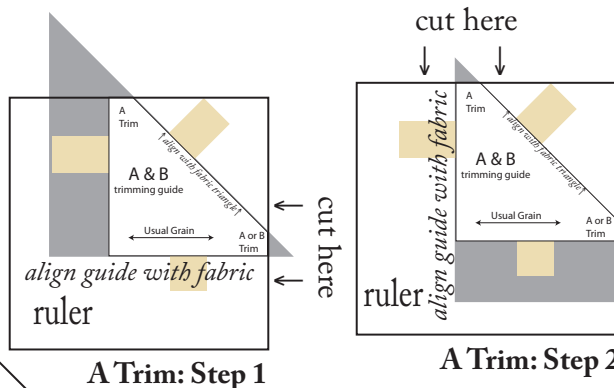
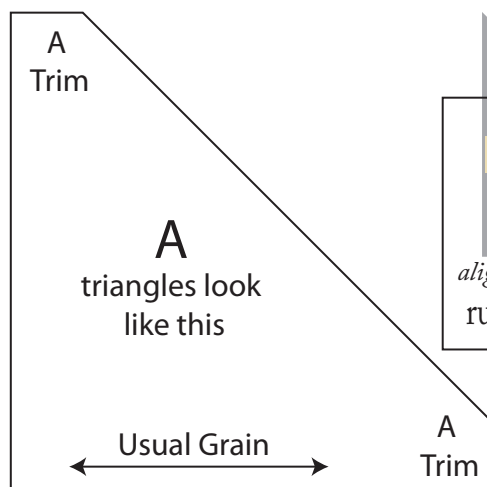
B 2) Flip the fabric face down and repeat at the other point, aligning the tool with the tip of the triangle and cutting off the point along the tool's blunted point.

# A or B Point Trims Using a Paper Guide Taped to a Ruler

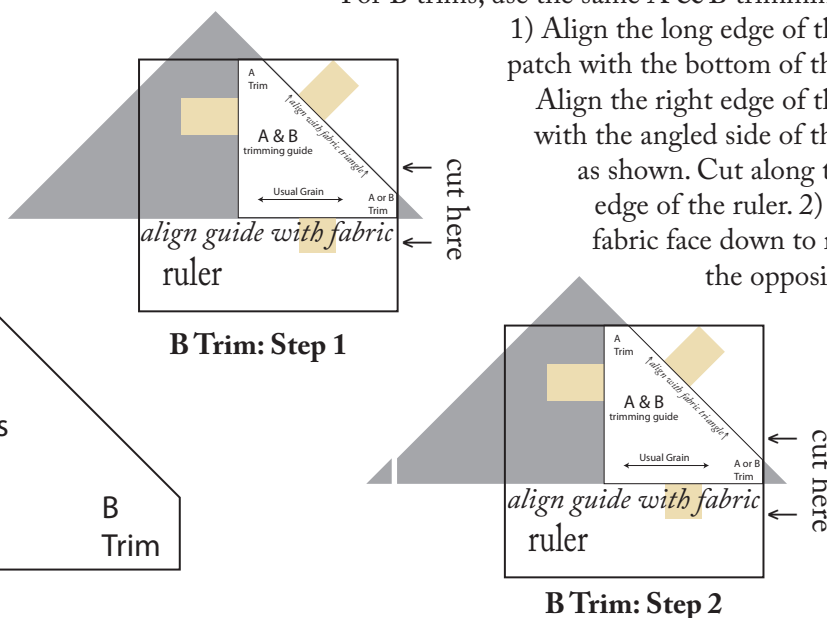
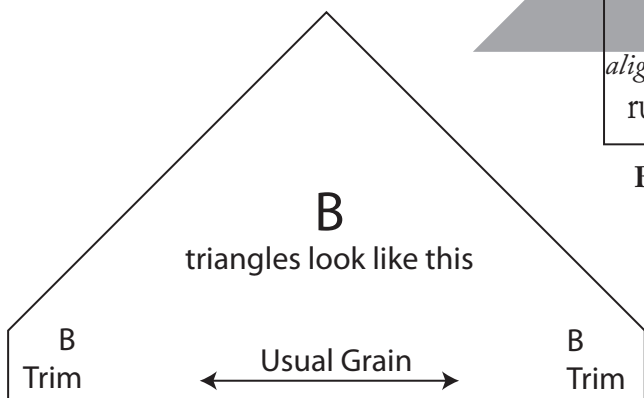


Note that you can use this guide to trim points of any size triangle or any shape having a 45-degree angle.

To make an A & B Point Trimming Guide, start by printing this page at 100% size. Cut out the triangular guide at the top left of the page, noting the ruler alignment instructions before cutting them off. Tape the guide to a small rotary ruler with the blunted points even with the top and right edges of the ruler, as shown at left.



1) For A trims, align 2 sides of the fabric with the bottom and right sides of the paper guide. Trim at the ruler's right edge. 2) Slide the ruler up and to the left, aligning the left side of the guide with the left side of the triangle. Trim the point that extends above the ruler, cutting along the top of the ruler.




For B trims, use the same A & B trimming guide. 1) Align the long edge of the fabric patch with the bottom of the guide. Align the right edge of the fabric with the angled side of the guide, as shown. Cut along the right edge of the ruler. 2) Flip the fabric face down to repeat at the opposite point.

### Trimming the Points of Half-Square Triangles: “A” Trims Using a Regular Ruler

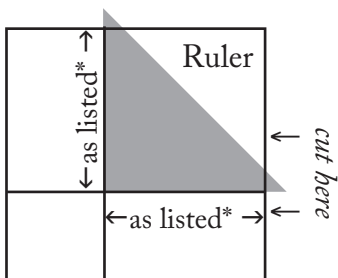
### Trimming the Points of Quarter-Square Triangles: “B” Trims Using a Regular Ruler

**Method:** *Align the 2 short sides of a triangle patch with both lengthwise and crosswise rulings of the listed size\* (the trim measurement). The points will extend 3/8" beyond the ruler. Trim both points off along the ruler's edges.*

**Method:** *Align the the long side of a fabric triangle patch with the bottom lengthwise ruling on your rotary ruler. Also align the corner of the triangle patch with the vertical ruling of the listed size\* (the midline ruling). One point will extend 3/8" beyond the ruler. Trim the point off along the ruler's edges. Turn the patch face down and trim off the other point in the same manner.*

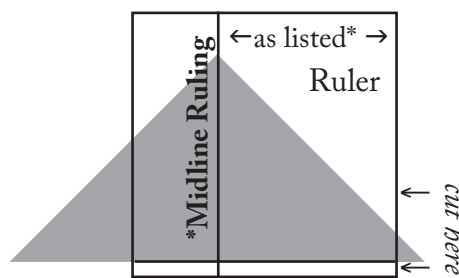
Cut Size of Triangle	*Trim Size
	
1 7/8"	1 1/2"
2 1/8"	1 3/4"
2 3/8"	2"
2 7/8"	2 1/2"
3"	2 5/8"
3 7/8"	3 1/2"
5 1/8"	4 3/4"
6 7/8"	6 1/2"
8 7/8"	8 1/2"
9 3/8"	9"

Cut Size of Triangle	*Midline Ruling
	
3 1/4"	1 1/4"
3 3/4"	1 1/2"
4 1/4"	1 3/4"
5 1/4"	2 1/4"
7 1/4"	3 1/4"
9 3/4"	4 1/2"



**A Trim: Step 1**

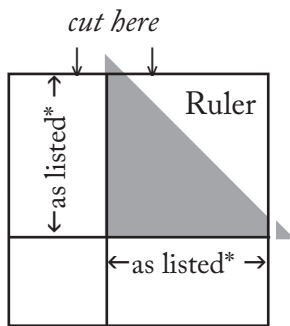
A 1) *Align the vertical and horizontal rulings of the listed \*trim size with the short sides of the triangular patch. Cut off the right tip along the edge of the ruler as shown at left.*



**B Trim: Step 1**

B 1) *With the fabric triangle face up, align the vertical \*midline ruling with the square corner of the triangle. Align the bottom of the patch with the bottom line of the ruler. Cut as shown.*

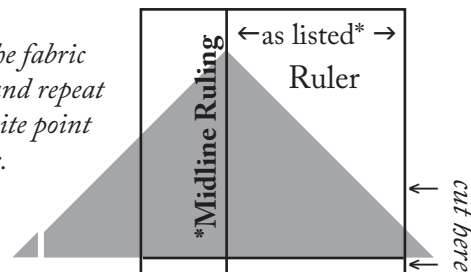
A 2) *Keeping the vertical and horizontal rulings aligned, cut off the tip along the top edge of the ruler as shown at right.*



**A Trim: Step 2**

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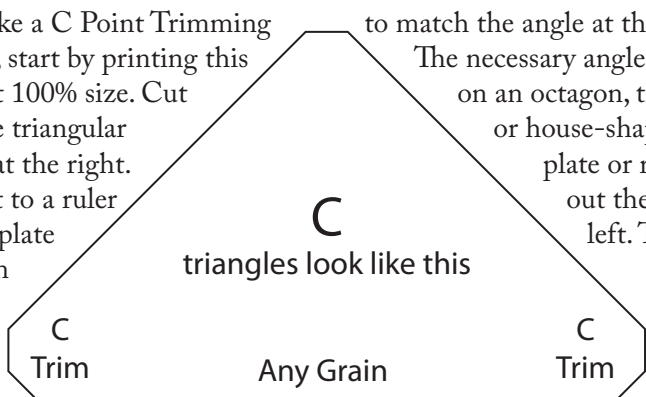
B 2) *Flip the fabric face down and repeat at the opposite point of the fabric.*



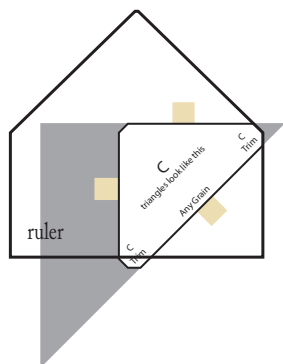
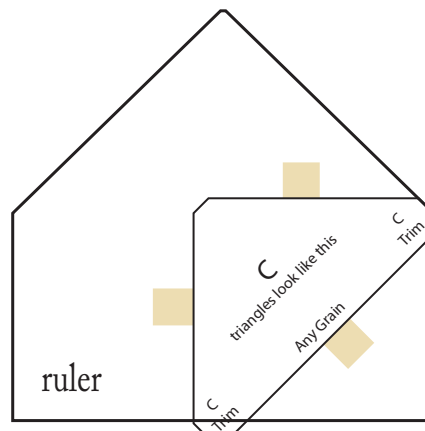
**B Trim: Step 2**

# C Point Trims Using a Paper Guide Taped to a 135 Degree Ruler or Using 2 Paper Guides Taped to a Square Ruler, page 1

To make a C Point Trimming Guide, start by printing this page at 100% size. Cut out the triangular guide at the right. Tape it to a ruler or template with an angle



to match the angle at the C trim. The necessary angle could be on an octagon, trapezoid, or house-shaped template or ruler. Cut out the guide at left. Tape it to a ruler as shown at the top right.



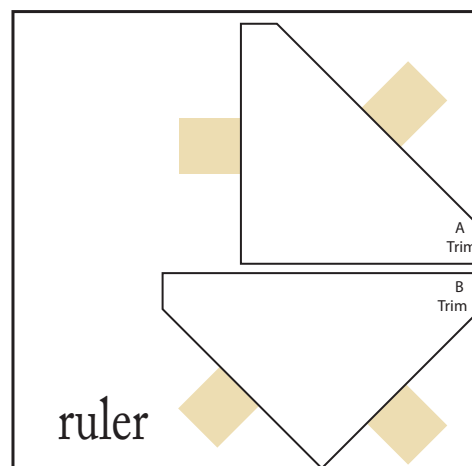
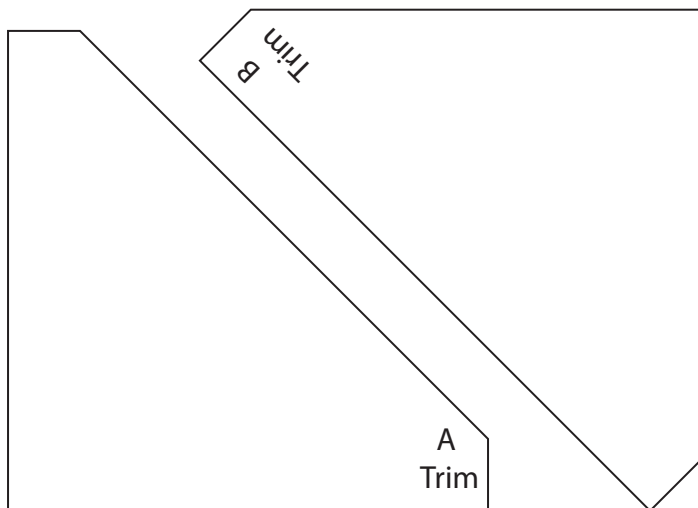
Align one tip of the paper guide with one tip of your fabric shape. Cut off the point of the fabric along the edges of the ruler in two short strokes. Repeat at the other tip of the fabric shape.

*Note that you can use either of these guides to trim points of any size triangle or any shape having a 45-degree angle.*

## Method for Use with a Square or Rectangular Ruler

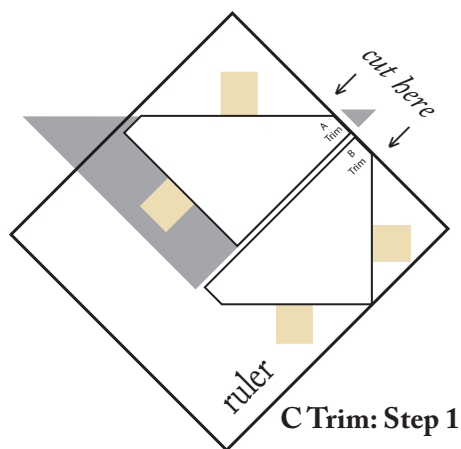
If you do not have a rotary ruler that has an appropriate angle, you will need to align each tip with an A guide and then a B guide to make a C trim. Start by printing this page at 100% size. Cut out the 2 triangular guides shown below left, cutting the two triangles apart. Tape both guides to a small square or rectangular rotary ruler with one blunted point of each guide even with the right side of the ruler as shown below right.

*continued on the next page*

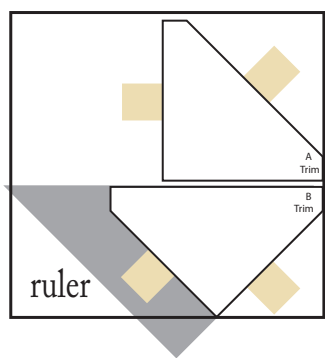


## C Point Trims Using a Paper Guide Taped to a 135 Degree Ruler or Using 2 Paper Guides Taped to a Square Ruler, page 2

### Method for Use with a Square or Rectangular Ruler, *continued*



**C Trim: Step 1**



**C Trim: Step 2**

1) For C trims, align the long side of the fabric triangle with the long side of the triangle on the guide that is marked with "A Trim." Also align the short side of the fabric triangle with the short side of the guide. Trim the point along the ruler's edge, as shown. 2) Leaving the fabric triangle in place, rotate the ruler as shown. Align the long side of the fabric triangle with the long side of the guide that is marked "B Trim." Also align the short side of the fabric triangle with the short side of the guide, as shown. Trim the point that extends beyond the ruler's edge. Flip the fabric face down to repeat steps 1 and 2 at the other tip of the fabric triangle.