Cutting Fabric for Spirals

Tools for cutting fabric

Paper scissors; rotary cutter, ruler & mat; double-sided tape (the permanent kind, not the removable kind); pins, safety pins or binder clips.

When cutting fabric for triangles in spirals, cut rectangular strips of fabric which will be trimmed down to triangles after sewing them to the foundation. This does waste some fabric, but the advantages are worth it:

1) Cutting strips is faster and easier than cutting individual triangles. Leave the fabric in strips and cut off lengths as you sew, so small pieces don’t get lost. Organizing is easy!
2) You’ll never accidentally cut a triangle backwards, because a rectangle fits either a “left” or a “right” triangle.
3) If you scoot the fabric too far to the left or right when sewing it, you will still have adequate seam allowance, so you won’t have to undo and re-sew it.
4) The edges of your spokes will be smoother because the extra fabric gives you a “handle” to grasp when pressing, and you’ll press precisely on the seam line.
5) For small pieces, the extra fabric simply makes them easier to handle.
6) On long narrow triangles, the extra fabric provides stability to keep the points from wobbling.

(If you really hate to waste any fabric, go to my blog for a fun, easy project to make with the cutaway scraps when you finish the mandala.)

If you cut all the fabric for all the spirals in the wedge at the same time, be sure before you start cutting that the individual pieces of the spirals are all marked to indicate which spiral they go in. Otherwise you’ll end up with several pieces all having the same number and not know which spiral they belong to! You might find it easier at first to cut and sew multiples of only one spiral at a time.

Prepare the cutting templates

Make a copy of each spiral on plain white paper. Place strips of double-sided tape across the entire back of each spiral, 1/8 to 1/4” apart. (Don’t stretch the tape as you stick it down, or it will cause the templates to pucker. If you do get a pucker, slit the tape behind it with a small pair of scissors or a seam ripper.)

(Optional) Cut apart the spirals into individual spokes, centers and corners (if any). (1A, 1B)

Gather all the fabrics for the spirals. Square off one cut edge and lay them on the table. Cut each spiral (or spoke of each spiral) into its separate triangles and center. These are your cutting templates. As you cut, stick each template to its corresponding fabric. (2)
Type A & Type B triangles

The base is not always the longest side of a triangle. In Type A triangles (blue) the longest side is the base, but in Type B triangles (red) the base is the mid-length side and the peak extends past the base. Labeling the triangles along the base helps to distinguish Type A from Type B. The 1/4” seam allowance should always be on the base side of the triangle; cut Type B triangles as shown in the diagram above.