

Use a **QUILTER'S AWL** or Stiletto for accuracy instead of pinning

By Elaine Theriault of Northcott

I've been using a quilter's awl (also known as a quilter's stiletto) for almost my entire quilting career. I'm happy to report that my seam matching is pretty accurate considering that I do not pin, except for curves and long straight pieces like borders.

It seems that a lot of time is spent pinning intersections and not wanting to sew over the pins, they are removed before the needle hits the intersection. The fabrics shift and the intersections are off.

I thought I would share with you how to use this tool which is always by my sewing machine.



Match the seams up about 3 to 4 inches before the needle. In this picture, I'm going to ease the top fabric down just a bit so the seams are nested right up to each other.



I position my stiletto on the intersection to prevent the two layers from shifting.

I continue to hold (pin) that intersection until it has been stitched. That means the stiletto goes right under the presser foot as shown in this picture. While there are other long pointy tools that one could use for this task, the stiletto is strong and it's narrow so there is lots of room to have the stiletto under the presser foot and not interfere with the needle.



I use the same approach when I get to the end of my seam. I position the two ends together and hold them in place using the stiletto.



My accuracy increased enormously once I started using the quilter's awl or stiletto. In addition to improving accuracy, this tool saves time. No time spent finding the pin cushion, no time spent pinning or removing pins and let's face it - you're going to drop a pin or two so no time is wasted in retrieving the pins from the floor.