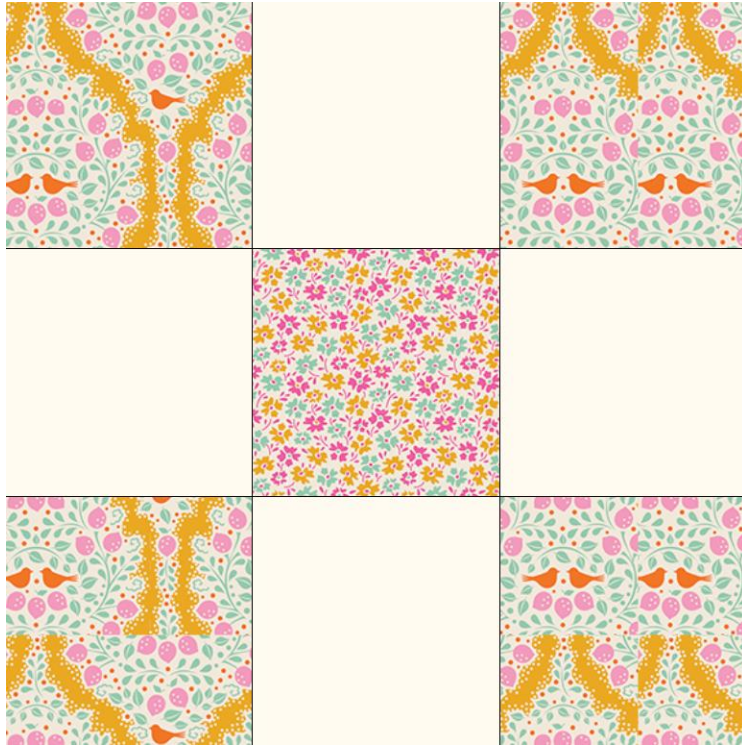


The Beginnings QAL



Block 1 the Nine Patch

Yep, it is the quintessential beginners block but there is nothing better for learning to make a perfect $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam and learning to match your points.

Helpful Notes (to do before you cut):

Make sure you are standing properly if you are rotary cutting. Stand facing your table with your shoulder/hip lined up with the edge of the ruler. So that your arm can move freely back and forth. If you are standing with the ruler too close to the center of your body then your arm will automatically want to curve to the right (if you are right handed) as you push it forward.

Wear shoes, not only is it better for your feet it will protect them as well. I have known two people that have cut tendons in their toes by dropping their rotary cutter.

Make sure to close and lock your rotary cutter each time you put it down. Seriously, you just don't want to get cut with that sucker.

Make sure to use a sharp blade. Believe it or not it is less likely you will cut yourself if your blade is sharp. You have to press with a lot more force when you are using a dull blade and that means that you also go faster and can move your ruler more.

For Three Blocks

Cut:

1 – 2 ½" by Width of fabric (WOF) strip of the fabric you are using for your 4 corners (if you have a fat quarter then cut two strips).

Subcut 12 – 2 ½" squares

1 – 2 ½" by WOF strip of background fabric

Subcut 12 – 2 ½" squares

1 – 2 ½" by WOF strip of center fabric

Subcut 3 – 2 ½" squares

Helpful Notes (to do before you start your blocks):

Place your leftover ends of strips in a container (I use a zip lock bag) with a post-it note or piece of paper labeled 2 ½". This way when you need the same size strips later you can use what is left of the strips before cutting a whole new one which saves fabric and time.

Check your ¼" seam allowance. Sew two pieces of scraps together and measure with your ruler. Your seam should go from the edge to the inside of the ¼" line on your ruler. You should be measuring to the far side of the thread. Believe it or not the width of your thread (times two because there are 2 pieces of fabric) can make your seam off by close to a 1/16th of an inch. It seems small but think about that multiplied over hundreds of seams in your quilt. If your seam allowance is off adjust it by using a piece of tape to mark your throat plate on your machine at a perfect ¼" you will be so happy you did later on.

Instructions:

1. Lay out your fabrics in stacks of three (for three blocks) so that they form your 9 Patch as shown.



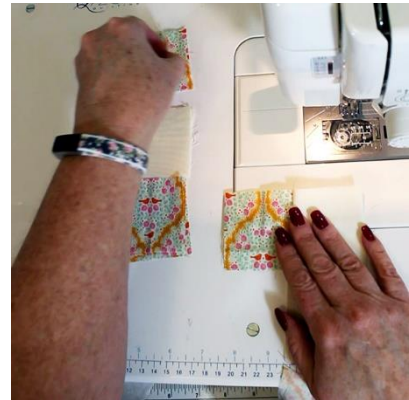
2. Place the center top piece right side together with the left top piece matching the edges pin approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the end and sew a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam removing your pin just before you get to it. Continue piecing in the same way the center piece to the center left piece, and the center bottom piece to the bottom left piece as shown.



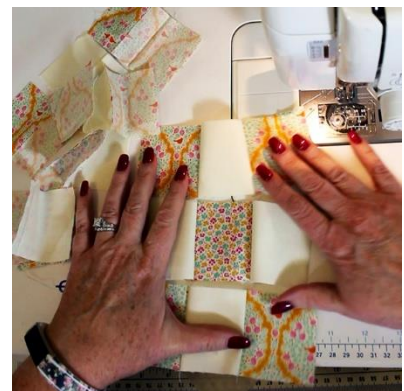
3. Without cutting your thread start back at the top of the stacks. Repeat step two until all right side pieces of the three blocks are sewn into pairs as shown. Cut your thread but do not cut the blocks apart.



4. Starting back at the beginning of your chain of pieces place the right top piece right side together with the center top piece and sew. Continue piecing in the same way the center piece to the center right piece, and the center bottom piece to the bottom right piece as shown.



5. Cut the thread between each of the blocks, three rows at a time, to separate your blocks.



6. Press your top seam out toward the darker fabrics, the middle seams in toward the darker fabric, and the bottom seams out toward the darker fabrics.



7. Place your top row of each block right side together with the middle row. Your seams should be going in opposite directions which will allow you to nestle your seams together and get them good and tight (this is what gives you nice points). Slide your seams together with your fingers until you feel them butt up together. Place two pins one on the right, and one on the left of the seam. Do not put a pin into the seam to hold it because this very act will actually push the seams apart. Put a pin $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the end of the two rows and one at the beginning about $\frac{1}{2}$ " down from where you will start sewing. Repeat for the other two blocks. Sew your seam removing pins as you get to them and making sure that your seams are not flipping the wrong way on the underside.



8. Repeat step 7 for the second seam in each block.
9. Press which ever way you prefer. I still prefer to press to the dark so I press the top seam up and the bottom seam down.



Disclaimers (AKA the reasons I do what I do)

Why do you press to the side when modern quilters always press open?

1. I press to the side even though there are some people that claim it is better to press open. You can listen to all arguments and make your own judgement. The reason that I press to the side is that if a stitch gets popped or broken and the seam is pressed open you will see a hole and see the batting through the top of the quilt. If you have pressed to the side and stitch gets broken you will see a tiny bit of the fabric seam allowance and it will not be a hole. Most likely by that point there will be quilting reinforcing the quilt and there won't be a problem with the hole and it will be much easier to fix if the seam allowance is there for you to mend it to.
2. I find it much easier to get crisp points when the seams are pressed to the side. I press to the dark wherever possible because 7 out of 10 times when you go to match up your next block in a row that will make your seams match on that block as well.

Why are we making 9 patches from squares when they can be made more quickly with strips?

1. This is good practice for making nice seams.
2. I find cutting strips makes for imprecise pieces. No matter how hard you try to cut the strip pieced pieces straight they always come out a bit wavy which makes a less than perfect nine patch.

Why do you pin every piece?

1. Because we are trying to make perfect blocks. If you don't care about perfect feel free to not pin. I do not always pin but I have been doing this for 25 yrs. I know that if I pin I am much more likely to make less mistakes. Since a lot of them can be caught while you are pinning.
2. It is easy to get pieces stretched and not lined up even if they are perfect when you start. If the end is pinned it is less likely that the pieces will be miss matched at the end of the seam since the machine will automatically ease your seam a bit for you.