

Owlsea's Patterns



My Method of Making a Harry Potter Quilt Block

Sorting It All Out

This tutorial illustrates my personal method of making a paper-pieced block.

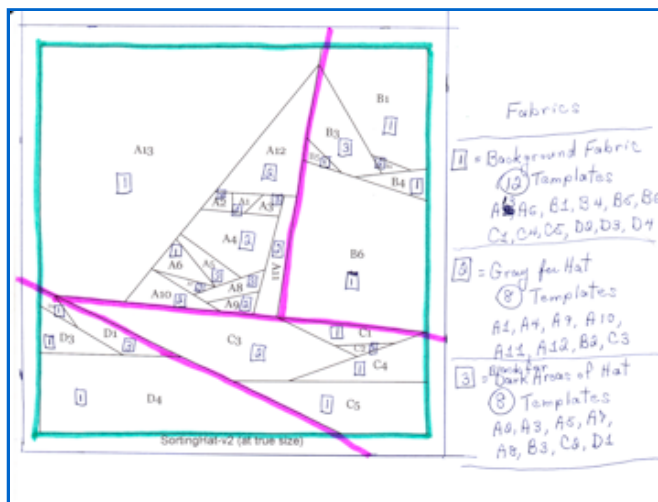
I cut all of the fabric pieces ahead of time before sewing. If I don't, I always end up with some pieces that have the wrong side of the fabric on the right side of the block. It never seems to fail!

Some of these tips I've collected from various sources, and some are of my own invention. Hopefully, you will find a hint or two here that will make things a bit easier for you when you paper-piece.



Homemade Fabric Chart and Templates

This pic shows a sample homemade fabric chart with templates.



Pattern marked for cutting templates, and Fabric Chart

This homemade chart (on the right) is especially important when making your own templates.

Print an Extra Copy of the Pattern for the Fabric Chart and Templates:

To make the templates and chart I print an additional copy of the pattern onto freezer paper if I have some, or I just use plain computer paper if I'm out of freezer paper.

Sorting Hat - Patterns

Sorting Hat - Pattern - Black & White

(Ink Saving Version) *Used this one for Tutorial*

Sorting Hat - Pattern - Color Version

(with Info & Instructions)

Mark the Outside Edges and Sections:

Then I mark the outside edges with a blue highlighter, and use a different highlighter (pink used here) on the section lines to make it easier to see where to start cutting the pattern apart later.

Add 1/4" Around the Outside Edge of the Pattern:

Then I mark around the pattern with pen to add 1/4" all around. This adds the extra 1/4" that I like to have on the outside edge templates to make sure the block will be large enough after it has "shrunk" in the sewing process.

I can hardly count how many paper-pieced blocks came out about 1/4" or more too small before I started doing this. This was very frustrating to say the least. This way I can always cut away any extra fabric later on, and my blocks are never too small when they're done.

Now using your design pic or a photo of a sewn block, hold a mirror up to it, to see it in reverse to match the pattern. Or use your paint program to mirror it, and print a mirrored copy. I find it hard to think backwards!

Mark the Pattern with the Fabric Colors, and Create the Chart:

Figure out how many fabric colors there are, and give each fabric its own number, then mark the pattern as shown.

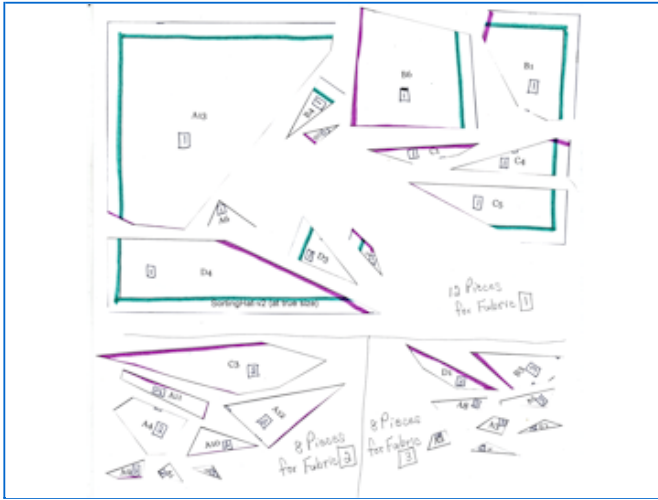
Make a chart beside the pattern, noting each piece that you've given a fabric number to. The reason I write the piece numbers on a chart is because once you cut up the pattern for templates, you might not be able to read the numbers on the tiny pieces. If the piece is really tiny, you might not want to write on it at all.

I always try to make sure NOT to write over the pattern piece number. It's better to lose the color number and keep the pattern number, I can always look up which fabric to use on my chart.

And counting the number of pieces for each fabric helps me to make sure that I haven't lost any pattern pieces. This way I'm double checking that I have all my pieces cut before putting my fabric away. (But not TOO far away in case I need to re-cut a piece I messed up while sewing!)

Cut the Pattern Into Templates

Now I cut the pattern apart into all its tiny pieces to be used as templates, keeping the chart for reference while cutting the fabric pieces.



The pieces are cut and sorted by fabric number



A few homemade templates pinned onto fabric

Since these templates don't have any seam allowances on them, I have to leave at least $\frac{3}{8}$ " around each piece when cutting it out. Double that amount (at least $\frac{3}{4}$ ") between 2 pattern pieces on the fabric when laying out several pattern pieces at a time.

A Small Piece of Paper Can Make This Easier:

I like to cut a strip of paper $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide as shown in the photos and use that when spacing out my pieces. I fold the paper in half to get $\frac{3}{8}$ " for pieces on the edge of a fabric. Notice the extra $\frac{1}{4}$ " on A13 automatically giving me the extra fabric I like to have on the outside edges of the block.

Be sure to put the templates on the **WRONG SIDE** of the fabric!

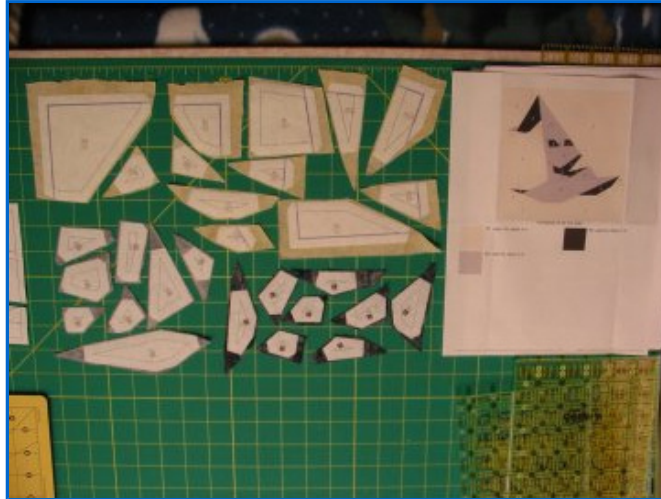
Paper-pieced patterns are a mirror image of the finished block.

After pressing or pinning all of the templates onto the fabric, I just have to cut in between the templates to get all my fabric pieces, repeating the process for each of the required fabrics.

If I have freezer paper, pressing the templates onto the fabric is much easier, and no pins to fight with. If I don't have any, I'll just print the templates onto regular printer paper and pin them to the fabric. Tiny applique pins are good for this because they don't stick out into the seam allowances as much as longer pins do.

OR
Pattern Templates and Fabric Chart (printed from Quilt Assistant)

The Quilt Assistant fabric chart shows me how many pieces of each fabric that I need to be cut. And the Quilt Assistant Templates already have the seam allowance on them which I like a lot!



[QA Templates With Cut Fabric and QA Fabric Chart](#)

I've printed the templates onto freezer paper and told the program to give me 3/8" seam allowances to give big enough pieces for paper-piecing.

For patterns that I didn't make myself, I usually trace the design into

[Quilt Assistant](#)

, which is a free program, so that I can have the fabric charts and all the templates ready to go with any seam allowance that I choose. And each QA template piece has the fabric number inside a colored box to match the fabric chart.

QA Template Points:

Notice that the Quilt Assistant templates have the points cut off, but I like to add them back. I find it makes it easier for me when sewing, it gives me a little extra fabric that I might need when things don't go exactly as planned when I'm sewing.

Outside Edges on QA Templates:

I always mark the Quilt Assistant templates where the outside edges of the block are, notice the blue lines. This is because I ALWAYS want extra fabric around the outside edges of my block. You can see how I've left extra fabric (about an extra 1/4" or more) at all those outside edges marked in blue.

Sorting Hat - Quilt Assistant Print-outs

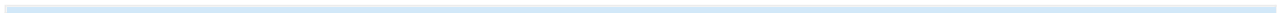
[Sorting Hat - Quilt Assistant Templates - Page 1 of 2](#)

(with Edge Lines already marked)

[Sorting Hat - Quilt Assistant Templates - Page 2 of 2](#)

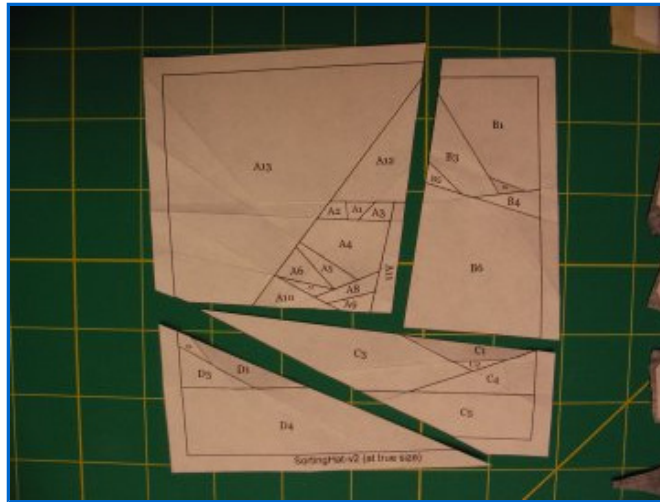
(with Edge Lines already marked)

[Sorting Hat - Quilt Assistant Fabric Chart](#)



Prepare the Pattern for Sewing

The paper-piecing pattern (with the extra 1/4" on the outside edges) is cut up into it's various sections, and then folded on ALL of the lines between pattern pieces.



Pattern cut into Sections and folded

Print an Extra Copy of the Pattern for Guidance While Sewing:

I like to print 2 copies of each pattern, the first copy is cut up into sections to be sewn on, the second copy is kept whole to refer to while sewing. I print a 3rd copy when I'm making my own templates.

Sorting Hat - Patterns

[Sorting Hat - Pattern - Black & White](#)

(Ink Saving Version) *Used this one for Tutorial*

[Sorting Hat - Pattern - Color Version](#)

(with Info & Instructions)

Add 1/4" Around the Outside Edge of the Pattern:

After printing a pattern, I mark a line 1/4" around the outside edges, and then I cut the pattern out on this line. This ensures that the block will be large enough after it has "shrunk" in the sewing process.

If the Pattern I'm Using Already Has Seam Allowances Around Each Section Piece:

Some patterns come in sections with the seam allowance all the way around every section. I always cut off the seam allowance on the outside of the sections, **EXCEPT for those on the outside of the block.**

This gives me the type of pattern section that I like to work with. When using my method, those seam allowances really get in the way, as you'll see later when we get to the joining of the sections.

Cut the Pattern Apart Into Sections:

A pattern that has multiple sections has to be cut apart along the section lines before you can use it.

Pre-Fold the Pattern Sections Before Sewing:

I find things go a lot easier if I fold the pattern sections on each line before starting to sew. I fold once on the line and crease well, fold again in the opposite direction and crease well again, then fold on the line again and crease well a third time.

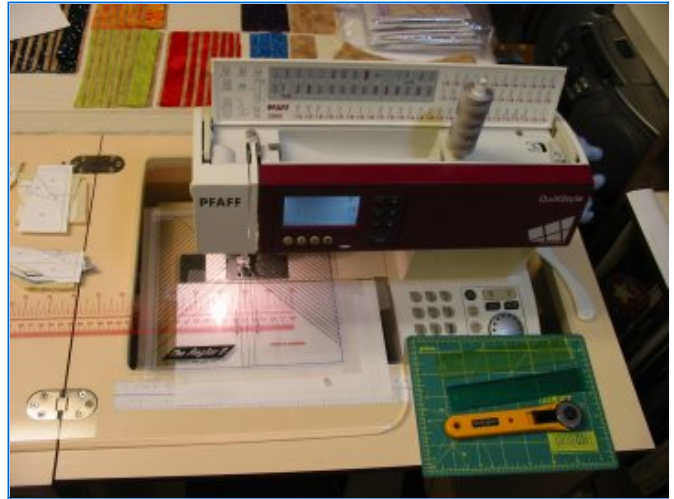
Since I'm using plain computer paper most of the time which can be a bit thick, this weakens the paper and makes it easier when sewing and also when removing the paper after the block is done.

Prepare to Sew

This is how I like to set up my work area. I'm left-handed so this might not be helpful to right-handed sewers.



Left side of Sewing Area



Right side with Sewing Machine

I find the little wooden stick iron invaluable. I used to use a regular iron, then a mini-iron, but now this is so much more convenient. I also really like the thread snippers that look like tweezers.

I have a little area set up on the right for trimming. This way I don't have to get up until I'm done sewing.

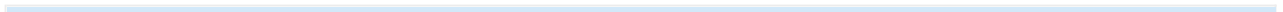
The Add-A-Quarter Ruler and the Add-An-Eighth Ruler are really a must. You can do fine without them, but it is SO MUCH EASIER just holding them against the folded paper to cut & trim.

A small rotary cutter and small cutting mat is nice too since my trimming area is so limited.

I like to listen to the Stephen Fry version of the Harry Potter books while I'm sewing Harry blocks. It keeps me inspired with new ideas for designs, and anxious to see the quilt completed.

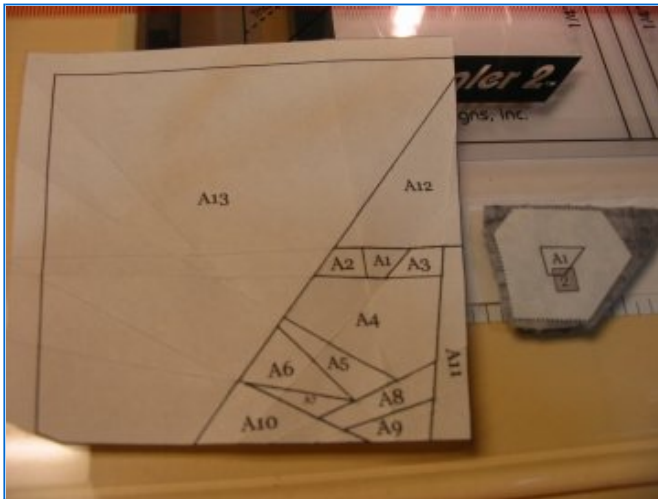
Sort the Cut Pieces by Section:

Now I sort all the cut template pieces into piles by section, and place the pattern section on top. If you put them in number order, they are always ready to grab the next piece you need when sewing.

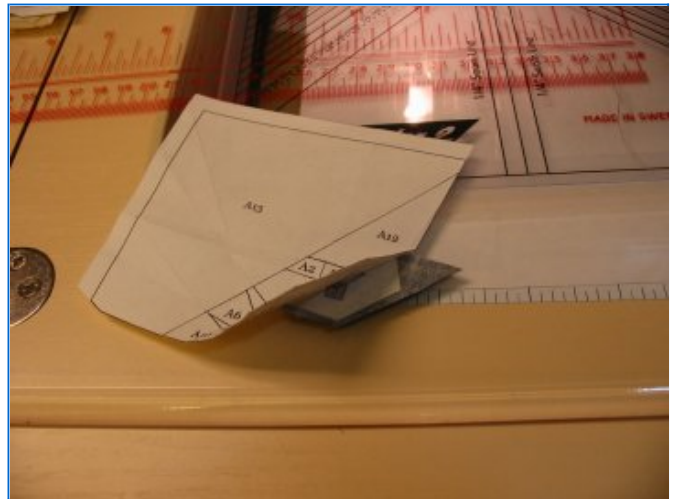


Pin the First Fabric Piece

These pictures show the placement and pinning of the first piece of the section.

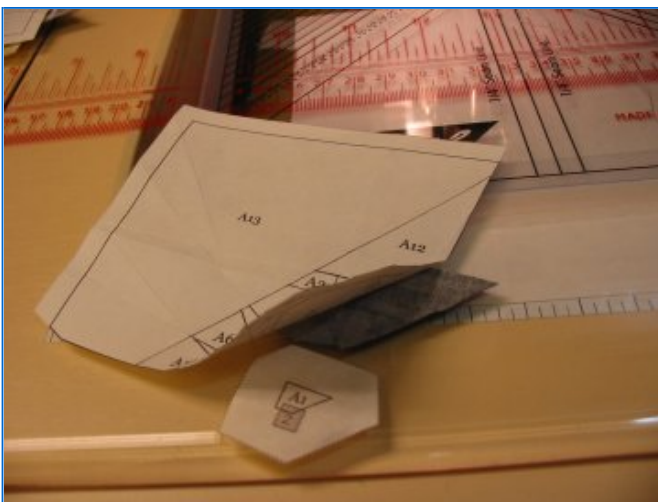


Orient piece A1 in same direction as pattern

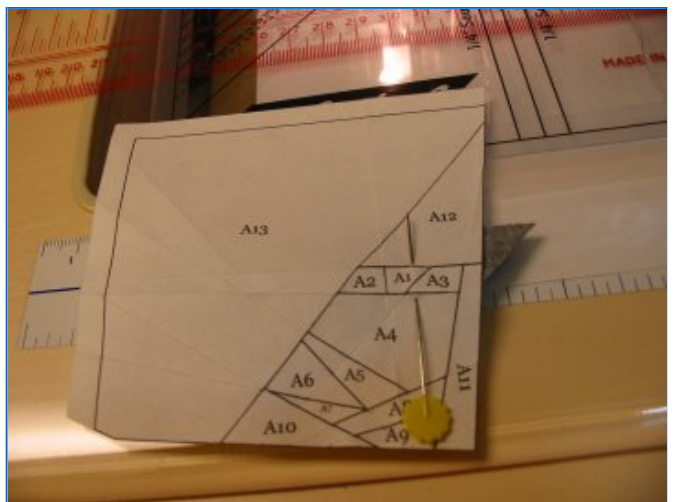


Put A1 under the correct spot

First I orient piece A1 in the same direction as the pattern.
Then I put it under the correct spot.



Carefully remove the paper

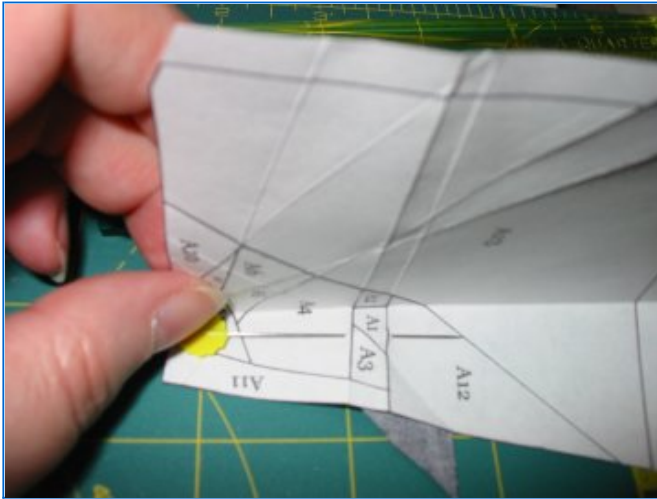


Pin fabric in place parallel to sewing line

Then I carefully remove the freezer paper while keeping the fabric in the same spot.
Then I pin the fabric in place with the pin parallel to where piece #2 goes, but not too close so it doesn't get in the way when sewing.

Trim the First Fabric Piece

These pictures show the trimming of fabric piece A1 at the edge that will be sewn to A2.



Fold the pattern on the line between A1 and A2

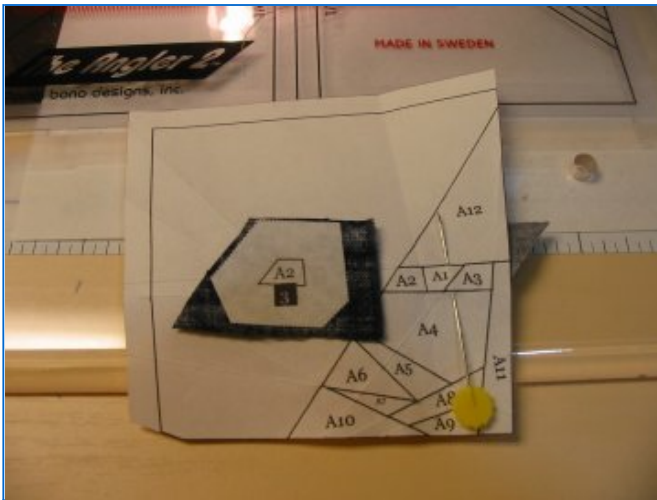


Trim the seam allowance down to 1/4"

Fold the pattern on the line for the next piece to be added, in this case the line between A1 and A2. Trim the seam allowance down to 1/4" using the Add-A-Quarter Ruler and any other ruler that works for you.

Sew the First Seam

These pics show the placing of A2 onto the pattern.



Orient piece A2 in same direction as pattern



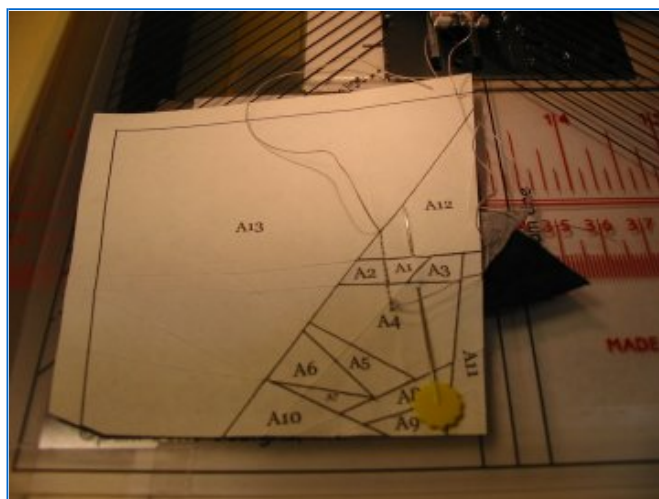
Put A2 beside the newly trimmed edge of A1

First I orient piece A2 in the same direction as the pattern. Then I flip the pattern over, and put it beside the newly trimmed edge of A1.

These pics show A2 in place ready to sew, and after it's sewn.



Carefully remove the paper



Sew with a small stitch

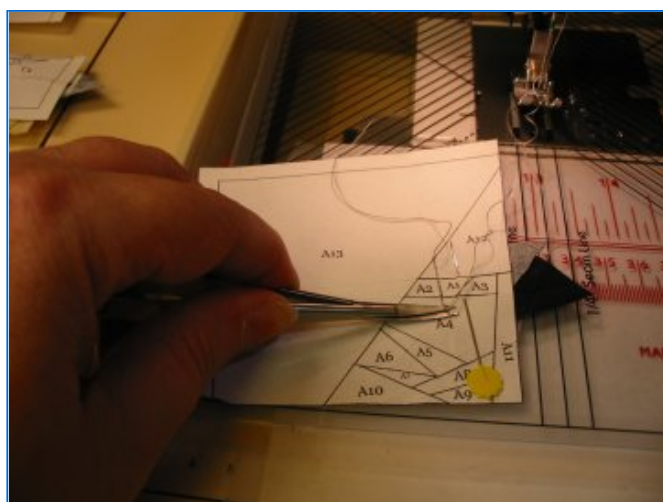
I carefully remove the freezer paper while keeping the fabric in the same spot. Holding the pieces together carefully, I flip it back over and sew on the line, starting and stopping about 4 stitches before and after the line.

Use a small stitch to sew through the paper (1.5 on my machine), to help perforate the paper for later on.

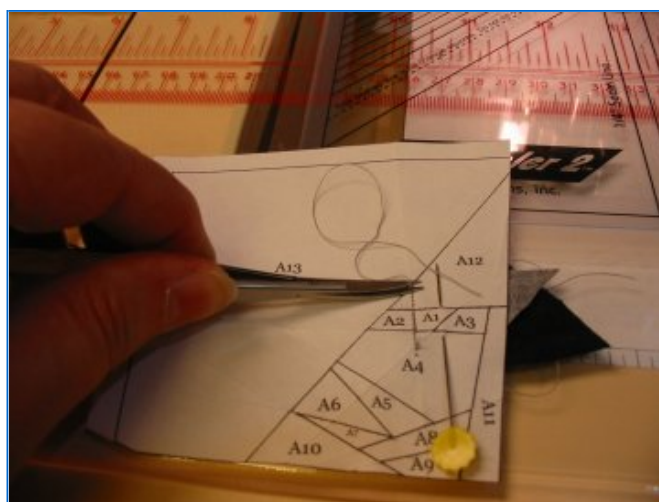
You can now remove the pin holding the A1 piece of fabric since the sewn seam will hold it from now on.

Snip the Threads

These pictures show using the Thread Snippers.



Snip the threads at the start of the seam

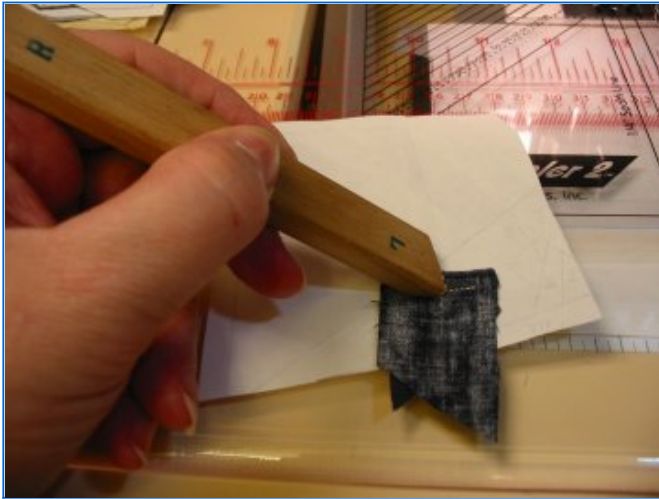


Snip the threads at the end of the seam

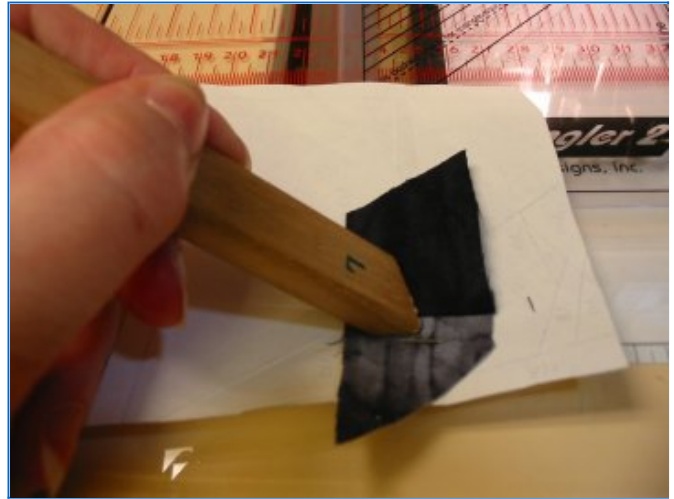
Tug on the top thread a tiny bit until the bottom thread pops up a loop, now snip the top thread and bottom threads at the same time. Repeat for the other end of the seam. Two snips instead of four!

Press with the Wooden Iron

These pictures show using the Wooden Iron.



Press the closed seam

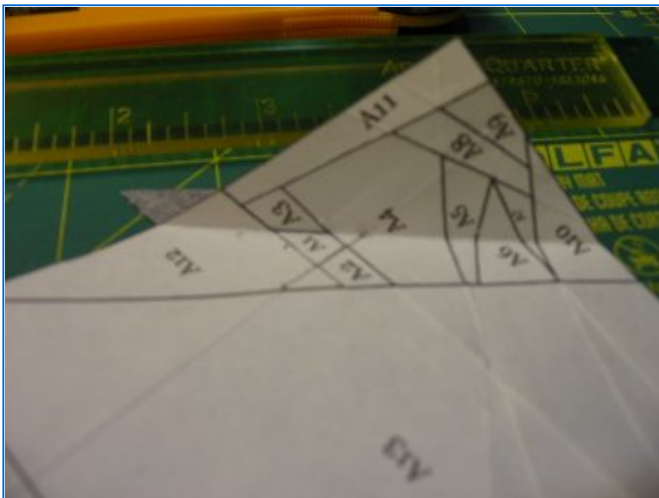


Press the seam open

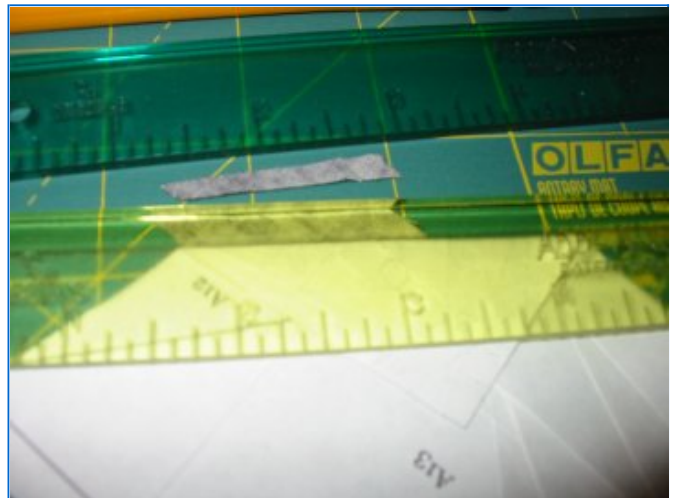
I use the Wooden Iron to press the closed seam first. This helps to set the seam, just like using a "real" iron. Next I use the Wooden Iron to press the seam open on the front side of the block. This is a great little iron, no burnt fingers and instant results!

Sew the Second Seam

These pics show trimming the seam allowance to prepare for piece A3.



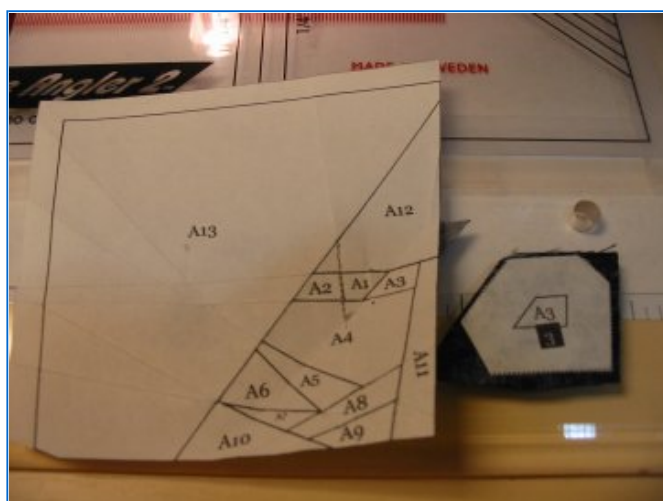
Fold the pattern on the line between A1 and A3



Trim the seam allowance down to 1/4"

Fold the pattern on the line between A1 and A3 to trim seam allowance on A1 that A3 will be sewn to. Trim the seam allowance down to 1/4" just like you did for the previous piece.

These pics show sewing A3 onto A1 & A2 through the pattern.



Orient piece A3 in the same direction as the pattern



Flip the pattern over, and put the fabric beside the newly trimmed edge of A1

Orient A3 in the same direction as the pattern. I find this helps me to make that sure I'm sewing to the correct edge of the new piece. Flip the pattern over, and put the fabric beside the newly trimmed edge of A1.

Now Sew Piece A3 onto the Pattern Repeating the Process You Used on the Previous Piece:

Carefully remove the freezer paper while keeping the fabric in the same spot.

Holding pieces together carefully, flip it over, and sew on the line, with a few stitches before and after the line.

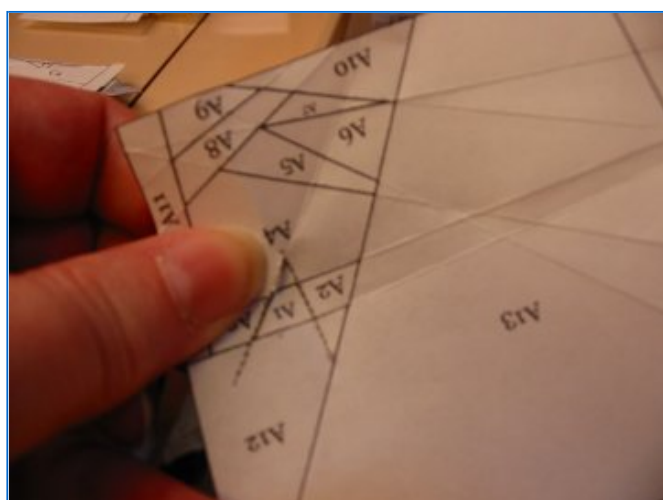
Snip the threads at both ends of the seam.

Use the Wooden Iron to press the closed seam.

Use the Wooden Iron to press the seam open.

Sew the Third Seam (Adding A4)

These pictures show what to do to add the A4 pattern piece.



Tear the paper where the extra sewing went over the line



Now you can fold the paper on the A4 line

The First Rip in the Paper:

Carefully perforate the paper where the extra stitches went over the line. The thicker your paper is, the harder it is to do this. With printer paper I don't like to just rip it back because I'm afraid it might take some of my stitches with it. I usually use both hands, but couldn't figure out how to do that, and hold the camera too! There are two seams crossing over this line, so you have to do both of them.

Once that's done, you can fold and trim the seam allowance like before.

The next pics show how to make sure a piece is where you want it to be.



Pins at the left, right, and bottom points of the A4 piece



Flip it over and look, not centered over the area very well

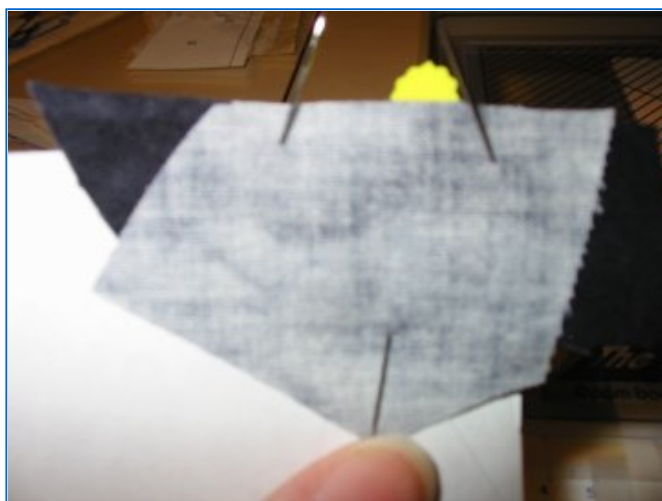
Checking the Fabric Placement:

I put pins at the left and right sides of the A4 line, and then folded the pattern down so that I could get a pin at the bottom point of the A4 piece.

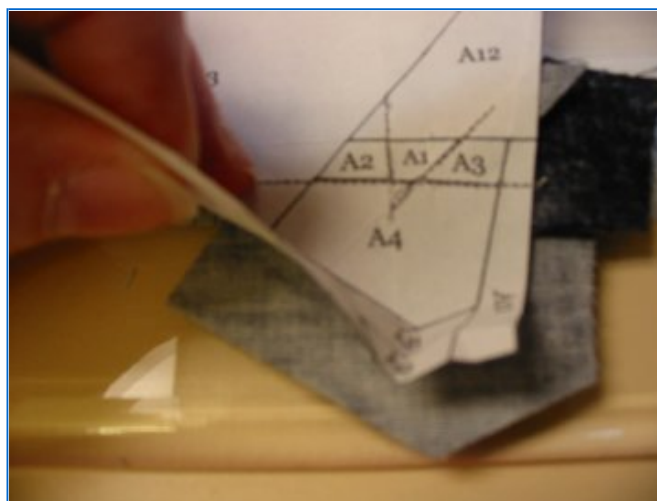
I usually just use my thumb on top and index finger on the bottom, then flip back and forth, checking each spot I'm concerned about, but I couldn't figure how to do that with the camera in my hand, so I used pins. The finger version of the checking process is usually pretty quick, just a rough estimate to make sure I have piece right.

Since the piece was off center, and the right side is much smaller than it appears to be in the photo, I decided to re-position the fabric and re-check.

The next pics show the checking of the moved fabric piece, and what it looked like after sewing it.



The re-positioned A4 fabric piece



The A4 fabric piece after sewing and pressing

Re-Checking after Re-Positioning the Fabric:

Put pins at the left and right sides of the A4 line, and then fold the pattern down and put a pin at the bottom point of the A4 piece, and see that it's much more centered now. You can see that the fabric is covering the entire A4 area plus a nice seam allowance.

Sometimes You Have To Move the Fabric Up:

Since my cut pieces have 3/8" seam allowances and I'm putting them beside a trimmed 1/4" seam allowance, sometimes I have to shift a fabric piece UP a tiny bit, to get it where it needs to be.

After sewing, I just re-trim the seam allowance to remove the "extra" fabric at the seam allowance.

Add Pieces A5, A6, and A7 Using the Same Process You Used on the Previous Pieces:

Fold the pattern on the line where you are going to add the next piece, ripping the paper if needed.

With the pattern folded, trim the seam allowance down to 1/4".

Orient the new fabric piece with template attached in the same direction as the pattern.

Flip the pattern over, and put the piece beside the newly trimmed edge of the previously sewed piece.

Carefully remove the freezer paper while keeping the fabric in the same spot.

Finger-check or pin-check that the piece will cover and leave a good seam allowances.

Re-position if necessary, and re-check.

Holding pieces together carefully, flip it over, and sew.

Snip the threads at both ends of the seam.

Use the Wooden Iron to press the closed seam.

Use the Wooden Iron to press the seam open.

Repairing a Pattern

These pictures show a damaged pattern, and the same pattern repaired.



The A8 and A9 section is getting pretty raggedy



Removable tape does the trick

Sometimes Patterns Quit Before You Do:

When a pattern starts to fall apart it's time for the removable tape. It's not as sticky as regular scotch tape, which is good for your sewing machine, and you can see through it just fine.

Not to mention that you might not get it placed perfectly the first time, and the removable part is important on that poor, ragged pattern.

Trimming a Seam Allowance to 1/8" to Reduce Bulk in Seam Allowances

These pictures show the re-trimming of a seam allowance to 1/8", AFTER sewing with a 1/4" seam allowance.



Trimming the seam allowance down to 1/8" with the Add-An-Eighth Ruler



The trimmed seam ready for pressing with the Wooden Iron

Sometimes It Gets Thick in Here:

When I have a narrow piece like A11 or A8 that is 1/8" wide but less than 1/4", I trim the seam allowance down to reduce the number of fabric layers under the next seam.

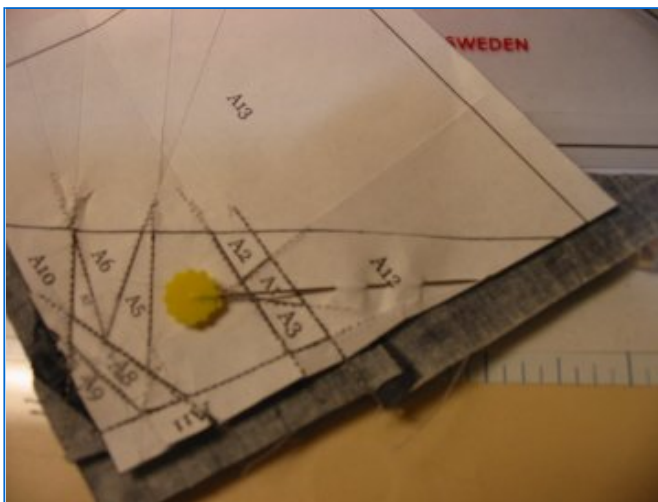
I also do this when sewing faces with eyes and glasses, or anywhere that has many pieces in a small area, otherwise it can get REALLY thick pretty fast, and difficult to sew and press.

I don't overuse this technique because it does leave less security in the seam, and I NEVER use it if a fabric seems prone to fraying. But for bulky areas, sometimes it's just the thing that makes a bulky area manageable.

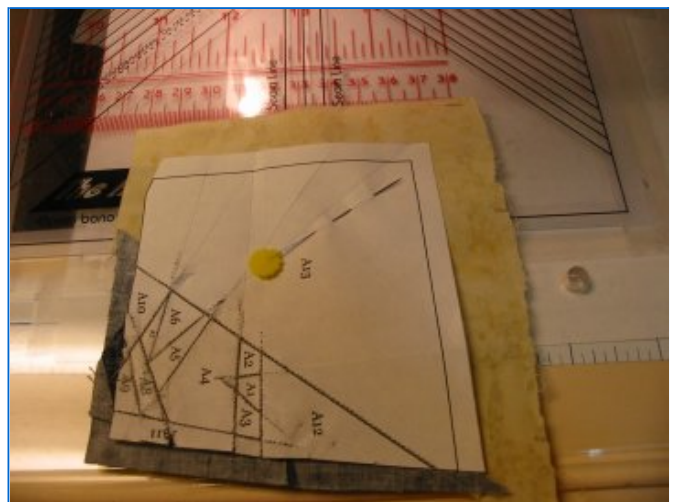
It wasn't really necessary in this particular block, but I wanted to document it here, and I figured it would be easier to see and understand in a simple area, rather than an area with LOTS of pieces like a face.

Pinning Large or Skinny Pieces

These pics show the pinning of large pieces.



Piece A12 is an example of a skinny piece



Piece A13 is an example of a larger piece

Shifty Pieces:

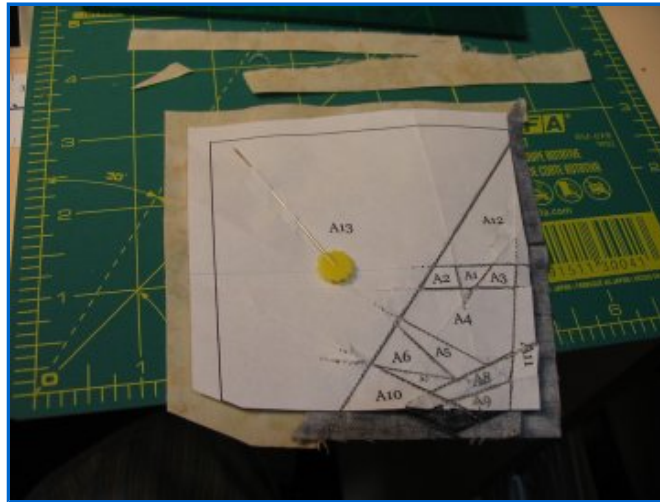
When pieces are large or skinny, they tend to want to move around and shift when you try to trim them. This can result in accidentally cutting a piece too small when trimming, when it was perfectly fine when you sewed it.

It works out a lot better when I pin the piece in place to keep it from moving. Notice, that whenever I pin a large piece, I put the pin in and out a couple of times. I do this here, as well when I pin large templates onto fabric using longer pins. I find this is a lot more stable.

These pins will stay in until the seam is sewn in the case of A12, or until the block is done in the case of A13.

Trimming a Pattern Section After It's Completely Sewn

This pic shows the trimming of Section A after it's completely sewn.



Trimming the completed Section A

Trimming a Section After It's Sewn:

Once a section is done, the ruler gets another workout on the outside edges of the section. Hold the ruler up to the outside edge of the pattern section and trim to 1/4".

Sew Section B Using the Instructions From Section A:

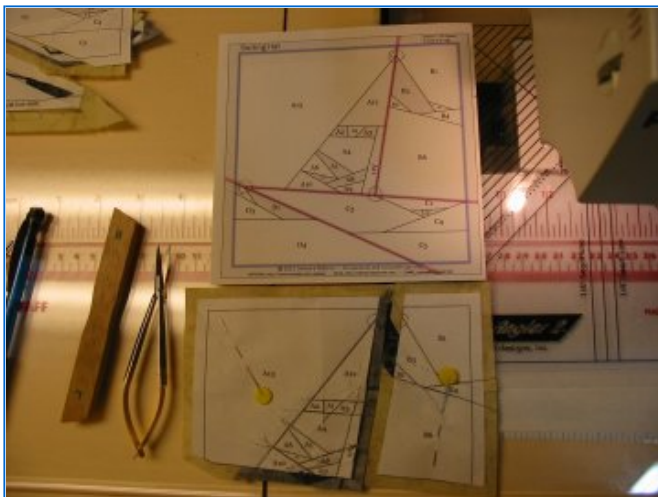
Repeat the steps you used make Section A to sew Section B.

The pattern pieces and numbers are different, but the procedure is the same.

Once that's done, you're ready to join to Section B to Section A.

Sewing Two Sections Together

These pics show the marking of match points and checking to see how they look.



Marked match points on Pattern and Sections A & B



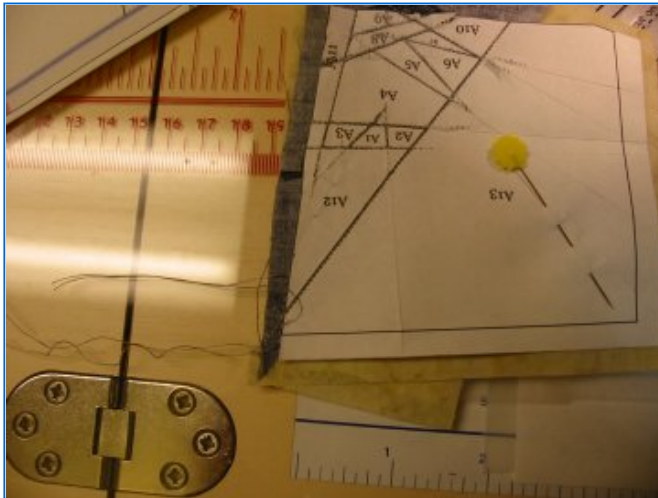
Checking to see how the points look before sewing

Mark the Match Points:

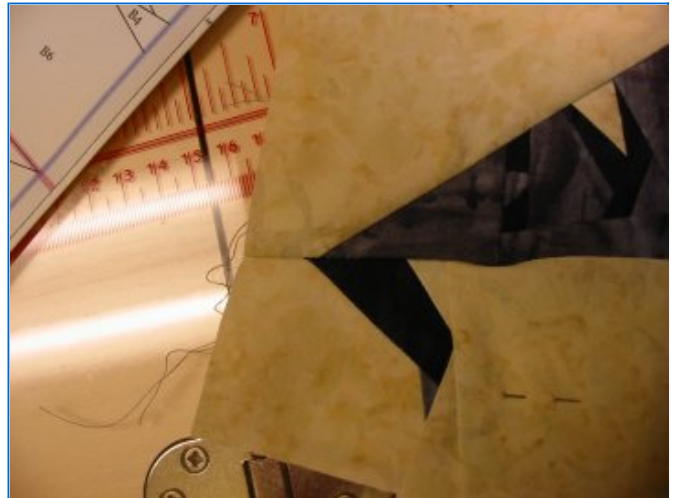
As you can see on the second copy of the pattern that I use as a guide, I've marked three areas where I'd like the design to match when I join the sections. I've also made a matching circle at the same spot on the Sections at the top of the hat (half of the circle on each Section).

When I first held the two sections together, you can see the points looks off.

These pics show my first attempt to match the points.



Basted first attempt to match points



Oops, not exactly what I was hoping for

Lengthen the Stitches for the Basting Process:

Lengthen your stitch length and baste the area with just a few stitches before and after the match point. I set my machine anywhere between the default setting of 2.5 and the longest setting of 4.0 depending on how hard a time I'm having with the match point. A bigger number means an easier time removing the stitches if it's not coming out right.

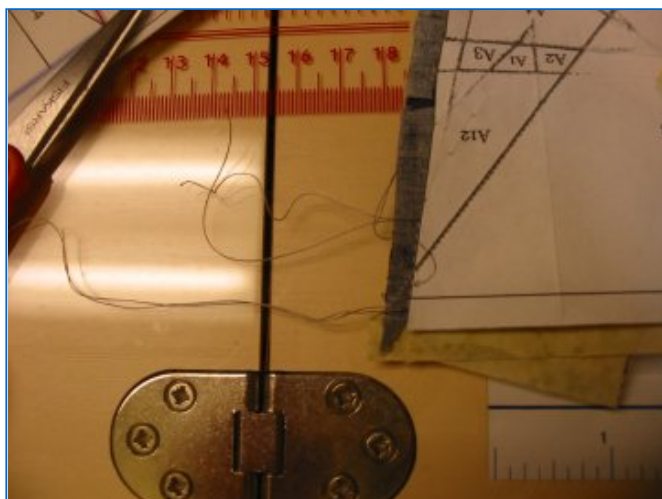
Baste the Match Point and Check it Before Sewing the Entire Seam:

Now that my machine is set for basting, I sew the match point and check to see how I've done. If it looks good, then I can move on to sewing the joining seam.

When Points Won't Play Nice:

My first attempt did not bring the results I was hoping for, but at least I only had to unsew a FEW stitches instead of an entire seam. Though it would have been fewer stitches if I had remembered to change the stitch length!

These pics show my second attempt to match the point of the hat.



Basted second attempt to match points



This looks much better

Second Time's the Charm (or Was it Third? Fourth? Fifth?):

I basted a second time, and checked, and this time I was happy with the result. (I got excited when it matched quite nicely, and went and sewed the seam immediately, forgetting to take a pic showing the result after the second basting. So the pic above is from the finished and pressed block.)

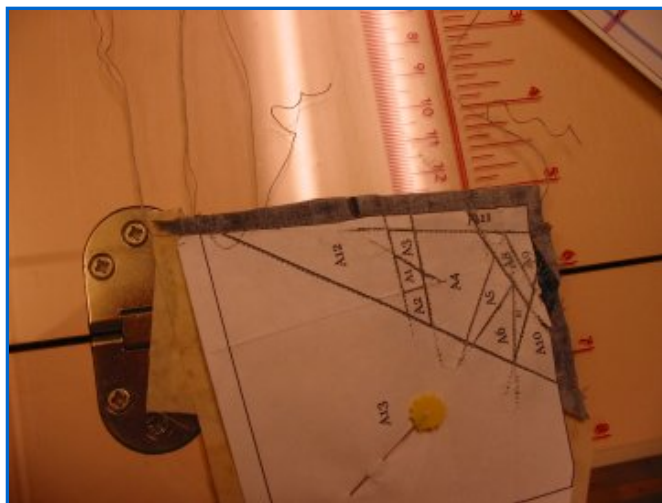
When the Matched Seams Move Out of Alignment as I'm Sewing:

If I'm having lots of trouble getting a point to match, or it seems to be moving out of alignment while I'm sewing, I'll put a pin quite near to the point, but not actually in the seams I'm trying to match, and then make sure NOT to sew over the pin.

More Than One Match Point on a Joining Seam:

If there are several match points on a seam, I do them one at a time. Once I'm happy with all of them, I'm ready to sew the seam.

This pic shows the seam after it's sewn, with the basting still in place.



The entire sewn seam after matching the point

Sew the Joining Seam With A Normal Stitch Length:

Now that I'm happy with the match points, I set my machine to the DEFAULT stitch length, which is 2.5 on my machine to sew the seam. Since I'm not perforating the paper at this point, there's no need for a tiny stitch, and if I have to rip the seam out and start over, at least it will be a bit easier at the longer stitch length.

Sewing a Joining Seam with More Than One Match Point:

If there are several match points on the seam, I sew very carefully, gently tugging a bit, or stretching or scrunching a bit, to get the area between the match points to fit together without any wrinkles, either on the top or on the bottom.

When It Just Won't Cooperate :

If I can't make it work without a problem, I might have to give up on my least important match point. First I have to unsew the seam, and then remove the basting at that match point. Then I'll try again, this time nudging it out of a perfect match by a tiny bit, until the seam will lay flat and cooperate. Sometimes, I just have to tell myself "Close Enough!" and move on to the next section.

Why I Don't Like Patterns to Have Paper in the Seam Allowances:

When I've tried to use a pattern section that had paper in the seam allowances, the seam was stiff and solid and had no "give" between match points. This inability to have a bit of stretch while I'm sewing is one of the main reasons why I don't like paper in the seam allowances. You can't very well tug gently and "ease" things between match points when the paper is holding things solidly together.

Another thing that bothered me about it is that when you're trimming the section, you can't use the ruler up against the outside edge of the section. Since the paper is there, you need to trim beside the paper and can't use the ruler.

Not to mention all the extra thickness the paper adds to the seam.

Plus you have even more paper to remove from even more seams when you're done sewing!

It was just too much hassle for me.

I find that with paper-free seam allowances it is MUCH easier to get the results I want, with LESS WORK!

To Remove the Basting or Not to Remove the Basting:

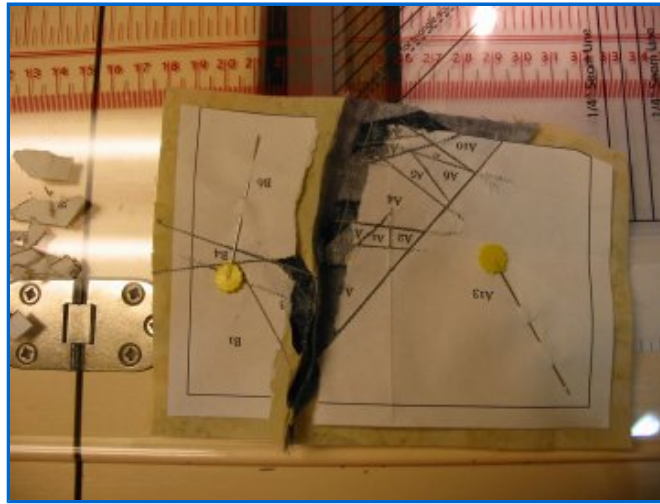
I prefer to remove it, but it does no harm at all to leave it. Since it's usually done in a large stitches and comes out easily, I usually remove it.

Shorten Your Stitch Again

Be sure to shorten your stitch again when you're done with the joining seam, since you'll be sewing through the paper again when you sew on your next Section.

Remove Paper From Seam Area and Press with Wooden Iron

This pic shows the paper removed for at least 1/4" near the seams.



Paper removed at the seam area of Sections A & B

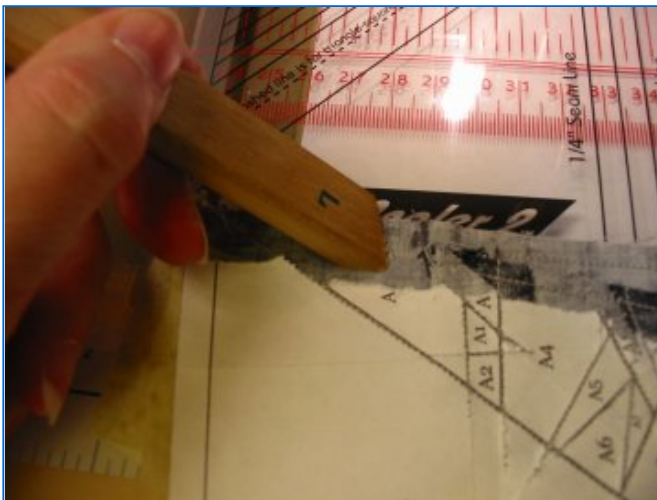
Rip Away the Paper Near the Section Joining Seam:

In order to be able to press the seam after joining Sections, I find it much easier to remove 1/4" or slightly more of the paper away from the seam area.

Not only does this make it easier to press, but I don't end up with paper stuck UNDER a seam when the block is done that I can't remove because I can't get to it. You really notice this when your pattern has many small sections joined together.

I really hated struggling to get it out, and I'm one of those people who just COULDN'T bring myself to leave it in, even though it was tiny and didn't make much of a difference. This eliminates that problem, preventing paper from getting stuck in the cross seams.

These pics show the pressing of the seam with the Wooden Iron.



Pressing the closed seam with the Wooden Iron



Pressing the seam open with the Wooden Iron

It's Time to Press Again:

This seam is usually a LOT lumpier than most, but I do my best with the little Wooden Iron to set the seam.

Open That Seam, and Let's See What We've Got:

Then I press the seam open with the Wooden Iron, letting the seam tell me which way it wants to go. Usually the bulk is more on one side than the other, and it's clear which way it wants to go.

Dueling Directions:

Other times, it wants to go one way at one end of the block, and the opposite way at the other end. I try to get it to cooperate, but if it fights me, sometimes I just let it go BOTH WAYS, with an odd twisting in the seam allowance in between.

When It Just Won't Cooperate:

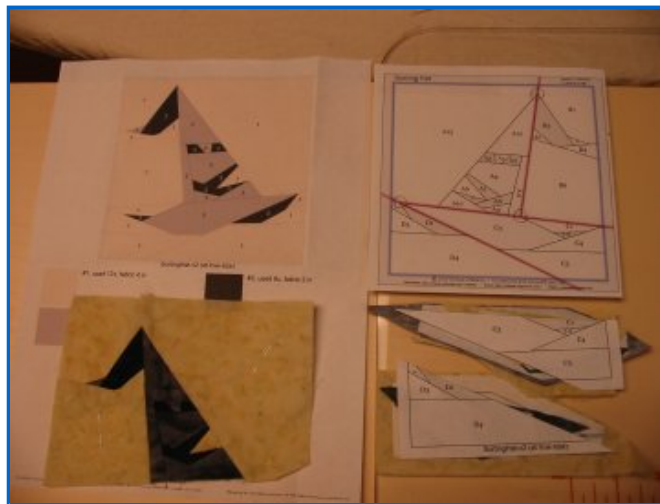
Sometimes there's just too much bulk in an area, and it doesn't want to go either way.

I say "split the difference" and press the seam OPEN, with half the bulk on each side.

I just do whatever I think works best for block in front of me, and hope for the best when it's done.

My new saying is "It won't really show that much once it's quilted, will it? The lump will probably sink into the batting, right?"

This pic shows the progress so far.



Halfway there - Sections A and B joined

The Worst is Over, We're Halfway There:

Here's my sewing area after finishing with Sections A and B, ready to sew Sections C and D.

I like having the pic of the finished design in front of me, as well as the second copy of the pattern. I can get pretty lost without my "compass" in front of me!

Sew and Join the Final Two Sections (C and D):

Repeat the steps you used make Section A to sew Sections C and D, then repeat the joining instructions for Sections A and B, to add Sections C and D to your block.

These pics show the completely sewn block with seam allowance paper removed, and the front of the block.



Completed sewn with seam allowance paper removed



The front of the block after pressing with Wooden Iron

The Block is Now Completely Sewn:

After pressing the final section seam closed with the Wooden Iron, then removing the seam allowance paper, and pressing the seam open from the front with the Wooden Iron again, we have a completed block!

It's Time to Take the Paper OUT of Paper-Piecing:

Now is when I remove all of the paper that's left on the back of the block. Usually even printer paper is fairly weak at this point, and I just tear it away like a perforated sheet of paper.

Sometimes little tiny pieces get stuck in sharp pointy areas, but I can usually just scratch them away with a fingernail, or I use tweezers if that doesn't work.

Now Give Your Block a REAL Pressing

These pics show my favorite dry iron for paper-piecing.



My dry iron



No holes to get caught on bulky seams

Look Ma! No Holes!:

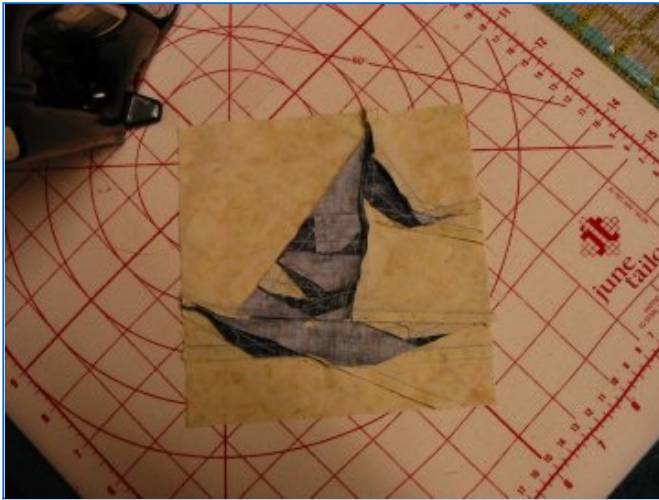
I got really tired of my paper-pieced blocks getting "caught" in the holes of a regular steam iron. So I found this flat bottom iron at the Vermont Country Store.

It makes some odd clicking and snapping sounds sometimes, and the dial is loose, so I have to be really careful not to move it while I'm pressing, but it's the only iron I use for these blocks.

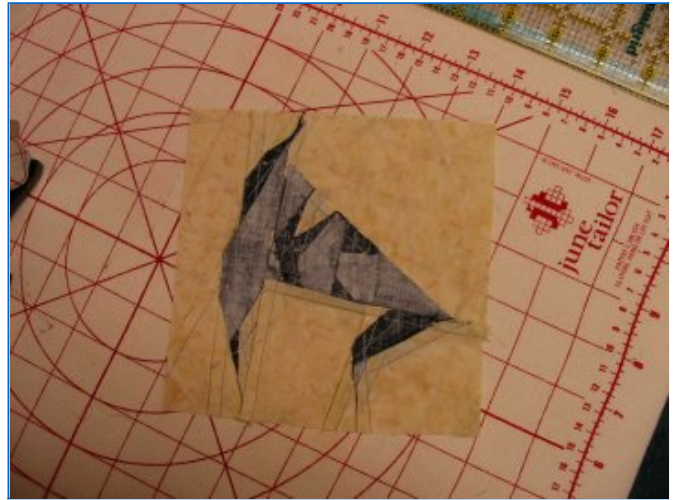
It tends to run a bit hot, so I usually only set it at 3. I've scorched sewn blocks in the past with other irons and lost them after all that hard work, so I'm super careful now not to over-press or use too hot a heat setting.

If a section is really giving me a hard time, I'll spritz it with a spray bottle of water. But I try not to, because then your fabric will really stretch out of shape easily if you're not really careful while pressing.

These pics show the block back before and after pressing.



Back of sewn block before pressing

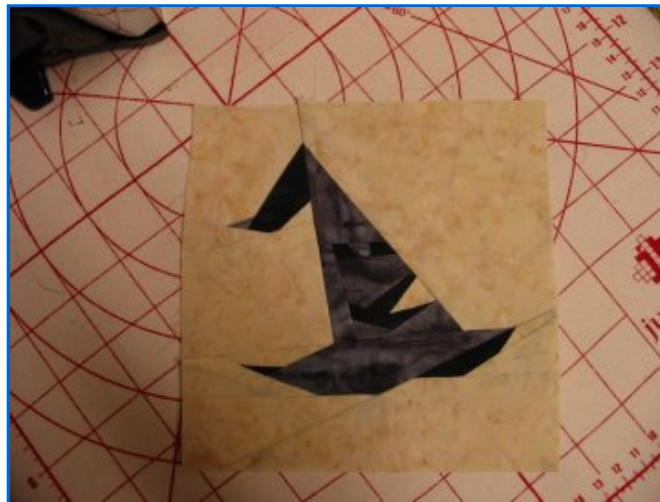


Back of sewn block after pressing

Most of the Work is Already Done:

Since I've been pressing the seams in the direction that I want them to go in with the Wooden Iron as I go along, they're already behaving pretty well before I do this finally pressing with the Dry Iron.

This pic shows the front of the sewn block after it's been pressed.



Sewn block pressed and ready for final trimming

One Final Press on the Front:

Now I give the block one FINAL press on the front and we're done, except for trimming of the extra I left around all of the outside edges for safety.

A Final Trim and We're DONE!

This pic shows the sewn and pressed block ready to be trimmed.



Sewn block ready to be trimmed, with design pic for reference

A Design Pic is Great Friend:

I use the design pic to center the design under the ruler. I especially need to remind myself that 1/4" of what I see UNDER THE RULER is going to be hidden in the seams when I sew it into the quilt. The design pics lets me know how the block needs to be centered under the ruler. With some blocks that shrink a lot in sewing, it can be hard to tell where to place the ruler to keep the design centered without a pic for reference.

A 5 1/2" Ruler is a Tremendous Help:

If you're going to be making a LOT of 5" finished blocks that are 5 1/2" unfinished, you might want to invest in the ruler. With the rotating cutting pad and this ruler, once I've centered the ruler, I just hold it REALLY WELL, and trim all around without ever moving the ruler. If I have to, I just carefully lift my hand up without moving the ruler, turn the mat, then gently replace my hand, hold down firmly, and cut the next side.

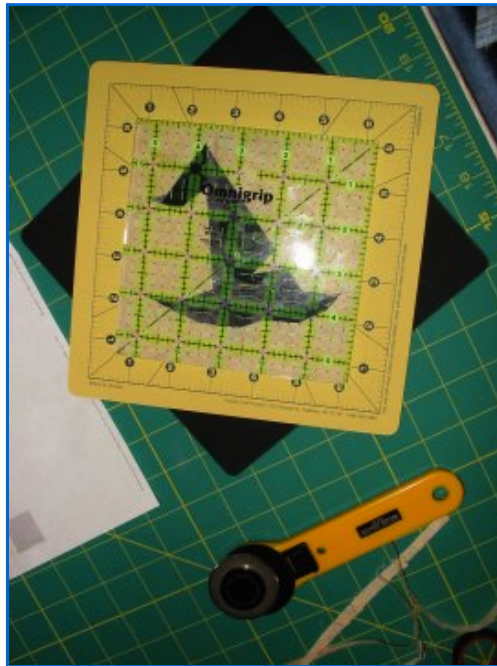
Trim Any Extra Left Around the Outside of the Block:

This block is probably the one I designed with the least number of pattern pieces, therefore it didn't shrink all the much in the sewing process.

But I've had some end up almost 1/2" too small when it was a block with lots of pieces and sections before I started leaving extra. Better safe than sorry I always say, especially after sewing a block with 80 or more pieces and over 15 sections. You do not feel like starting over at this point!

A block that came out perfectly would have exactly 1/4" left all the way around. I've yet to sew that perfect block! This one is probably the closest I've ever come.

This pic shows the trimmed block, ready to be added to my quilt.



The block is now trimmed and done

Remove the Ruler, and Call it Done!:

If all went as planned, you now have a perfect 5 1/2" square to be sewn into your quilt or whatever project you have in mind.

This pic shows the completed paper-pieced block.



The Sorting Hat ready to be sewn into the quilt

Congratulation! It's a Block!:

Well, I hope all the work was worth it, and you like your new block!

These are the tips and tricks that help me along with my paper-piecing.
Hope you found this tutorial helpful!

I'd be grateful if you let me know about any errors, or things that are unclear, I have a tough time proof-reading my own stuff.

HAPPY SEWING !!!

Harry Potter at Hogwarts - Castle Quilt

[Quilt Block Patterns](#)

[Quilt Design & Layout](#)

NEW! [Paper-Piecing Tutorial](#)

[Pattern Making](#)

[Owlsea's Blog](#)

[Other Patterns](#)

~ Designs by Connie Tessier ~

© 2008-2010 Owlsea's Patterns -- For personal and non-profit use only

E-mail: [owlsea\(AT\)comcast\(DOT\)net](mailto:owlsea(AT)comcast(DOT)net)

