

Curves Ahead!

An instructional guide for achieving Gentle Curves in Paper Piecing
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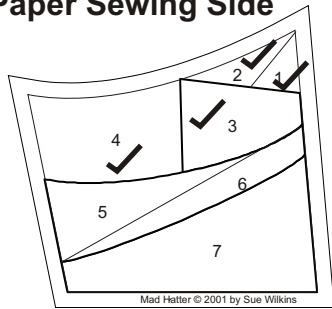
In my quest for creating realistic designs I often wish for smooth curved lines.

I have developed some techniques that will achieve just that.. There is one method for adding gentle curves within a pattern section and a second for joining two curved pieces together.

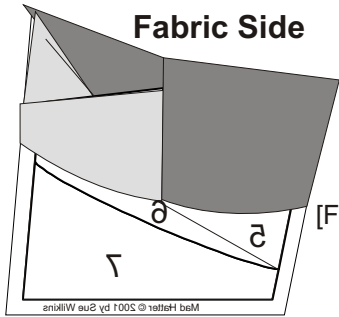
Sewing curves within a pattern section

1. Add pieces in normal sequence. [Fig. 1]
2. When you come to a long softly curved line you will [Fig.2]
 - a) Trim the previously added piece(s) freehand, following the curved line to be added and allowing slightly more than your usual 1/4" seam allowance.

[Fig. 1] Paper Sewing Side

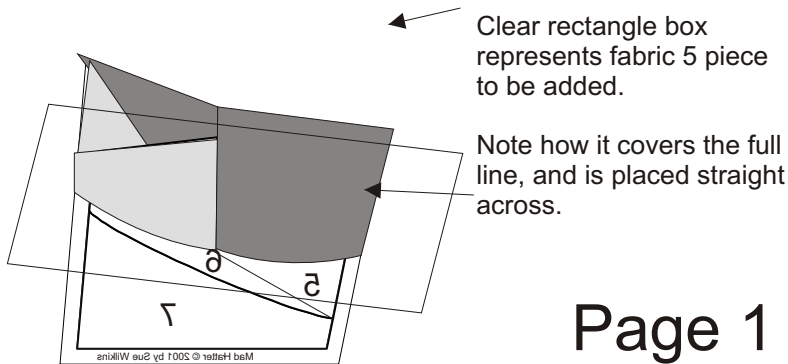


Fabric Side



- b) Place fabric to be added right side down, straight across at deepest point and allow a little more than you usually do to cover the patch [Fig.3]

Fabric Side

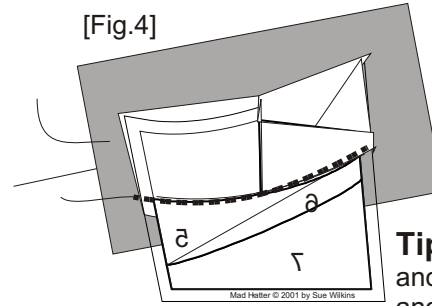


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Sewing curves within a pattern section: continued

Step 2, c) Sew along curved line. [Fig.4], and trim excess seam allowance following curve. [Fig.5]

[Fig.4]

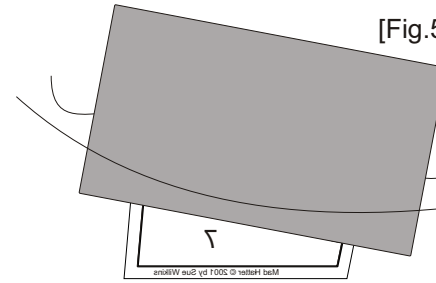


Paper Sewing Side

Sew along curved line

Tip: It helps to take a couple of anchoring stitches at the beginning and end. This will prevent stitches being pulled and being visible on the fabric side. (See step 3a)

[Fig.5]



Fabric Side

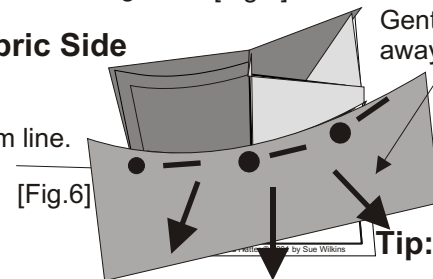
Trim seam allowance following curve.

Step 3, a)

When you turn back to your fabric side and open the piece just added you will notice a slight fold (pulling) along the seam line. Here's what we do next. Gently stretch the fabric from the seam line outward, and hold by placing straight pins (flat head are best) close to the seam line to prevent the fold from rolling back. [Fig.6]

Fabric Side

Straight pins close to seam line.



Gently stretch fabric away from seam line

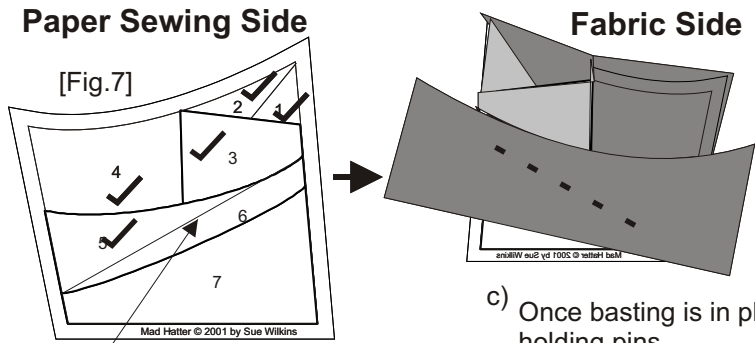
Tip: A hot iron with a bit of steam is a great help here

Tip: Some find it preferable to place their pins on the paper side so they don't accidentally run over them while sewing.

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Sewing curves within a pattern section: continued

Step 3 b) Once the fabric has been stretched and smoothed, place a few basting stitches (I change to largest machine stitch length) Just beyond the next add line. [Fig.7]



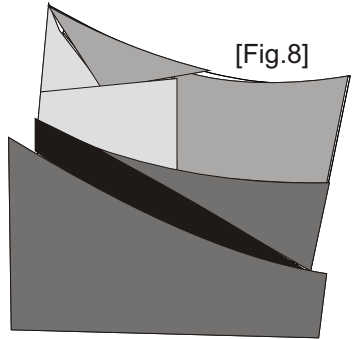
Shows next add line.

c) Once basting is in place remove holding pins.
Trim to 1/4 " seam allowance following curve as in 2a.

Step 4. Lay on next piece in sequence. Repeat Step 2b-2c.
Hand trim seam allowance and continue next steps.

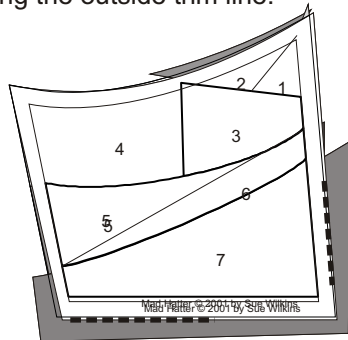
Additional instruction when adding to a curved piece that covers to the outside edge.

1. Add Fabric in same manner, [Fig.8]



Fabric Side

2. Sew a line of anchoring stitches [Fig.9] along the outside trim line.



[Fig.9] Paper Sewing Side

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Sewing Curves when adding 2 sections together

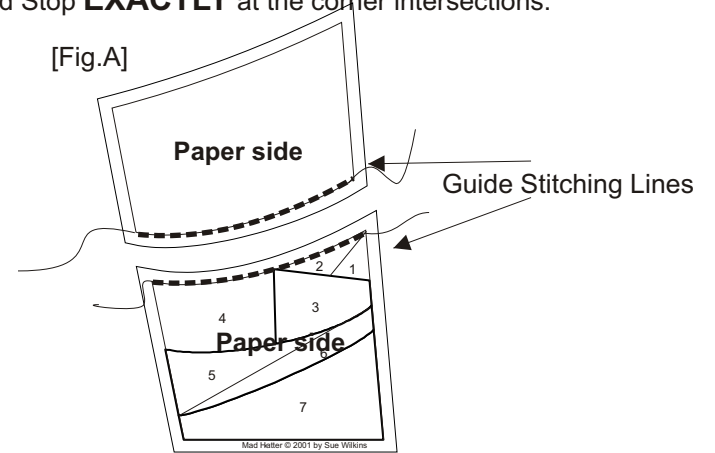
Sewing opposing curves has been done in the past using the freezer paper method but here I add it to traditional paper piecing.

Trim the sections to be joined neatly along outside line of pattern.

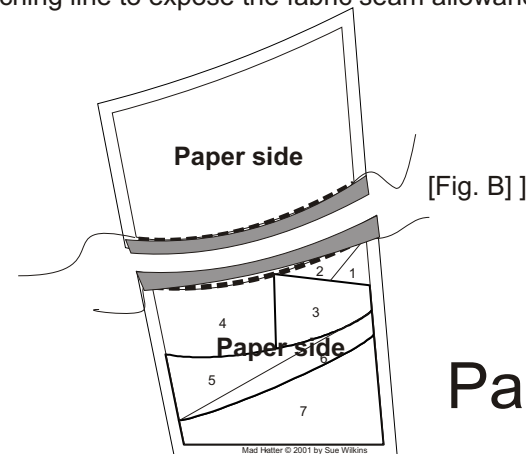
Step 1 a). Sew along the inside sewing line of each piece to be joined along a curve. I use a medium stitch length and a contrasting thread.
(This stitch line may have to be removed later and the contrasting colour is easier to see. A basting stitch is not recommended as you do need to pull the paper away from it)

[Fig.A]

Start and Stop **EXACTLY** at the corner intersections.



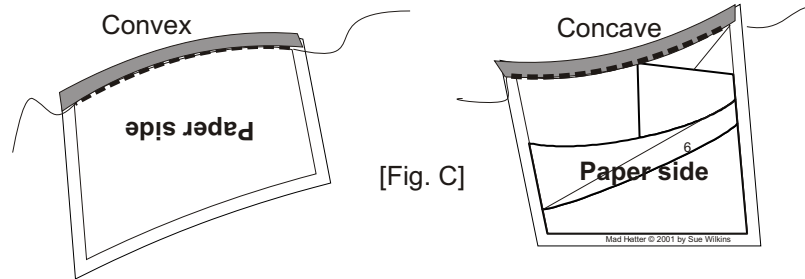
1 b)
Tear away the paper from the seam allowance down to the stitching line to expose the fabric seam allowance. [Fig B]



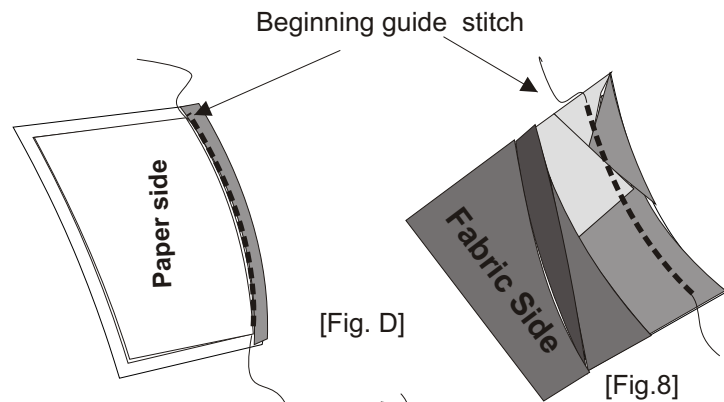
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Joining 2 curved sections continued:

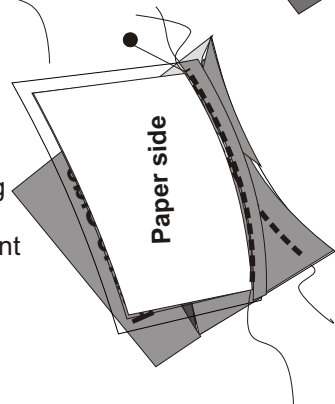
You have 2 curved shapes. A “convex” or outward round.
And a “concave” or inward round [Fig. C]



Step 3 a) Layer the two sections with right sides facing. [Fig. D]
Match the beginning stitch of the two sections



Layer and use a pin to match the beginning stitch. Note that your curves go off in different directions!



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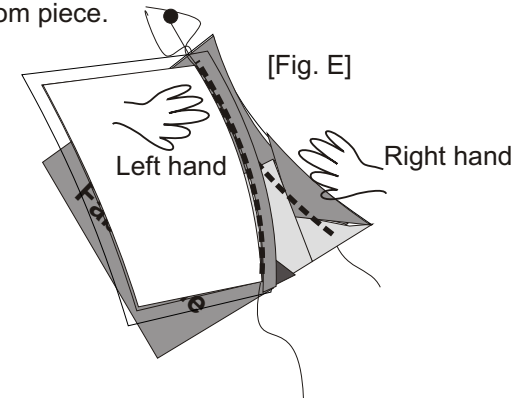
Joining 2 curved sections continued:

Step 3 b) Set your sewing machine to a “medium” stitch length, till you get the hang of it. You can go over it later with a smaller paper piecing stitch or you may find that because you don't have the paper to tear away from this seam that the stitch you have sewn with is sufficient. If you have “needle down” position capabilities on your sewing machine it really helps here!

Carefully set under presser foot and lower needle at this **exact** matching point. [Fig. E]

Your LEFT hand guides the top piece.

Your RIGHT hand is positioned between the pieces and guides the bottom piece.



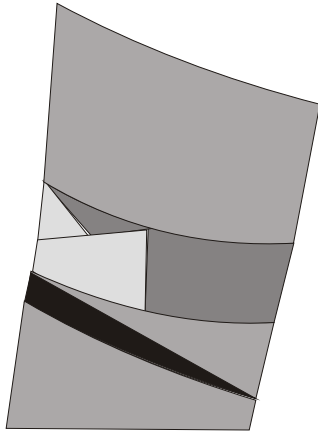
Step 3 c) Line up the guide stitching lines directly on top of each other and sew, pivoting and adjusting the bottom piece.

Step 3 d) End **EXACTLY** at the end of the guide stitching line.

Try to stay on track with the top & bottom guide stitches, however if you have wandered a tiny bit just remove the “visible” stitching. However if you are off by very much then I strongly suggest you take it apart and line them up again. This can make a difference when you join other sections to these.

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Fabric Side View of Curved Pieces.



Press and Admire your softly curved pieces.

Please note that this method will work for those gentle curves. A large concave vs convex combination will definitely need to be subdivided till it becomes feasible to “stretch” the fabric gently and achieve the look you want.

This sample test pattern is from the project
The Mad Hatter and his Tipsy Teacup.

