

Everything I Know...And Then Some...About Precision Paper Piecing...

No Fail, No Frustration Paper Piecing

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YUCK!!! That is the way I used to feel whenever I had a project that required PAPER PIECING. Not the easy things like log cabins, but those patterns having odd shapes and angles.

Paper Piecing — the GOOD the BAD the UGLY
Perfection Confusing Lack of Straight Grain
Wasteful

What if I told you that I have devised a way that eliminates the “BAD and the UGLY”? Well, I have—I really have!!

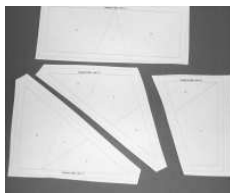
I know from experience, that ideas fall from the heavens and land on folks. Somewhere out there, I'm sure someone else has had this idea, but I have never seen anyone else do it and I have never read about it. So, for now, I'm going to take credit for receiving this bit of inspiration and pass it onto you.

For demonstration purposes, we will be piecing an 8” star block. The angles are weird and if you can get the concept on this one, you can do any block.

- a. Using our 8” star block, cut out the individual units. (Our star block has 4 separate units, each made up of segments. Units A, C, and D have three segments each and unit B has 2.) You don't have to be real careful of the outside cuts, as we will square up the units with the rotary cutter before we sew the units together. (Picture #1)
- b. Crease the sewing lines of the first unit, Unit A, with the printing to the inside of the folded paper. I use my fingernails, but there is a little gadget, called the “Little Wooden Iron” that works well. Do all of the sewing lines on all of the units this way. (Bear with me; this will make sense, soon!) (Picture #2)
- c. We're *almost* ready to sew. You are going to sew on the right side of the paper, using the ‘sew and flip method’, hiding all the seams
- d. Shorten the stitch length of your sewing machine, because this makes the paper much easier to tear, when we are ready to tear the paper off. I usually set my machine to 1.5 length (or 14 to 16 stitches per inch).
- e. Place a fabric piece large enough to cover segment 1, with the wrong side of the fabric to the back of paper. (This is the only piece of fabric that will be right side facing out, wrong side to the back of the paper. The remaining fabric will be right side to the paper piece, facing in.) If you have trouble keeping this 1st piece in place, while positioning the 2nd piece, a tiny bit of glue from a glue stick, to hold the 1st piece, works wonders. Just a tiny bit. (Picture #3a and b)
- f. Fold the paper piece, segment #2, down on the previously creased sewing line. (If the prior seam prevents the fold from lying flat, see item n., about breaking the paper.)
- g. *THIS IS THE SECRET and THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THIS METHOD.* Align the next piece of fabric with the first piece, right sides together. Look at the folded paper piece making sure that the segment (segment 2 in the first unit) is completely covering the newest piece of fabric. Another way to say this is: making sure fabric extends beyond the edges of the folded paper. (Use your imagination here, pretend that the first piece of fabric is invisible and all of the paper is invisible, except the segment you are putting in place, segment 2 in our example.) You are looking at the backside of the paper and the right side of fabric. (My friend, Linda Schmidt of Dublin, CA suggested drawing the grain line or arrow on your segment to help get the grain straight—Good Idea!) You will also want to make sure there is at least ¼” allowance along the creased (folded) line. (Picture #4)
- h. Open the paper, being careful not to move the position of fabric piece #2. The angle of the seam may look wrong, but trust me this WILL work. (Picture #5)
- i. Sew on the right side of the paper, on the line (so you have to turn the paper over to see the material and what the block looks like). (Is this making sense to anyone?) Sew along the creased, sewing line. Remove piece from sewing machine. (Picture #6)
- j. Fold the creased, sewing line towards you, one more time and trim to 1/8 “ seam. (Picture #7)
- k. Open the paper, and flip the fabric. Voila! The segment is covered perfectly and if you positioned your paper carefully, you hardly wasted any fabric at all! (Picture #8)
- l. On the paper side of the piece, run your fingernail or your little wooden iron along the machine stitches, to press. You could use your iron, but I'm lazy, and I'd spend too much time getting up and getting back to my sewing machine!
- m. Repeat steps f. thru l. until all units are completed.

- n. When folding back paper where it intersects with a seam that has already been sewn, break the paper carefully by holding the sewn stitches with your finger and pulling the paper. You don't want to pull your stitches out, but you do want the paper to fold down completely where you had creased it in the very beginning. (Picture #9)
- o. When sewing lines that extend into the outer seam allowance, sew beyond the seam allowance. When sewing lines that do not go to the outside edge, start two or three stitches before the line and ending two or three stitches after the line. (Picture #10)
- p. When sewing multiple units for one block, complete all the units, press with your 'real' iron and trim to the $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam using a rotary cutter and ruler. (Picture #11)
- q. Join the units together, unit c to unit d, unit c-d to unit b, and unit b-c-d to unit a) on the $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam. Carefully tear the just sewn $\frac{1}{4}$ " paper from the seam and press the seam open, either with your iron or the little wooden iron. (Picture #11)
- r. Continue sewing the units together until the block is complete.
- s. Carefully remove the remaining paper, by supporting the stitches with your fingernails to keep from pulling the stitches out. Press with your 'real' iron a final time and you have a perfectly pieced block! (Picture #12)

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#1(units cut apart)



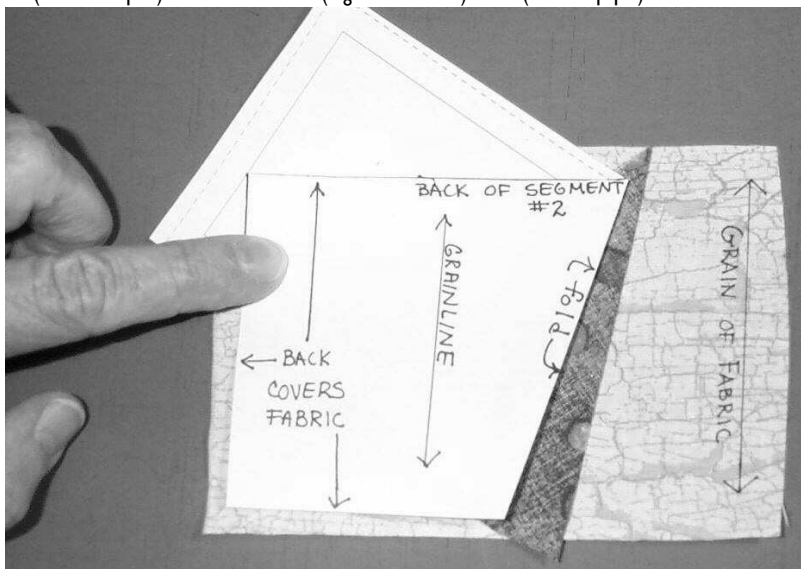
#2(segment creased)



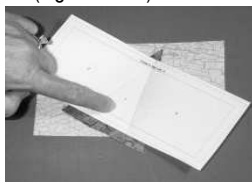
#3a(back of paper)



#3b(front of paper)



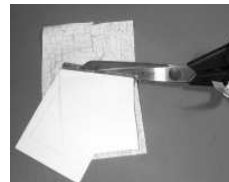
#4(seg. 2, folded)



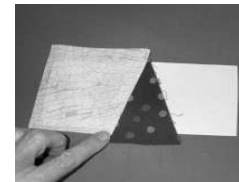
#5(seg. 2, opened)



#6(sew on line)



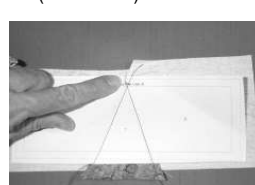
#7(trim to 1/8")



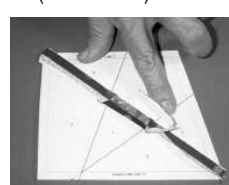
#8(open, finger press)



#9(break paper, for flat fold)



#10(sew beyond seam line)



#11(tear 1/4" seam, press)



#12(finished block)

Paper Foundation 8" Star

