

“How-to” Paper-Piece

Paper Piecing, also known as foundation piecing is the process of sewing fabrics onto a paper pattern. The pattern is printed on one side of the paper, and the fabrics are placed and sewn on the opposite side.

Benefits of this technique range from creating perfect points on stars, or as in many of my patterns, sewing narrow strips of fabrics together for making one-eighth inch window sashings or roof edges.

Some things to remember with this technique

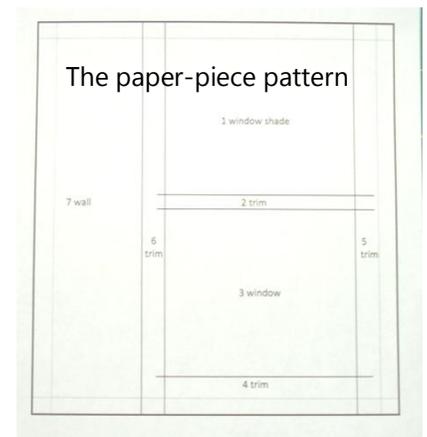
- a. Use a large needle in your machine, size 14 is good.
- b. Set the stitch size to about 14 stitches per inch.
- c. ALWAYS press each seam after being sewn!
- d. My patterns always include the seam allowances. Emphasis on ‘my’, because not all paper-piecing patterns include the seam allowances. Something to check before trimming!

Some great tools to have on hand
add-a-quarter (or eighth) ruler
small rotating cutting mat
sturdy index card (or postcard)
12” cutting ruler with fingertip guard.

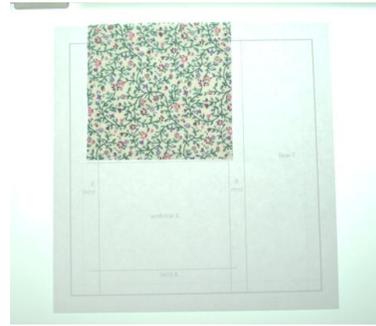


Step by Step guidelines for Foundation Paper Piecing

1. Set your stitch length to a small setting, (at least 14 stitches to the inch).
Select the fabrics desired to create your block(s)
The fabrics will be placed in numeric order onto the *unprinted* side of the paper pattern.
2. Photocopy patterns onto copy paper, cut out, leaving quarter inch margins around each pattern.
3. Follow pattern directions for cutting all fabrics needed to make the block.
Place your fabrics in a zip top baggie along with the pattern. One baggie per pattern.
(Note: not all patterns include directions for cutting the fabrics, if that is the case, you must measure each numbered section, adding a quarter inch all around)
4. Make one pattern at a time.



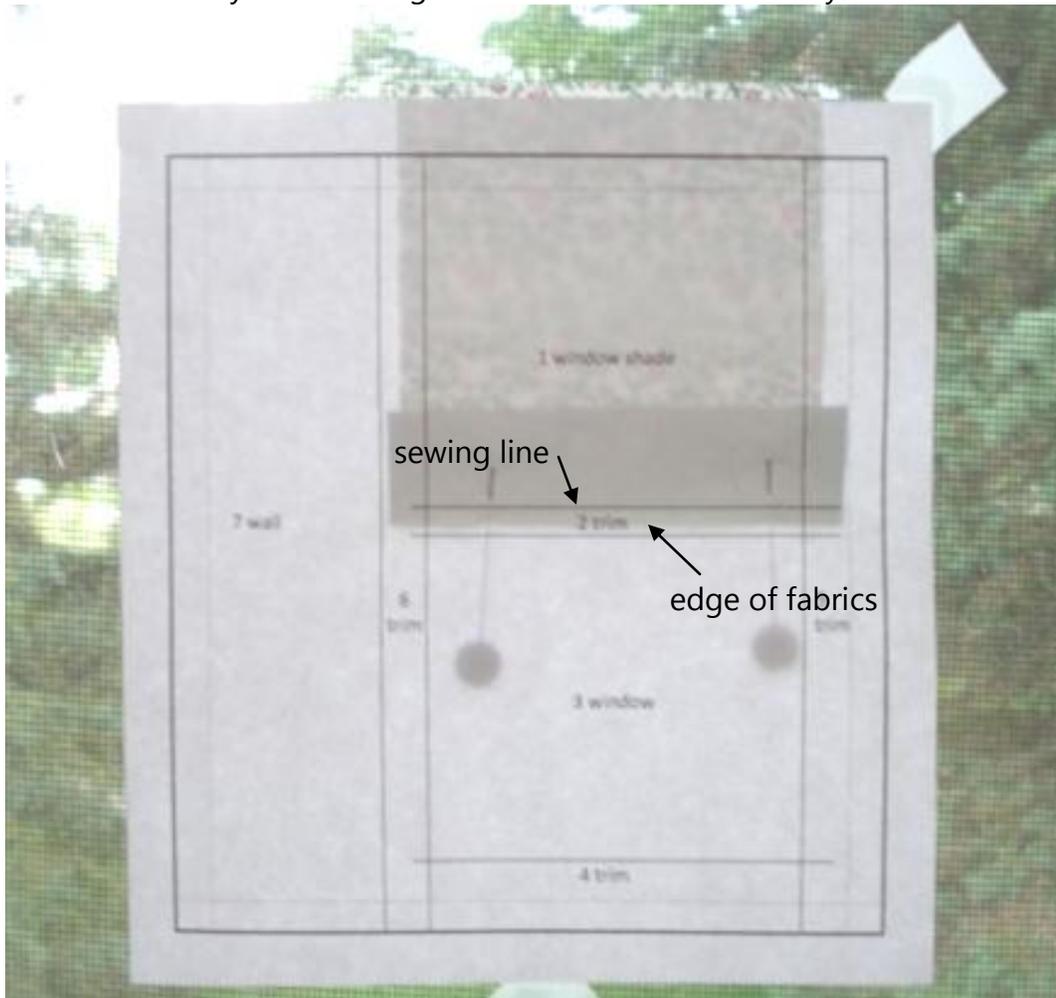
5. Place fabric piece #1, **right side up**, on the unprinted side of the paper pattern, directly over section #1. Hold the paper up to a light source, making sure it covers the entire section, *plus* small margins on all sides. Pin in place. (photo at right shows placement using a lightbox)
Tip: Number #1 fabric is always **RIGHT SIDE UP!**



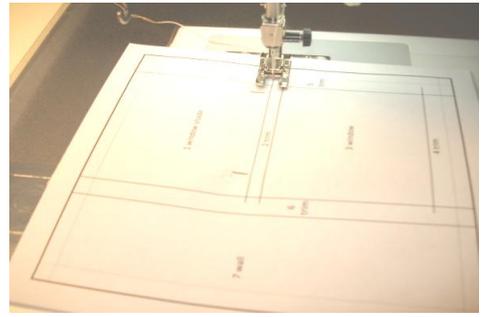
6. Place fabric piece #2 **right side down**, along the #1 & #2 edge of fabric #1. Pin in place so that the pins may be removed as you sew. (see photo at right)
Tip: Number 2 and remaining fabrics are always **RIGHT SIDE DOWN!**



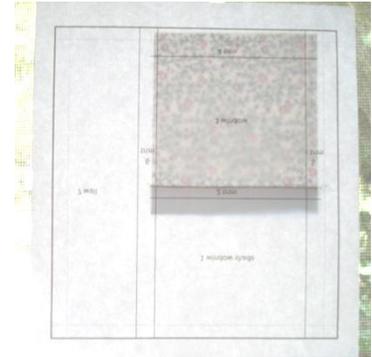
Photo below shows printed side of pattern held up to bright window. Notice the position of the layered fabric edges. They are between the line that separates sections 1 & 2. You should always have an eighth to a fourth of an inch beyond the line that you will be sewing.



7. Carefully turn paper pattern over so that printed side is facing you. Take care not to disturb either fabric as you place it in position to be sewn. Sew on line between section 1 and 2.
 → REMOVE the pins as you go, do NOT sew over them. (sew entire length of line. No need to backstitch)



8. Trim threadsand PRESS open.

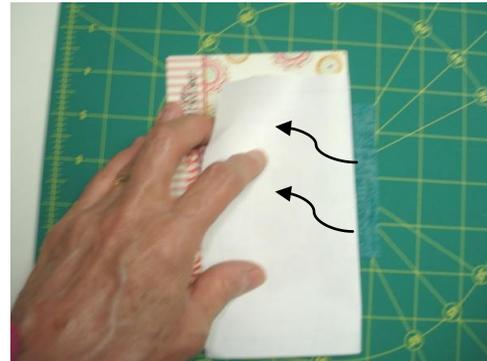


9. Hold up to light, checking to see if your fabrics cover the entire section plus margins. ↑
 If not, remove, reposition fabric, re-sew the line. If it covers section, continue.

10. Place pattern on cutting mat with printed side facing up. Place a sturdy card on the "next line to sew" (the line between #2 & #3)



11. Fold the paper pattern back over the index card



12. Place add-a-quarter (or eighth) ruler along the folded edge of the paper. (the thicker lip of the ruler should be snugged up against the folded paper)



13. Cut off any excess fabric with your rotary cutter.



14. Repeat steps 6 through 13 to add remaining fabric pieces to pattern.

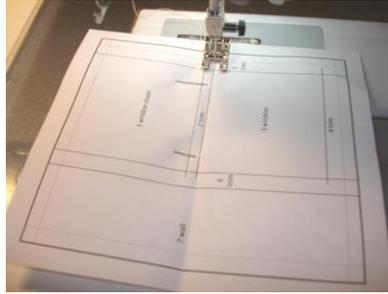
RECAP

Always attach in numeric order, AND always press after adding each fabric piece.

PIN ↓



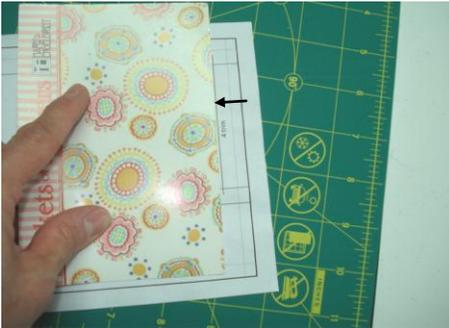
SEW ↓ (Don't sew over pins!)



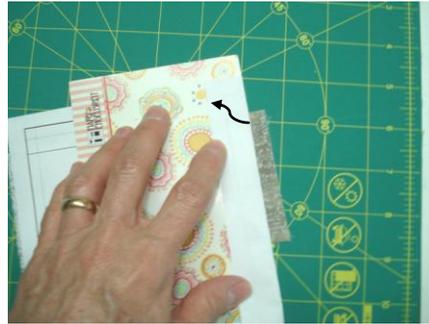
PRESS ↓ (Always)



Use sturdy index along
↓ NEXT LINE TO SEW!



Fold paper pattern ↓ back over card



Place add-a-quarter (or eighth)
ruler along ↓ folded edge



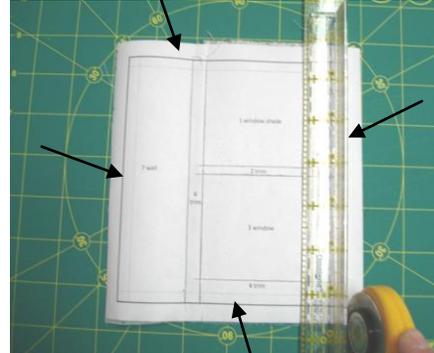
Cut off excess fabric



Final pressing ↓



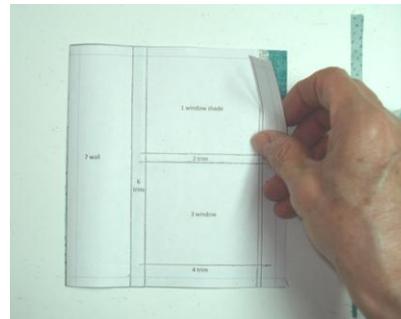
Lay finished block on cutting mat, printed side facing up. Use ruler & rotary to trim all four sides along the pattern edge lines.



Finished 'trimmed' block



Remove paper pattern ↓



Don't forget to set you machine stitch length back to 'normal' and change the needle after all your blocks are completed.