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Beginner Block Quilt

2026 Scrappy Sampler Starter Guide



This pattern walks you through building a 12-block sampler quilt over the course of 2026. You will sew one block at a time, starting with the easiest construction and working up to half-square triangles and stars. By December, you will have a 53-by-68-inch lap quilt top that you made with fabric from your own stash.

Tools and Fabric Requirements

BEFORE YOU START

- You can thread a sewing machine and sew a straight line.
- You can operate a rotary cutter without losing a fingernail.
- You know how to press a seam (not iron it).
- If any of these is unfamiliar, complete a pillowcase project first



Prerequisite Checklist:

Can you thread a machine? Operate a rotary cutter safely? Press a seam (not iron it)? If no, complete a pillowcase project first.

Fabric Requirements

- All measurements assume 42-inch wide quilting cotton.
- If using scraps, the totals below are the minimum yardage equivalents.

Tools and Fabric Requirements

Tools You Need:

- 45mm rotary cutter
- 24 x 36 self-healing mat
- 6.5 x 24.5 acrylic ruler
- Sewing machine + 1/4-inch foot
- 50-weight cotton thread
- Quilting pins
- Iron and pressing surface
- Seam ripper

Fabric Role	Description	Yardage
Dark scraps	Navy, dark red, charcoal, deep green	2 yards total
Light scraps	Cream, white, low-volume prints	1.5 yards total
Accent scraps	Red, gold, or one feature color	0.5 yard total
Sashing fabric	One coordinating solid (cream works)	1.75 yards
Border fabric	Matches sashing or darker accent	1.25 yards
Binding	Dark solid or stripe	0.75 yard
Backing	Quilting cotton or wide back	4 yards

Sort Your Scraps Before

You Cut



Scrap chaos kills beginner block quilt projects faster than any other failure mode. Sort by these three categories before you cut anything.

1. SORT BY COLOR VALUE

Dark, medium, and light.

This matters more than color itself. Hold each scrap at arm's length and squint. If it looks dark, it goes in the dark pile. If it looks light, light pile. Medium goes in the middle. Patterns and prints disappear from your eye when you squint. What remains is the value, which is what determines how a block reads in a finished quilt.

2. SORT BY SIZE

Under 5 inches, 5 to 10 inches, and larger than 10 inches.

Most blocks in this pattern need 5-inch squares or smaller pieces, so the medium bin is your active pile. Save the larger pieces for sashing or backing later. Anything under 3 inches you can save for a future scrap project or use as a leader-ender.

3. SORT BY FIBER

Quilting cotton only. Knits and synthetics out.

Mixing fibers in a block quilt creates uneven shrinkage after the first wash. Polyester scraps stretch under the rotary cutter and produce inaccurate pieces. Set aside knit and synthetic scraps for a future t-shirt quilt project, which uses different construction methods.

Master Cutting Chart

Block	Pieces from Dark	Pieces from Light	Pieces from Accent
Nine-Patch	5 squares @ 4.5"	4 squares @ 4.5"	—
Four-Patch (4 units)	8 squares @ 3.5"	8 squares @ 3.5"	—
Rail Fence	12 strips @ 1.5 x 4.5"	12 strips @ 1.5 x 4.5"	12 accent strips
Half-Square Triangle	2 squares @ 6.5"	2 squares @ 6.5"	—
Pinwheel	2 squares @ 6.5"	2 squares @ 6.5"	—
Churn Dash	2 squares @ 4.5" + strips	1 square @ 4.5" + strips	—
Friendship Star	1 square @ 4.5" + 4 HSTs	4 squares @ 4.5"	—
Sawtooth Star	8 small triangles	4 squares @ 3.5" + rect	1 square @ 6.5"
Disappearing 9-Patch	5 squares @ 4.5"	4 squares @ 4.5"	Cuts after sewing
Log Cabin	6 strips @ 1.5" varied	6 strips @ 1.5" varied	1 square @ 2.5"
Bear Paw	4 squares + 16 HSTs	Background pieces	—
Ohio Star	4 quarter-squares	4 squares @ 4.5"	1 square @ 4.5"

Foundation Patterns

Square-only construction. Master the 1/4-inch seam here.



BLOCK 1

Nine-Patch

Difficulty: Beginner

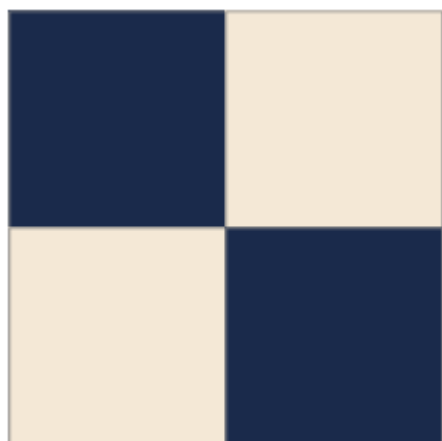
Technique: Squares in a 3 x 3 grid

Cuts:

- 5 dark squares at 4.5 inches
- 4 light squares at 4.5 inches

Build it:

1. Arrange squares in a 3 x 3 grid, alternating values.
2. Sew each row with a scant 1/4-inch seam. Press toward dark.
3. Sew rows together, nesting seams. Press long seams open.



BLOCK 2

Four-Patch Sampler

Difficulty: Beginner

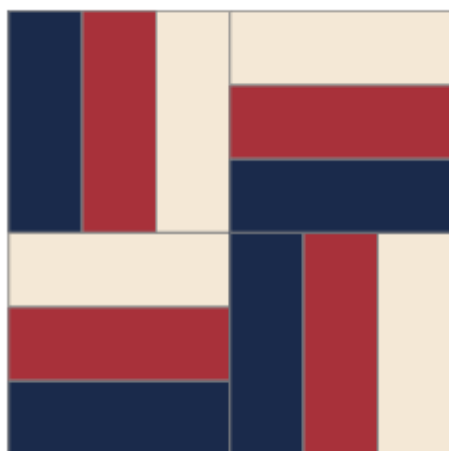
Technique: Four 4-patches assembled into one block

Cuts:

- 8 dark squares at 3.5 inches
- 8 light squares at 3.5 inches

Build it:

1. Sew pairs of squares (one dark, one light) into 8 rectangles.
2. Sew pairs of rectangles into 4 four-patches (6.5 inches each).
3. Sew the 4 four-patches into a 2 x 2 grid. Rotate for contrast.



BLOCK 3

Rail Fence

Difficulty: Beginner

Technique: Strip-pieced units rotated 90 degrees

Cuts:

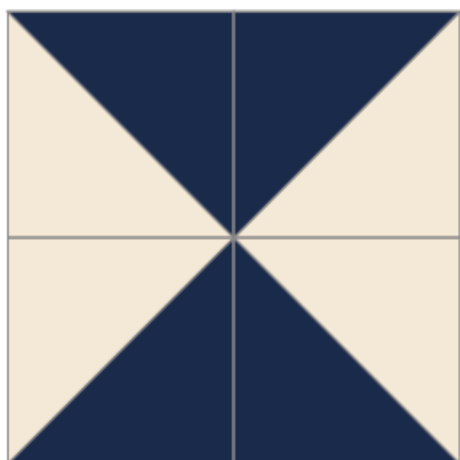
- 12 dark strips at 1.5 x 4.5 inches
- 12 light strips at 1.5 x 4.5 inches
- 12 accent strips at 1.5 x 4.5 inches

Build it:

1. Sew 3 strips (dark, accent, light) together into a 4.5-inch square.
2. Make 4 of these units total.
3. Arrange 2 x 2 with alternating orientation. Sew together.

Triangle Introduction

Your first half-square triangles. Take it slow.



BLOCK 4

Half-Square Triangle (HST)

Difficulty: Advanced Beginner

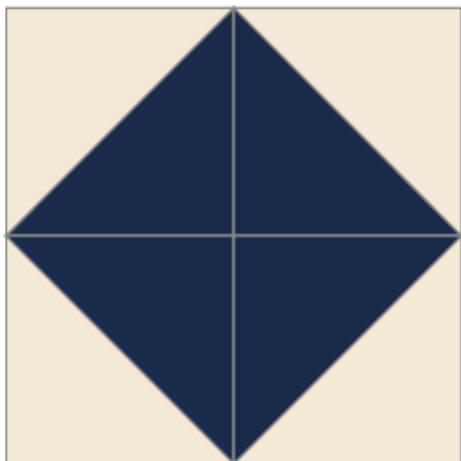
Technique: Two-at-a-time HST method

Cuts:

- 2 dark squares at 6.5 inches
- 2 light squares at 6.5 inches

Build it:

1. Pair each dark square with a light, right sides together.
2. Mark diagonal. Sew 1/4 inch on each side of the line. Cut on line. dark.
3. Press, trim to 6.5 inches, then sew 4 HSTs into 12.5-inch block.



BLOCK 5

Pinwheel

Difficulty: Advanced Beginner

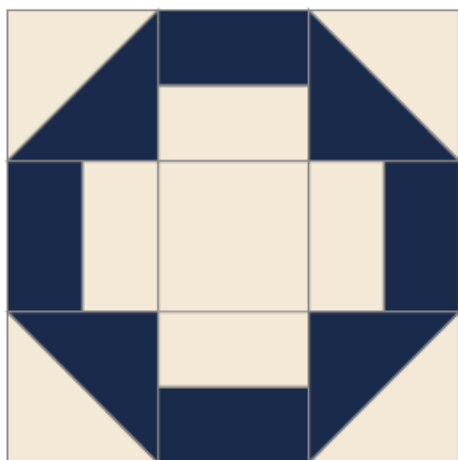
Technique: Four HSTs arranged in rotation

Cuts:

- 2 dark squares at 6.5 inches
- 2 Light squares at 6.5 inches

Build it:

1. Make 4 HSTs using the two-at-a-time method.
2. Arrange so dark triangles spiral around the center.
3. Sew rows, nest center seams, sew rows together.



BLOCK 6

Churn Dash

Difficulty: Advanced Beginner

Technique: HSTs + split rectangles + center square

Cuts:

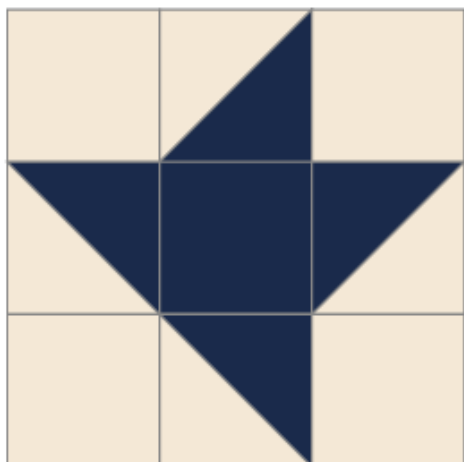
- 2 dark squares at 4.5 inches + 4 strips at 2.5 x 4.5 inches
- 1 light square at 4.5 inches + 4 strips at 2.5 x 4.5 inches
- 4 HSTs at 4.5 inches (see block 4)

Build it:

1. Make 4 HSTs for corners.
2. Sew light/dark strip pairs to make 4 side rectangles.
3. Assemble a 3 x 3 grid: HSTs at corners, splits at sides, light center.

Star Patterns

Stars look complex but use the same HST and flying geese skills.



BLOCK 7

Friendship Star

Difficulty: Advanced Beginner

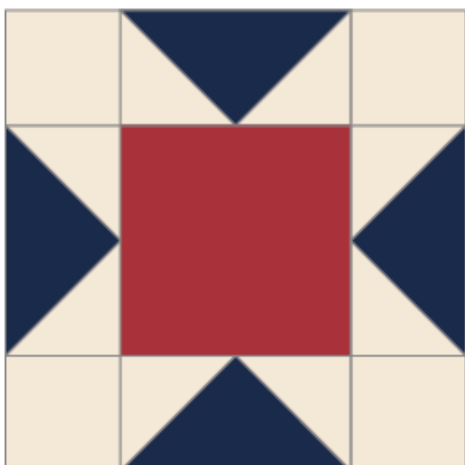
Technique: HSTs forming star points around a solid center

Cuts:

- 1 dark square at 4.5 inches (center)
- 4 light squares at 4.5 inches (corners)
- 4 HSTs at 4.5 inches (points)

Build it:

1. Make 4 HSTs with dark triangles pointing toward center.
2. Arrange 3 x 3: corners light, sides HSTs, center dark.
3. Sew rows, press, assemble. Star points should touch corners cleanly.



BLOCK 8

Sawtooth Star

Difficulty: Confident Beginner

Technique: Flying geese units around a center square

Cuts:

- 1 accent square at 6.5 inches (center)
- 4 light squares at 3.5 inches (corners)
- 4 flying geese units at 3.5 x 6.5 inches

Build it:

1. Make 4 flying geese (two-at-a-time method or stitch-and-flip).
2. Arrange: corners light, sides geese, center accent.
3. Sew center row first (geese + center + geese), then top and bottom.



BLOCK 9

Disappearing Nine-Patch

Difficulty: Confident Beginner

Technique: Nine-patch cut and rearranged

Cuts:

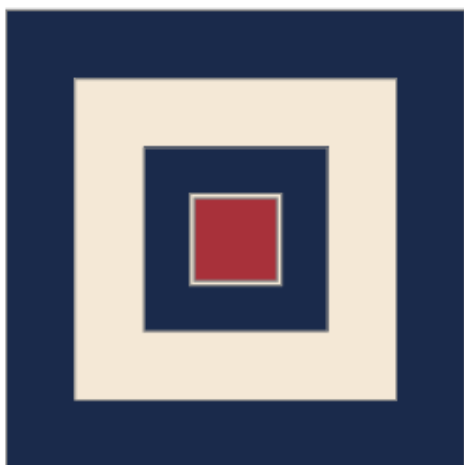
- 5 squares at 5 inches (mix of dark and accent)
- 4 squares at 5 inches (light)
- Cuts happen after initial sewing

Build it:

1. Sew a basic nine-patch using 5-inch squares (14.5 inches total).
2. Cut the finished nine-patch in half horizontally, then vertically.
3. Rotate the 4 quadrants 180 degrees. Sew back together.

Combination Patterns

Bringing it all together. Quarter-square triangles are the last new skill.



BLOCK 10

Log Cabin

Difficulty: Confident Beginner

Technique: Strips added around a center square

Cuts:

- 1 accent square at 2.5 inches (center)
- 6 dark strips at 1.5 inches wide, varied lengths
- 6 light strips at 1.5 inches wide, varied lengths

Build it:

1. Start with accent center. Add a light strip to one side, trim flush.
2. Rotate 90 degrees. Add another strip. Continue around.
3. Two light strips, then two dark strips, repeat. Total 3 rounds.



BLOCK 11

Bear Paw

Difficulty: Confident Beginner

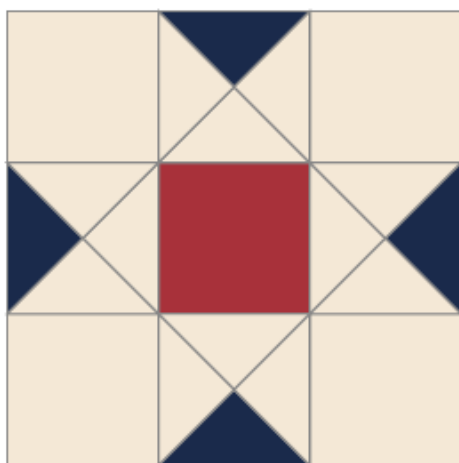
Technique: Four paw units around a center cross

Cuts:

- 4 dark squares at 3.5 inches (paw centers)
- 16 HSTs at 2 inches (claws)
- Sashing strips at 1.5 x 6.5 inches (cross)

Build it:

1. Make 16 small HSTs (2-inch finished).
2. Build 4 paw units: dark center with 4 HSTs around 2 outer sides.
3. Assemble paws around a cross of cream sashing strips.



BLOCK 12

Ohio Star

Difficulty: Final Block

Technique: Quarter-square triangles + corner squares

Cuts:

- 4 light squares at 4.5 inches (corners)
- 1 accent square at 4.5 inches (center)
- 4 quarter-square triangle units at 4.5 inches

Build it:

1. Make 4 QSTs: sew 2 contrasting HST squares, cut diagonally again.
2. Arrange: corners light, sides QSTs, center accent.
3. Watch the QST orientation. The dark points face outward.

Sashing and Quilt **Assembly**

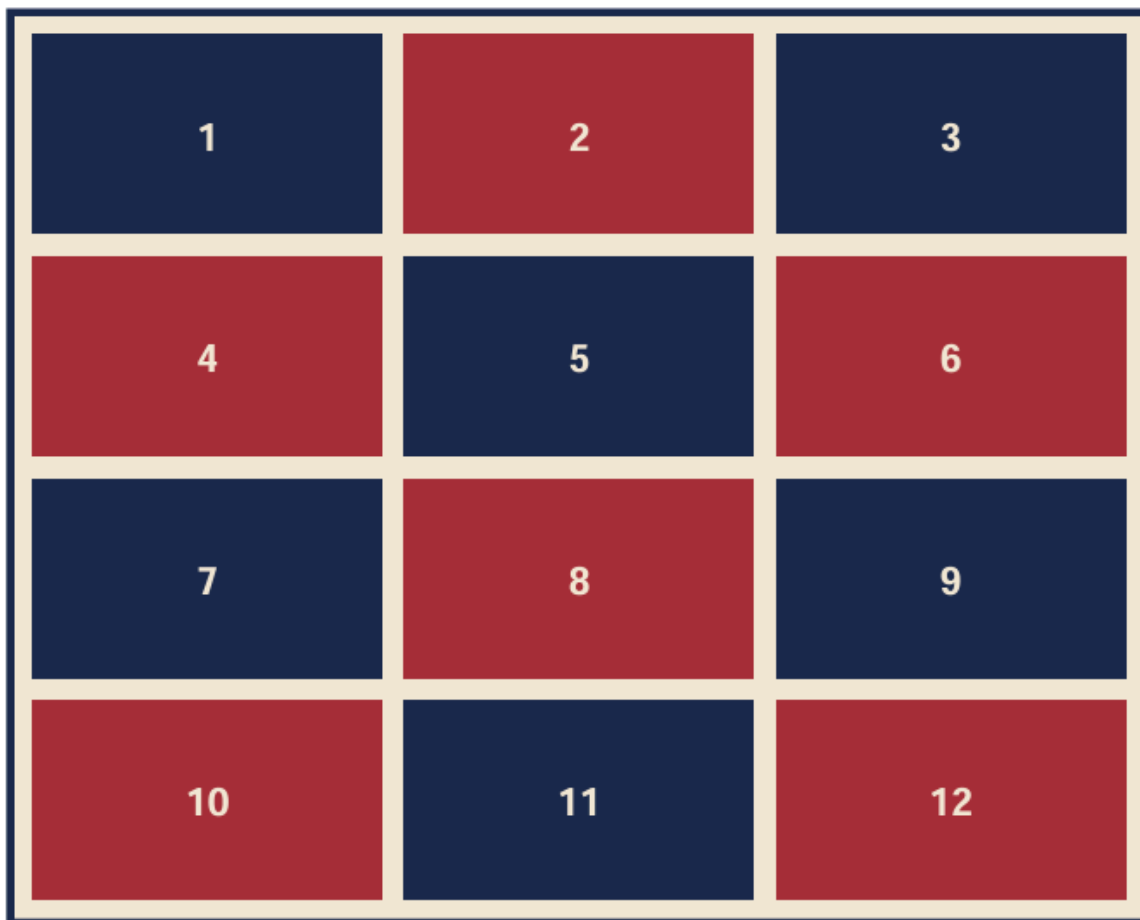
Step 1: Square Up All 12 Blocks

Press every block flat. Trim each one to exactly 12.5 inches square using your acrylic ruler. If a block measures less than 12.5 inches, see the troubleshooting page. Sashing absorbs small variations, but not large ones.

Step 2: Sew Sashing Between Blocks

Cut 2.5-inch wide sashing strips. You need 17 short strips (2.5 x 12.5) between blocks in each row, and 4 long strips (2.5 x 42) between rows. Sew short sashing to the right of each block in a row, then add the next block. Repeat to build 4 rows of 3 blocks.

Quilt Layout (3 wide x 4 tall)



Sashing and Quilt

Assembly

Step 3: Add the Border

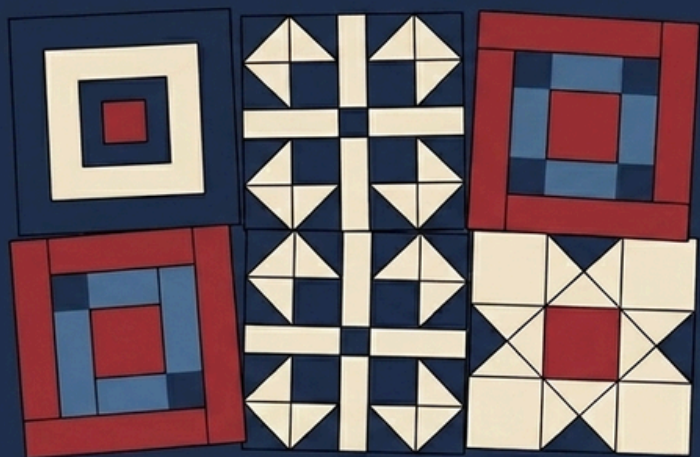
Cut 4 strips at 3.5 inches wide by the width of fabric. Sew two strips to the long sides of the quilt top, trim flush. Then sew strips to the top and bottom. Press toward the border.

Step 4: Quilt and Bind

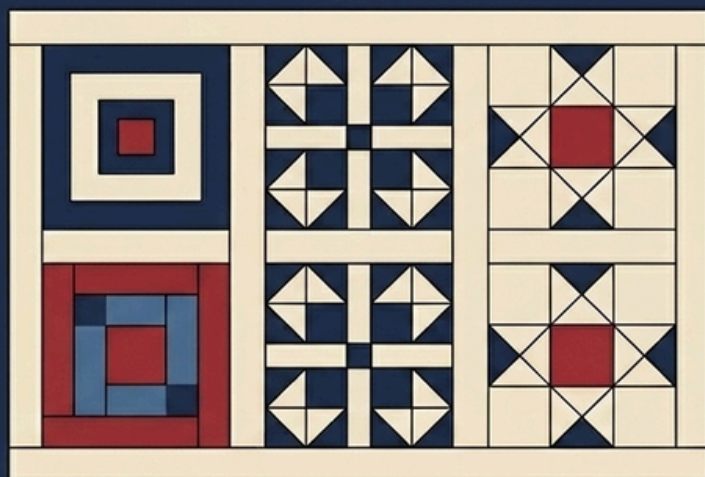
Layer the top, batting, and backing. Baste with safety pins or spray. Machine-quilt straight lines, stitch-in-the-ditch around blocks, or send to a longarm. Bind with 2.5-inch double-fold binding.

The Magic of Sashing

Before



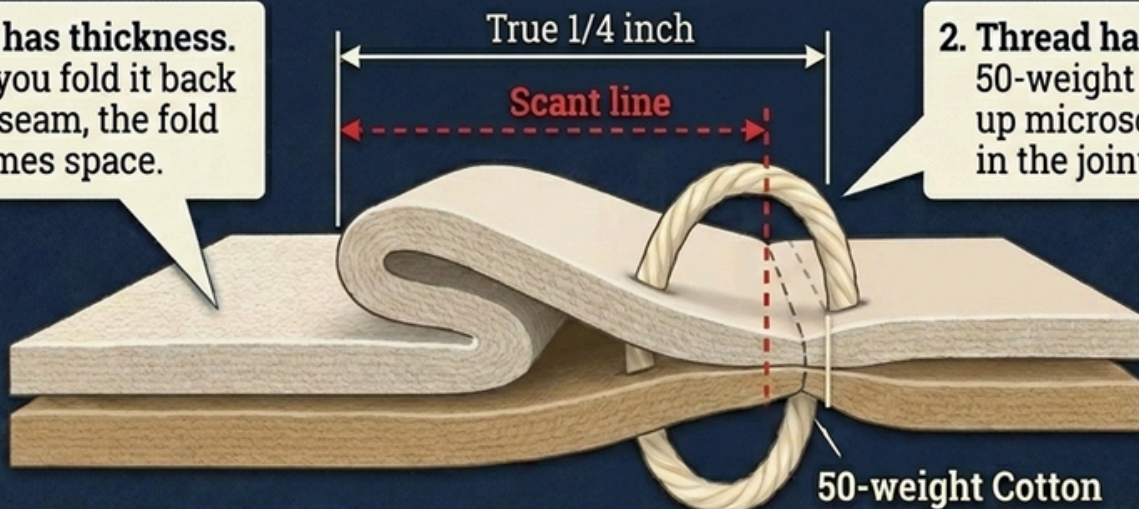
After



Takeaway: Square up every block. The sashing handles up to 1/4 inch of variation. The final quilt reads as a whole, not as 12 individual errors.

Nesting Seams

1. Fabric has thickness. When you fold it back over a seam, the fold consumes space.

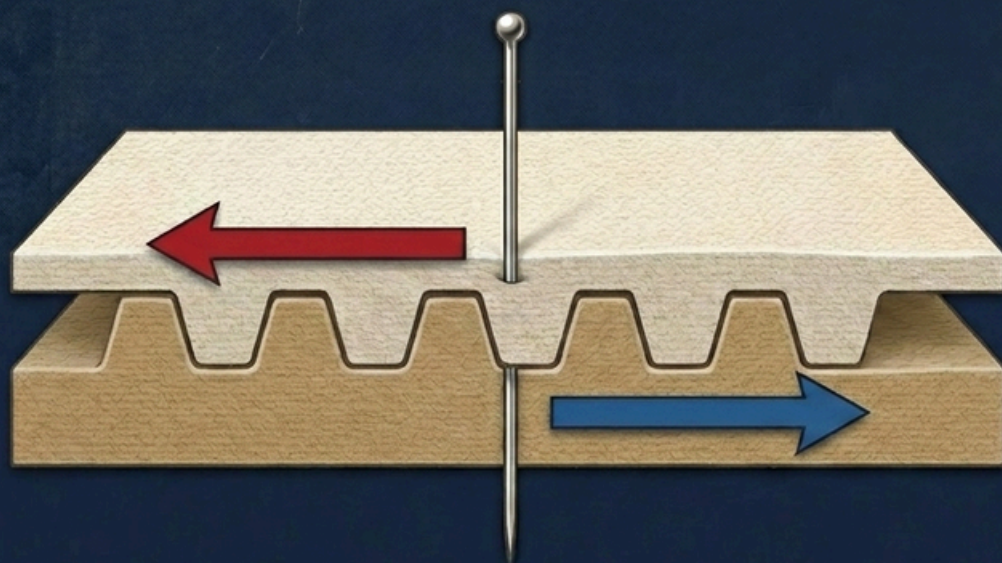


2. Thread has volume. 50-weight cotton takes up microscopic room in the joint.

If you sew a full 1/4-inch seam, the fold and thread make your finished block too small. A scant 1/4 inch (just inside the line) accounts for this physical loss.

Diagnostic Test: Sew three 1.5-inch strips together. The result must equal exactly 3.5 inches.

Scant $\frac{1}{4}$ Inch



- 1. Press seams** in adjacent rows in opposite directions before joining.
- 2. Slide the rows together.** The seam allowances should interlock at the intersection, holding the match in place.
- 3. Use a single straight pin** through the nested seam, then sew slowly across the join.

Result: A perfectly flat intersection without fabric bulk.

Fix-It Guide

When something goes wrong (and something will), start here.

My block is smaller than 12.5 inches

Your seam allowance is too wide. Test by sewing three 1.5-inch strips together. The result should be exactly 3.5 inches. If it's smaller, your 'scant 1/4 inch' is actually a full 1/4 inch. Adjust your needle position one notch to the right or shift your seam guide for the next block.

My points are getting cut off in HSTs and stars

When you sew the next round, the cross-seam needs to land 1/4 inch from the point. Mark the seam intersection on the back with a fabric pen before sewing. Sew slowly across the point. If it's still off, your earlier seam was too wide.

My seams won't nest at intersections

Press seams in adjacent rows in opposite directions before joining. The seam allowances should interlock at the intersection. If both rows press toward the same color, one of them needs to be re-pressed.

My fabric is shifting during cutting

Either your ruler is slipping, or your rotary cutter blade is dull. Replace the blade if it's been more than 6 months or 6 quilts. Add fine-grit sandpaper dots to the underside of an old ruler if you don't have a non-slip one.

My thread keeps breaking

Re-thread the machine from scratch first. If it still breaks, check that you're using 50-weight cotton (not all-purpose polyester) and that your needle is fresh. Change needles every 8 hours of sewing time.

My finished blocks are different sizes

Square up every block to 12.5 inches before assembling. The sashing handles up to 1/4 inch of variation. If a block is smaller than 12 inches, set it aside and make a replacement using the same pattern.

I hate my fabric choices halfway through

Scrappy quilts forgive fabric inconsistency. Keep going. The final quilt reads as a whole, not as 12 individual blocks. If a single block is really wrong, make a replacement and use the original for a future cushion or table runner.

Time Expectations: Speed is not the Goal

Month	Block	Skill Focus	Active Time	Difficulty
Jan	Nine-Patch	Quarter-inch seam, nesting	1.5 hrs	★
Feb	Rail Fence	Repeating units, contrast rotation	1.5 hrs	★
Mar	Rail Fence	Strip piecing, alternating orientation	2 hrs	★
Apr	Half-Square Triangle	Two-at-a-time HSTs, trimming	2.5 hrs	★★
May	Pinwheel	HST rotation, center-seam matching	2.5 hrs	★★
Jun	Churn Dash	HSTs + split rectangles	3 hrs	★★
Jul	Friendship Star	Star points, value placement	3 hrs	★★
Aug	Sawtooth Star	Flying geese, point precision	3.5 hrs	★★★
Sep	Disappearing 9-Patch	Cut-and-rearrange method	2.5 hrs	★★★
Oct	Log Cabin	Strip-around-center construction	3 hrs	★★★
Nov	Bear Paw	Multiple paw units assembly	4 hrs	★★★
Dec	Ohio Star	Quarter-square triangles	3.5 hrs	★★★★

If you made it through all 12 blocks, you are no longer a beginner. You have built a 12-block quilt, learned the four foundational quilting skills (square piecing, HSTs, flying geese, and quarter-square triangles), and finished a real object. Most people who start a quilt never finish one. You did.

What's Next

You finished. Now what?

A Year-Long Guided Experience



Month 1

Announcement &
Fabric Sorting
(VLOGs 14 & 15)

Months 2-5

The Foundations.
Blocks 1-6
dropped weekly
(VLOGs 11, 12, 13)

Months 6-9

The Stars.
Blocks 7-12
(VLOGs 8, 9, 10)

Months 10-12

Assembly & Border.
Cornerstones, Pieced
Borders, Final
Assembly
(VLOGs 1, 2, 5)

Over 7,900 makers follow this exact sequence. You are completing a shared curriculum, supported by 15 hours of detailed video instruction.

Where to go next?

- Learn Binding: The most skipped skill, mitered corners take practice.
- Try Free Motion: Upgrade from straight-line walking foot quilting.
- Make a paper-pieced block: Foundation paper piecing lets you make any shape with perfect points.
- Join a 2027 BOM: You are ready for an intermediate Block-of-the-Month
- Gift your scrappy quilt: Or keep it. The quilt you finish is always more valuable than the one you plan.

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