

Basics of Foundation Paper Piecing

Why Foundation Paper Piecing?

- Intricate blocks
- Perfect points, especially for spikes
- Original designs- curved flying geese, Mariner's compass, wonky subjects in quilt
- Stabilizes geometric pieces, stabilizes pieces cut on bias
- Good tool for group quilts- leads to uniform block size

The Foundation Pattern

- Purchased FPP patterns- include tissue or newsprint papers for all quilt pieces. Judy Niemeyer specializes in these.
- FPP patterns are a mirror image of the finished block.
- Many are available online or in books and magazines- make sure you print them at 100% or recommended enlargement
- EQ prints out foundation patterns for any block.
- Foundation patterns are numbered, indicating sewing order.
- There are sewing lines and cutting lines. Solid and dotted- no industry standard on which is which, so pay attention.
- You can print patterns on lightweight copy paper, newsprint, washaways, Carol Doak FPP paper
- Freezer paper makes a good pattern- fabric adheres to the shiny side when pressed with a warm iron. It's easy to batch copy patterns using freezer paper- sew along the sewing lines with an unthreaded needle in the machine. (4 at a time is good.) Ideal for original and large designs.
- Cut out each pattern with paper scissors, 1/4" or so outside of the cutting line.

The Fabric

- Batiks are ideal for FPP because there is no obvious right or wrong side
- Make a fabric key (for a quilt with lots of different fabrics) or mark each pattern with colored pencils indicating which fabric goes where.

How to Measure Fabric Pieces

- General Rule of Thumb- measure the longest length and widest width of the section you need to cover. Add an inch to each side. Example- A4 is 4" at its longest and 2" at its widest. Cut a piece of fabric 3" x 5".
- If your block has several sections that use the same fabric and are graded in length (i.e. spikes) cut all the pieces to fit the largest section.

Sewing

- Set your stitch to 1.2 - 1.5. The seam will be strong and the paper easy to tear off.
- Use a size 12 or 14 topstitch or microtex needle for batiks.
- 50W to 80W thread.

- Flat head pins are best.
- An add-a-quarter ruler is ideal for trimming as you go, but you can use a regular rotary cutting ruler if you want.
- Start sewing 1/4" before and after the sewing line- These stitches will be caught in the adjacent seam and keep seams from opening up.
- Keep your scotch tape handy to repair patterns if you have to rip.

Putting It All Together

- Cut each pattern piece on the cutting line with a ruler and rotary cutter blade that you use for paper.
- Most blocks will be constructed from sections that need to be sewn together.
- When do you pull off the paper? No clear choice. Sometimes it's good to leave it on until the final seams are sewn. There may be registration marks to line up, as in curved piecing. Having the papers on makes these marks easy to line up. However, paper to paper can slip when sewing, and it's a pain to remove paper from the seam allowances.
- Remove the papers carefully! No undue strain on the seams, please.

The Mechanics

1. Glue the first piece of fabric to the wrong side of the pattern covering A1. **Wrong side of fabric to wrong side of pattern.**
2. Fold back sew line between A1 and A2 over hard edge tool. Line up Add-a-Quarter ruler with the edge of the paper and trim away excess fabric. Unfold paper.
3. Lay Fabric A2 **right sides together** along edge of A1 fabric. Using a tight stitch, sew on sewing line between A1 and A2, starting and ending 1/4" from sewing line.
4. Turn pattern over and press seam open.
5. Turn pattern back over and place your hard edge tool up against the next un-sewn line (A1 to A3.) Fold pattern back against hard edge tool. Line up Add-a-Quarter ruler with the edge of the paper and trim away excess. Unfold paper and line up A3 fabric with cut edge of A1.
6. Sew, Press, Fold, Cut, Line up next piece, Repeat....

Don't worry if you forget the steps when you try this again Everyone needs a little warm-up time when returning to FPP. There are lots of great videos on You Tube to get you back on track.



