

---

## **Piecing Large-Scale Patchwork Quilts** with Heather Jones

---

### **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

#### Overview

(cheerful music) - Hi, I'm Heather Jones, I'm a modern quilter and designer. And one of the ways that I find a lot of inspiration is by taking a traditional quilt block at a small scale and blowing it up so much so that one block makes up the entire quilt design. I'm gonna show you how to cut and sew with larger pieces of fabric and we're going to be making some half-square triangles in this design too. And I'll show you how to add a border to your quilt. You can use this technique to make this pattern or to scale up any traditional quilt pattern. (cheerful music)

### **Chapter 2 - Materials**

#### Materials

- To make a 72-inch square quilt, you need the following materials, three and a half yards of a background fabric, one yard of a second fabric that will be used to make the half-square triangles, and three quarters of a yard of a fabric that will become the center of your design. You also need a nine and a half inch square grated ruler, a six inch by 24 inch ruler, thread snips, pins, a pencil, a rotary cutter and a cutting mat. It's also helpful to have a sketch book with graph paper, some markers, and pencils for drawing. Also need a sewing machine, threaded with a neutral thread, and an iron and ironing surface.

### **Chapter 3 - Preparing Blocks**

#### Scaling the design

- One thing that's handy to have on hand is one of these encyclopedias. This is a book by Maggie Malone that has 5500 quilt block designs. While it doesn't have the patterns, per se, it doesn't have cutting instructions or fabric requirements, it does have great graphics of over 5000 traditional quilt block patterns. So I like to reference this when I'm looking for a design that I wanna blow up to a larger scale. The quilt we're making today is inspired by this block. It is called the winged square. And in a traditional pattern this would be created at a size of anywhere from six to 12 inches square. I like to start by sketching the block. And don't worry, because we're not working with any math right now. It's just about increasing scale and working with proportions. I like to draw in a notebook that has graph paper. Because I find that it's easy to translate scale and proportion. I see that my block has a square in the center so I'm gonna start by drawing a square. And because the squares of my graph paper are kind of small, I want to make it large enough so that I can see it. So I think I will make it six blocks on my graph paper, by six blocks. Just remember to keep it square. You can count out your squares to make sure everything is staying in proportion. I can see that the center square is the same proportion as the surrounding eight units. So I'm gonna go ahead and draw eight more squares. I've got my nine squares drawn all in proportion to each other so they're all the same size. And looking back at the inspiration I can see that each of these squares at the top are made out of four half square triangle units. So I'm gonna go ahead and draw those in now too. Because there are four half square triangle units in each section, gonna divide my square into four smaller squares. Each of them are three graph paper squares. And then I can draw a diagonal line through each of these squares... To create the half square triangle design. I'm gonna repeat this in all of the squares that have the half square triangles. Got the entire block translated now into my sketchbook.

And I could stop at this point but I like to give these large scale designs a little bit of a border around the perimeter of the square. I like the design look. I think it gives it a little bit of breathing room and allows the center design of the quilt to just become the focal point. You can make the border as narrow or as wide as you like. And that's why I like to use pencil because I can erase it if I don't like it. Let's try a border that is three squares wide. See how that looks. I'm just extending my line three squares up. And I'll draw a line up here. And I'll do the same thing on the bottom. And to keep it proportional, I will extend a line three squares on either side. I think that looks good. I think that with this border, we'll increase the negative space and the overall design, which I think will give it a really nice look. Once I'm happy with my design drawn in my sketchbook I like to add color. And I use markers when I draw these, have India ink in them. And I really like the look that they give in the sketchbook. I know I want the center square to pop out of the design so I think I'm going to try this hot pink color. I think this will make a really strong focal point in the center of the design. These markers that I have are a brush tip and I really like them because they're fine enough at the center to get some detail, but the brush really allows you to fill in larger areas of color. Next I think I want to use this dark bluish purple color for my half square triangles. Wanna color these in just in the same way. I like to outline my shape first and then fill in. It just tends to keep everything a little bit neater. I've tried lots of markers trying to find the right ones and I keep coming back to these. These are my favorite. These are by Faber-Castell. They're called pitt pens and I love them because they don't bleed through the back of my paper like every other marker I've tried does. They also have really nice clear colors, which work well. Your background color could be white fabric, like the white of the page of the sketchbook, but I want to use cream so I'm gonna go ahead and color that in now with a cream colored marker. I typically make sketches like this for all of my quilt designs. In fact it's, I think my favorite part of the process. I like to work out the color palette I might use, I like to work out construction, and I even use it to work out yardage and fabric requirements for each project. Now we're gonna start thinking about math but don't freak out because it's really easy math and you can do it. I start by counting how many graph squares I have on the paper. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24. And I make a note of it. And it should be 24 tall since we're working in a square format. That's a good idea to check, just to make sure we didn't get off-kilter as we were drawing. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24. And I make a note in the margin just for reference because I usually forget that number. At the very least, if we were to make one graph paper square equal to one inch, this finished project would be 24 inches by 24 inches, which is really pretty small. So I know I wanna make it large enough to be usable, so I'm going to play with scale and increase my size of my squares a little bit. If I were to make each square equal to two inches, this would be 48 by 48, which would be bigger and could certainly work, but I think if I make that each square three inches square, my total dimensions would be 72 inches by 72 inches. And I like to use that. That's a good usable size quilt dimension for me. So I'm gonna make note of that here. I'm gonna write each square is equal to three inches. Remember, this dimension is without seam allowances. So when we're working on figuring out our actual pattern pieces we need to add that in. A typical seam allowance is a quarter inch on each side. So as I'm figuring out and calculating my pattern pieces, I just need to keep that in mind. Like to start in the center. Maybe I'll call this a. And I'm gonna count how many sides it is, how many squares it is to determine the pattern piece. It's one, two, three, four, five, six. One, two, three, four, five, six. So it's six by six on my graph paper. And remember we're making each square equal to three inches. So for my pattern, a needs to be 18 and a half because we've got a half or a quarter inch seam allowance on either side. By 18 and a half.

So that will be the cut dimension of the center square. Looking at our proportions of this pattern, we can see that these two outside or these two outer squares are the same size. Let's go ahead and label these *b* for our purposes. You can double check your math if you want. One, two, three, four, five, six. One, two, three, four, five, six. And again, we're multiplying by three. So these pieces will also be 18 and a half by 18 and a half because we need to add the seam allowances. So those will be the sizes of fabric that we'll cut for those sections as well. Now let's look at the half square triangles. We know that four of them make up the same dimensions. So we need four of these units to make up a square that will measure 18 and a half by 18 and a half. So that means each of our half square triangles will be nine and a half inches with the seam allowance. Let's call these *c* just to keep in line with the rest of our design. You might be wondering why our half square triangle units are nine and a half inches instead of nine and a quarter because if you add nine and a quarter and nine and a quarter, you get 18 and a half. But we need that extra quarter inch on each piece, because it disappears in the seam allowance. So just remember anytime that you have a square that is gonna be pieced, you have to add a seam allowance. And I like to calculate how many of piece I have in a pattern. So I've got one *a*. I have two *b* pieces. And I'll count up my *c*'s. So I'll have 24 *c* pieces. Now let's figure out the border. In keeping with our alphabetical naming of our pattern pieces, let's start with the top and call this and the bottom *d*. They're the same dimensions. And some quick math tells us that that will be nine and a half. And let's count how many white it is. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18. So that's 54 and a half. Feel free to use a calculator at any point during this process. I just use the one on my phone. So we know we have two of those pieces in our pattern. Our next letter in the alphabet is *e*, so let's call our outside border pieces *e* and figure out the math for those. Nine and a half. And we know it's 24 inches or 24 squares long. So let's go ahead and calculate that. 24 times three is 72. So we need to add our seam allowance in. So it'll be 72 and a half. 'Cause you need to add the seam allowance in and we've got two of those. So we'll just make note of that as well. So now we have everything plotted out. We know what our pattern pieces are. And you can use the same technique to increase the scale of any quilt design pattern. Here's another one that I have already done using the same technique. This is a traditional quilt block design, that again typically would be made multiple times in a finished quilt. But I've increased the scale to make the one block the entire quilt design. I started in the center and worked my way out. I figured out the pattern size pieces based on the dimensions of the squares that I drew, and then have that all notated around the design. Even though the math may seem daunting at first, using this graph paper and this technique really makes it a lot easier.

### Cutting fabric

- Because we're working on such a large scale, we're gonna be cutting bigger pieces than we would in a traditional quilt pattern. And it can be a little tricky, so I'm gonna walk you through how I do that. We're first cutting our center square and that dimension is 18.5 inches by 18.5 inches. So I've got my fabric yardage placed on my cutting mat. It's folded in half. Just like I buy it off the bolt. So it comes folded in half. And I'm gonna cut 18.5 inches. So line the ruler up at the 18.5-inch mark. Hold it in place and cut with a rotary cutter. So now our fabric is 18.5 inches wide. We're gonna open it up. And turn it in the other direction to cut the 18.5-inch square. If your fabric is extra wrinkly, be sure to iron it beforehand so you can get a more accurate cut. We're gonna trim off the selvedge, we don't wanna use that in our project. So I made a cut at the 18.5-inch mark. I'm gonna move my ruler over to the zero mark, zero line. And make a cut here. And we've got our 18.5-inch square. Now we need to cut a 10-inch square. This will be used in our half-square triangles. And then we're gonna

sub-cut that strip into squares. So my strip of fabric has already been cut at 10 inches wide. So now I'm just going to rotate it and cut this into 10-inch squares. Because the fabric comes folded off the bolt, each square that we cut in this manner will yield actually two squares instead of just one. So make sure that you line up the fabric so that your first cut will remove the selvedge. Mine happens to be on the 23-inch mark. And that's fine. So I'll make a cut here because we want this to be 10 inches, we're gonna move down 10 inches on our ruler. So that will be the 13-inch mark in this case. So that gave us two squares. And we can get two more out of this strip. So if we're at the 13-inch mark, we're gonna move down to the three-inch mark. For a 10-inch square. We have four squares now, you need to make a total of 12 out of the three remaining strips of fabric. We're getting ready to cut our borders, and because they need to be 72.5 inches long to start that's really kind of an unmanageable size of fabric to deal with. So the best thing to do is to fold it over in half and then I like to fold it in half again to make it a little bit easier to cut. The thing to keep in mind when you're doing this to cut large pieces like this through multiple layers of fabric is to keep everything lined up as neatly as possible on the ruler so you have accurate cuts, and also make sure you have a sharp blade in your rotary cutter. Because we're gonna be cutting through multiple layers of fabric you really want the blade to be nice and sharp to handle that. I'm working with fabric that's been folded over, and so my finish size right now is roughly 23 by 19. And it's got eight layers of fabric, so again, make sure your rotary cutter is sharp and cut slowly. We're gonna be making 9.5-inch wide cuts. And the way the fabric is folded, it will yield us two strips per cut. So line it up. Make your first cut. And then measure 9.5 inches over. And double-check your measurement before you cut. Nine and a half. And cut. And repeat one more time. So we've got a 9.5-inch wide measurement. And just keep everything lined up with the lines on your cutting surface to make sure your cuts are accurate and even. Two of these strips we need to leave at the length they are, so 72.5 inches wide. And the other two we need to trim down to 54.5 inches. I like to do this cut separately instead of keeping it layered, just to make sure my cut is accurate. Because my cutting mat is 36 inches, I'll have to do this in stages. Pinch the fabric at the 36-inch mark of your cutting mat or whatever longest dimension you have on your cutting mat, you may be working with a smaller cutting mat. Mine's 36 so I'm gonna hold my finger there and then place that right on the zero mark, hold it in place with your other hand. And then gently smooth out the fabric. Trying not to move it around too much. Once you've got your measurement there, I'm actually just gonna slide it up to the next line so I can see my numbers. And I know that my border strip now needs to be 54.5 inches long. So that means I need to cut it at the 18.5-inch mark. Based on my measurement, yours may be different. Just make sure your border is cut to 54.5 inches for this part. Repeat this with your other border strip. You'll also have to cut two 18.5 by 18.5 inch squares out of the same background fabric. You will also have to cut a total of 12 10-inch by 10-inch squares of this fabric as well.

## **Chapter 4 - Assembling the Quilt**

### Half-square triangle blocks

- We're gonna start by making our half-square triangles with our light and dark fabrics, our ten-inch squares. It's easier to draw and see on the lighter fabric. If you're using two darker fabrics, you would use a white pencil to do this stuff. Start by placing the ruler on top of the square and find the diagonal line between two of the points of the square. Place your ruler right on top of that center of the square and draw a line diagonally through the center. I'm working with solids, so the right and wrong sides of the fabric are pretty much the same. If you're working with a printed fabric, be sure to draw the lines on the back of it, on the wrong side of the fabric. Once you have your center line,

place the ruler on top of the square again 1/4 of an inch over from the center line and make another line. And you may need to go over the same line a couple of times, two or three times, just to make sure it's dark enough to see. Once you've got two lines, rotate the square to make a third line on the other side of the center line. So line up your ruler again and draw a third line. We're drawing three lines on the fabric because we're gonna stitch on the outside lines, so we're gonna stitch on this line, we're gonna stitch on this line, and this center line becomes our cut-in line. Once we have our three lines drawn, we can take our other fabric and put it underneath the fabric with the lines drawn. Line everything up and then I'm gonna pin it in place. Because our square is large, because we're working with larger pieces of fabric, we're gonna put a few, two or three, pins on either side of our drawn lines. That should hold everything in place. Make sure that your fabrics are right sides together. And sometimes, I even put a pin on the outer two edges when I'm working with such large pieces and just to hold everything in place. Once it's pinned, we're ready to sew. Place the fabric on the sewing machine and line it up so that the needle is right over that exterior line, outside line that we drew. And then start to sew. You don't need to backstitch because we're gonna be squaring this up after we're done and you may snip off the threads anyway. But what is important is to go slowly and really try to stitch right exactly on the outside line. Staying on this line will create half-square triangles that are precise and constructed well. When you get to the end, take it off the machine, snip the excess threads on both sides, place it back on the machine to sew the outside line, and place it right underneath the needle, and stitch along that line again. Going slow, really trying to make sure your stitches fall right on top of that pencil line. And stitch on the other line. Snip the threads and unpin, and I'm gonna show you what those stitches look like on our sewing lines. I'm gonna flip it over to the back so you can see it better. You can see, we stitched along the outside two lines, and then our center line where we're gonna cut these apart. So, using the rotary cutter and your straight edge, place it on top of the center line and cut along that line. Open it up, and you could see we've got two half-square triangles. Finger press, and we're gonna press our seams to the side towards the darker fabric. So just run your finger all on that seam. Because our block is big, it's a little bit tougher to do than if it were small. But just go slowly and ease the fabric where it needs to be. Once it's finger pressed, we can press with the iron. And remember the difference between pressing and ironing. Pressing is putting the iron down and keeping it still, and the picking it up and lowering it again. Ironing is moving the iron back and forth without picking it up. And it's a good idea to press and not iron at this point, because if you iron and move the iron over the fabric too much, you can stretch out your block. These are dog ears, and they are formed from the seam allowance of our square. So, we're just gonna cut these off before we square up our half-square triangle. Use the rotary cutter, just trim them off, and then repeat on the other side. And then, with our 9 1/2-inch square ruler, place the ruler on top of the half-square triangle and line up the diagonal line of the ruler with the seam, and then trim off excess fabric. You may need to rotate your block and trim on the other two sides. Once they're all trimmed and squared, we're going to sew four of them together in this arrangement. We're gonna make two rows, place them right sides together and pin in place. You see, I've got a piece of washi tape here, and I've got it so that it's 1/4 inch away from the needle. We are going to sew a 1/4-inch seam allowance, so this is gonna act as a guide. I'm gonna place my fabric right up against it. And then just sew slowly to ensure an accurate 1/4-inch seam. And, at a place where you've got a seam allowance on these half-square triangles, they might start to shift and flip over. If they do, stop the sewing machine, make any adjustments to the presser foot that you might need just to keep everything in the direction it should be pressed in. You can see it's starting to flip up. Just lift that presser foot up, place it back down and then finish sewing.

Once it's done, take it off the machine, snip the excess threads, unpin. We're gonna open it up, and we're gonna repeat with the bottom two half-square triangles. Finger press, and that means running your finger along the seam allowance of the seam that we just sewed. So, here's our seam, and because we're gonna sew this top section to the bottom section, we want our seams to be pressed in the opposite direction. So, from my bottom half here, I'm gonna press the seams towards this block on the left. But on my top, I'm gonna press the seam towards the block on the right so that when we sew these two sections together, we'll be able to nestle the seams and get really nice, precise points. I'm all ready to press with the iron. This is the top of my piece, and I'm pressing the seam in this direction to the side towards the block on the left when it's turned wrong side up. And here's my bottom row, and you can see, I've got the seam pressed to the side in the opposite direction. Once they're pressed, we can sew the top to the bottom, and we're gonna nestle our seams together, which means that they will be lined up together, but opposite each other, and that just gives a finished look to our points, so everything comes together as it should. So, once you've got them nestled together, pin in place, and on the seams that are nestled, I like to put a pin on either side of the seam, parallel to that seam. I've found that that really keeps everything from shifting as I sew. And then, I'm gonna place pins along the rest of our edge. Once it's pinned, it's ready to sew. We're sewing with a 1/4-inch seam allowance. Let's place it under the machine, and stitch slowly together. When you get close to the area where the seams are nestled, you might have some shifting, that will occur. If that happens, and then you'll be able to feel it with your fingers as you're sewing. If that happens, just stop the machine and readjust as necessary. There's also a lot of bulk at this intersection, so you may need to guide it through the sewing machine with your other hand. Then, get to the end. Take it off the machine, snip off your extra thread, and unpin. And open it up, and here is our block of four half-square triangles sewn together. Finger press and press the seam with the fabrics to the side towards the darker fabric. Repeat this five more times for a total of six of these pieced half-square triangle units.

### Assembling blocks

- We're ready to build our first row. I've got two of my four half-square triangle blocks together and one of the 18.5 inch squares of my background fabric. So, I'm going to sew these two together first. Just place it right sides together. And line up the corners of the triangles as best as you can, and pin in place. And again, I'm going to put a pin on either side of this seam to hold it in place as I sew it together. I'm going to finish up a few more pins on either side, and once it's all pinned, I'm ready to sew along this seam. We are sewing again with a quarter-inch seam allowance. Because our blocks are so big, you may need to stop and adjust the fabric if it starts to pull too much because of the weight. And when you get to the intersection of the seam, you may need to make some adjustments as well, just to make sure everything is staying in the position that it was pressed in. When it's done, take it off the machine. Snip the threads. And we're ready to unpin. Open it up, and then we're gonna sew the white square to our pieced section. So, pin it, right sides together. Because my white fabric doesn't have a seam, I'm gonna put that side down. The seams on the back of my half-square triangles have a tendency to shift. And if I have them on top, I can see right what I'm sewing on top of. Once it's pinned, we're ready to sew with a quarter-inch seam. Since our seams are on top, I can kind of hold them in place a little bit easier. Still might need to stop and make some adjustments. When you're done, take it off the machine, snip the threads, and unpin. And open it up. And we're ready to press. Go ahead and sew your next two rows just like we did here, and don't forget you've got an assembly diagram in your PDF.

### Assembling the quilt top

- We'll start assembling our rows, sewing the top and the middle one together first. Sew them together right-sides together. Be sure to arrange the seams so that the middle seams of each row line up together. When you have them aligned, pin them in place. I'm gonna do the same thing over here. And I'm gonna put some more pins in along the edge. There's a lot of pins. Bring it to the machine and sew with a quarter inch seam allowance. And again because our pieces are so big, you may need to adjust and move the fabric, and it's nice to have some table space; behind the machine, to the side of the machine, just to hold this extra fabric as you go. Remember when you get to a seam you might need to do some readjustment, and because of the bulk of that seam, you may need to help guide it through through the back with your other hand. Coming up on another seam so I'm gonna make some adjustments; keep everything in place. And I'm just gonna readjust the fabric too because of the way it's starting to pull just because it's such a large piece. Adjust the fabric again. And adjust the seams here and I'm gonna help guide it through, lifting the foot up as needed. Once you're done, remove it from the machine, and snip the threads. Press the seam to the side and then sew the bottom row on in the same way.

## **Chapter 5 - Finishing**

### Binding and finishing

- We're ready to sew our borders on, and we're gonna start with the top and bottom pieces, which are the shorter of the two borders, the 54 and a half-inch pieces. Place the border on top of the pieced section of your quilt top, right sides together, and pin in place. Once it's pinned, we're ready to sew with a quarter-inch seam allowance. Place it under the machine, and sew with the quarter-inch seam allowance. (sewing machine runs) You may need to do some adjustments where there are seams underneath on your quilt top. (sewing machine runs) And if it's too bulky, just guide it through the machine with your other hand. (sewing machine runs) Once you're done sewing, take it off the machine and snip your threads and unpin. Open it up. You can see the top border is on. Press your seam to the side, and then sew the rest of the borders onto the exact same way, starting with the bottom first and then the right and left sides to finish your quilt top. Here's the finished fly-away quilt. Once you have your quilt top finished, you've got some design choices when it comes to quilting and binding. You can see that I've quilted my quilt with a cream-color thread to match the background color that I chose. So this cream color, I quilted this on a long arm machine with a free-hand kind of figure eight design, almost like a sketch along the top of my quilt. You can really use almost any kind of quilting design, whatever you would prefer. For my binding, I used cream-color fabric, the same fabric as my background because I didn't want the binding to compete with the design of the quilt top itself. I also feel like this may be a little bit more of a modern design choice as well. Using the technique of scaling up a traditional small quilt block creates a really strong graphic modern quilt design.