
Polk Block: Paper-Piecing with Scraps with Carolyn Friedlander

Chapter 1 - Block of the Month - Polk Block: Paper-Piecing with Scraps

Introduction

Overview

(ethereal music) - Hi, I'm Carolyn Friedlander, pattern designer, fabric designer, and quilter. In this workshop, we will be paper piecing using scraps, one of my favorite techniques. I really like being able to just grab whatever's available on the table, and because of this technique, our piecing will be very precise. (ethereal music)

Polk Block

Paper-piecing with scraps

- Materials you'll need are, some assorted fabrics for your blocks. I've just pulled sizeable pieces from my cutting table. For our larger pieces of the block, you'll need a three and a half inch strip. You'll need your block template which is a pdf. Mine's printed on regular office paper. You'll also need an iron, an ironing surface, a cutting mat, small pair of scissors, a rotary cutter, some quilting pins, a neutral thread, and a small ruler, and your sewing machine. You want a foot that allows a really good visibility of your sewing area. This might mean an open toe foot. Also, if you have an extension table, this is a great time to use it. On my work surface, I have my template cut out and the different pieces separated. I've my scraps of fabric and then I have my larger three and a half inch strip to the side. I'm gonna be using this piece for these larger sections here. And for my scraps, I'm gonna use those in these two blocks. One nice thing about this block is you can kind of move around these pieces. You could move one on top of the other, you can move this to the other side, but we can play with that later. So, let's start with these guys. Since I'm working from scraps, I'm gonna start with template B because it has larger sections. So I'll go ahead and make use of my larger pieces of scraps first so that I'll have the smaller pieces later. Looking at your template, you'll notice that it's numbered one through five. You're going to want to work in order. But also grab my pile of scraps, And then gonna just flip through and see which one I wanna start with. This first piece number one isn't too huge. But, hey this one looks one pretty good. I'm gonna pick another color to go next to it. So paper piecing is worked on kind of both sides of the paper. You're gonna be flipping it back and forth quite a bit. And the goal is to get your fabric to fill each of these areas plus a seam allowance. So starting with number one, I'm gonna see if this piece of fabric will work. It will be easier to show you from this side. But what you'll wanna do is keep in mind that the ink side of your template is going to remain free and clear so that you can read everything. And then your block is going to be built on the back side. So your fabrics are gonna be right side up from the back and your ink is going to be always facing you and not covered up. So to audition this one, I'm gonna have it face side down because like I said that you're building up the face of the block on the other side. And I'm just making sure that the size this scrap will fit over this area plus the seam allowance. So I'm bringing it up to that first sewing line which is the shared line between one and two. Going over, make sure of a seam allowance. And you'll see, I have plenty of extra fabric. So that one will

work great. Let's take a look at number two. I'm gonna do basically the same thing. I wanna make sure to turn it over. It's super easy to forget that it's being built the other way. But I'm gonna line this one up and lay it on top. Again, giving myself a seam allowance on either side. It looks like that one's pretty perfect. If you're new to paper piecing, you may wanna try with the larger piece first just to double check. But as you get more comfortable, and you see that this is a pretty good fit, you'll be better at positioning it so that it will work. So, I start with number one. And now, I'm working on the back of the piece. Position the first fabric over area one aligning this long edge with the first sewing line. Gonna push that up so that's a quarter of an inch over the sewing line. And then I'm gonna take my piece to number two, audition it as it's going to go to cover area number two. Making sure I've got enough fabric on either side. Flip it right sides together and then I'm just gonna double check my seam allowance and now we'll head to the sewing machine. Turn your stitch length to 1.5. I like using a shorter stitch because it makes for a really great tight seam. Plus it perforates the paper more which makes it easier to remove later. Slide your assembled piece in and I like to use the hand wheel to turn the needle down to make sure I'm at the very beginning of that sewing line. So now I'm there, I drop the presser foot. You're gonna back stitch at the beginning and the end. Sew the full length of the line. (sewing machine stitching) As you can see, I've sewn my first line and I made sure to stay within the borders of these outer lines. I back stitch at the beginning and at the end. Flip everything over and press this piece out. Now you can double check to make sure that your pieces are big enough by how they cover outside of these lines. Now it's time to trim our block. You'll notice we have plenty of fabric here. But I need to trim it to create the seam allowance. Our next sewing line is going to be the shared line between two and three because the number three is the next area that we wanna cover. The way you do that ... is fold your paper back at that sewing line. I'm just kind of looking through the paper. But if you're having trouble seeing it, you can always slide in an index card up to that line and fold your paper back next the index card. Trim your excess fabric quarter of an inch from that fold line to create your seam allowance. So now, we need to figure out what fabric we wanna use for number three. Got my stack of fabric here ... And the way that these pieces come together is kind of just one after the other. A good way to audition that, I mean I've already picked my first two. But I could start thinking about just what color I may wanna have next. I could line them up. Maybe I want the gold then I might want a white. Maybe I want a symmetrical palette. So I could go back to there blue and then the blue like that. That could give you an idea of one way to go. Or you maybe you want them to all be different. So I could go the gold, I've got this one and then I want like a pop of this. And maybe this one to finish up. I kind of like that cause then we've got some nice boldness there between some softer kind of grays. So if this is the order that I want, I'm just gonna set these up here as a reminder. And a great thing about paper piecing is that you can actually write on the paper. So leave yourself little notes about what you wanna put where. First, I need to double check that this one will actually fit area three. So just as I did before, and now this piece has a little bit of salvage. I don't wanna include that in my piecing. So I need to keep that in mind. If it's something that's kind of hard to remember, you can go ahead and trim that off. So that you can be totally sure. And just like I did before, I'm gonna leave it face side down unto the template. Let's see, I can put it this way but you can see that it really doesn't fit cause I've still got this extra piece here that I need to cover and I've barely created a seam allowance here. So I can kind of turn it around to see if it will work other ways. And actually, it will work pretty well this way. I'm kind of feeling for the fold that I created in that paper to make sure I can do a seam allowance over here. And then if you just kind of peek up, you can see there's enough fabric there and you've got enough fabric on this side. So this one will work. Again, if you're

new to paper piecing, don't worry about trying to use the smallest scrap possible, you can always start bigger and as you get more comfortable, get down to those smaller sizes later. So, I'm gonna flip back over, I have my fabric right side up. And this one since it is a little bit tight, I'm gonna make sure it fits by auditioning it where it's going to be. So I like doing what I've already pieced towards me and when I'm auditioning away from me, I wanna make sure it's pointed in the correct direction with this angle covering this angle at the block. And I'm wanting to make sure I have plenty of fabric on either side cause that's really where scrap is gonna be kind of tight. So, I've got that align and I flip it right sides together. I always love to audition my fabric where it's going to go and then once I've flipped it, I don't question that. With some of the angles and paper piecing, it might look a little bit crazy once you flip it. But just trust it's in the right spot cause if you position it based on how it flips then you might be really surprised with how it flips open. Take it to your sewing machine, and again use your hand wheel to get your needle right at the beginning of that line. Then drop your presser foot and sew the full length of the line, backstitching at the beginning and at the end. (sewing machine stitching) Turn it over, press that new piece out and then continue until the rest of your areas are full. I finish piecing my block, everything is covered and when I flip to the back, I noticed, I've plenty of extra fabric around those sides. Now, you're going to want to trim down your block, a quarter an inch from all of these outside sew lines. (cutter cutting fabric) Everything's trim down. Now we have a nice and clean block. So, now we're gonna move on to template A. We can actually put template A above or below template B, that doesn't really matter. But they're going to be like this. So, if you wanna kinda come up with a plan for the way you use your fabrics, you're going to wanna pay attention to which side of the paper you're looking at. If you're planning it out this way, you wanna look at both sides of your block from the ink side. But if you're wanting to actually audition the fabrics and since you've already gotten one made, you've got a great visual of for how that one's going to look. You wanna flip to the back side of your project and audition it this way. So I'm gonna flip over here. I know I need six fabrics and now I can think about which order I wanna use them in. So I've grabbed a couple of pulls here. You know I could use some of the same colors but position them in different ways, or if I wanted to match everything. So I wanted the same one in the center. I could put the blue on here and I can kind of repeat what's up here. So they're kind of mirrored but the shapes would be different so that would be kind of interesting. Or like in this case, I pulled the same fabrics and I kind of played with where they go. If you're going this route and you wanna mark it to make sure you're doing it right, make sure you're keeping in mind how the block is being mirrored. So if I were to flip this back over, I'm not gonna label it how it's actually laying here. I'm gonna layer it the opposite version. So, number six is actually gonna be the one farthest on the left. This other palette, I just, you know, this is why I like working with scraps cause sometimes it just makes you think of things that you wouldn't have planned otherwise. Just based on how they're laying in your pile. So like the idea of these softer fabrics. They're just happen to be in the stack together. And I got to thinking that maybe this is the more colorful block. And then the one ... The other block is kind of like a softer one. So I pulled the softer fabrics, and I think I'm actually gonna go this route. And I don't really care which order they go in. I'm just gonna go ahead and start with this one. I'm gonna apply these fabrics in the same way that I apply them to the first block. I've just finished my next template. And so now, I need to finish these last two. And you'll notice there's only one section. For these pieces I wanted them to be the same fabric. So I cut my three and a half inch strip. You can also use scraps. Same thing as before, you just wanna make sure they're gonna be large enough. This fabric works well on either side. It's a two-sided fabric. But if you're working with the one-sided fabric, position it so that the wrong side of the fabric is facing

your paper. So I'm gonna layer the template on top of the fabric. I've got extra fabric all the way around and I'm just gonna do a rough cut over here. So that I have excess ... And I'm gonna use a long basting stitch to hold it in place. To do a basting stitch, turn your stitch length up to a five. My fabric on my template, make sure everything is nice and flat and I'm just gonna do three or four basting stitches, at the corners and anywhere to hold it in place. You'll notice, I'm keeping inside of that stitching line, about a quarter of an inch from it. I might do one more here. So now everything is attached to the block. Nothing's moving, it's nice and flat. And everything attached to your template and you're going to trim it down a quarter of an inch from all solid lines. You'll do the same thing to template D and now all of your pieces are ready to go. So let's look at the layout. Flip it over. So this is how the block goes. This can go above each other, however you want it. And this can actually go on either sides. So you can keep that in mind if you're gonna make multiple blocks, you can really play with your layout. And then also, this piece can go above or below. So I'm gonna flip that over to this side so I can actually see what it's going to look like in this side, how I want to position my block. So, first look at these guys cause you'll sew this guys together first. This side if I want. Kind of like this little guy in the middle. And then, do I want, it kind of on the right side or the left side. So it kind of like did it would being down on this corner. That's what I'm gonna do. So the first seam you're going to do, is you're going sew your two blocks together by flipping them right sides together. Grab your pins. I really like to pin. So I pin them in place but if you're comfortable not pinning, totally go for that. Turn your stitch length back to 1.5 and we're going to sew this full line end to end. I just get into the habit of back stitching, But since we're sewing the full line, you don't necessarily have to. I like to use the needle down position when I'm doing this. (sewing machine stitching) a little tip that will help make the removing of the paper later much easier, is then at this point, get rid of the paper and the seam allowance. A good way to do that is I always like to fold it back and then just apply a little bit of pressure and then it should just rip right off. (paper folding and ripping) Now you're gonna press the seam. I pressed it down towards the bottom block and now you're just going to sew the smaller piece on to the block. Press that seam toward the blue. And then last, just sew this piece to that. Press that seam towards the blue as well. Each time making sure that you're removing the paper in the seam allowance. Now that your block is finished, I'm just gonna take out these basting stitches that are no longer necessary. And this is the nice thing about just having stitch ... About three or four stitches is that they pull right out. Go ahead and leave those basting stitches around the outside of your block as well as the paper. I always like to keep the paper on the backs of my blocks until I have the quilt top done. That just keeps them nice and flat and clean. But always remember the paper and the seam allowance. Then, you can make more, like I've made another one here and already you can see, you can play around with how you place your different pieces. Have fun paper piecing through your scrap pile. Finding many combinations that you wouldn't have thought of before.