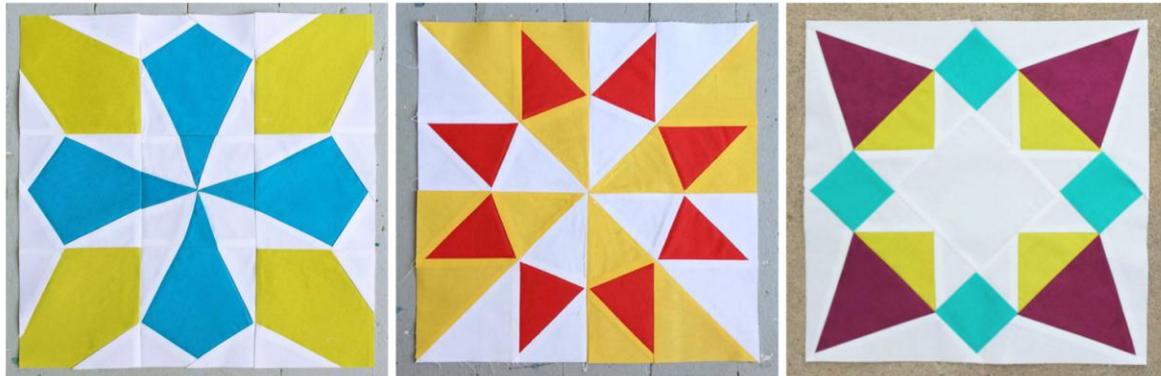


♥ Foundation Paper Piecing ♥

TUTORIAL



By Amy Gibson - www.stitcherydickorydock.com



Welcome to the magical world of foundation paper piecing!!! This is such an exciting technique, that I've really grown to appreciate for several reasons. It enables you to sew extremely precisely- with every seam and every patch exactly where it should be, BUT, without the stress of having to worry about perfectly accurate cutting and seam allowances. Whew! Since you are literally sewing on the printed lines of your paper template, you always know exactly how your block is going to turn out (almost like paint by number). The other thing I love is that this technique fosters so much creativity by allowing you to stitch complicated designs that would otherwise be nearly impossible to create.

There are so many fantastic paper piecing patterns available online....from vintage cookware to magical creatures to funky alphabets and beyond. Many traditional quilt block patterns are available in paper piecing form as well. Once you've got the hang of it, you can even try designing your own blocks! There are some really great software programs available that make this process easy as pie...speaking of...I think I need to paper piece a pie!

The unknown can be super intimidating, but I promise- you can do it! Let's break the steps down, so you can get on with the quilting!

1. First things first- you need to print your templates. Some quilt shops sell lightweight slightly translucent printable paper that makes for good paper piecing, but I prefer to use regular old printer paper. Any weight will do, other than perhaps a super heavy card-stock type- that would be tough on your machine and be difficult to tear off at the end.

Be sure to read instructions that come with your pattern very carefully before you begin. Some patterns require that you re-size them when you print, and some do not. If the pattern doesn't specifically instruct you to re-size, then take care to make sure that your printer settings are not set to scale or re-size the document at all.

2. Once you've printed your templates, you need to cut them out outside the trim line. Trim line is the very outer line of the template that includes the 1/4" seam allowance. If your pattern specifies that you need to add the seam allowance when you trim, then you should cut out your templates outside wherever that seam allowance will be. You don't need to cut accurately at this point- just a rough cut is fine, as long as you're outside the seam allowance on all sides.

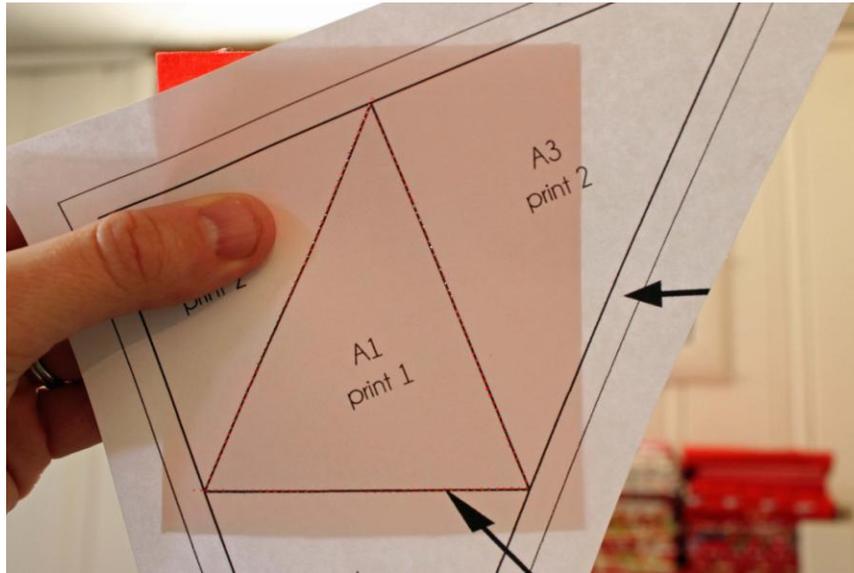
3. Next you need to turn down the stitch length on your machine. This can be a personal preference and will depend on your specific machine, but I usually turn mine down to a 1 or 1.5 (from the 2 that I usually sew at). You want it small enough that you'll easily be able to rip off the papers keeping your seams intact, but not so tiny that you shred your paper or fabric when you sew (and heaven forbid you have to rip out a seam...keep it large enough that this is still possible).

4. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, before you begin you want to perforate the stitch lines on your template by stitching along them with an unthreaded needle. Some quilters consider this an unnecessary step and prefer not to perforate for whatever reason (perhaps to speed up the process), however my experience has thoroughly convinced me that perforating saves time and headache in the long run because it eases the speed of the piecing process and reduces the chance of mistakes. You'll be folding along every single stitch line as you create your block, and if the lines are already perforated, they almost fold by themselves, perfectly on the line, every single time, without having to open the paper up and double check. To me, this is a time saver. I can speed through, certain that my folding and trimming is accurate. This step also comes in handy when it comes time to rip off the paper at the very end. The paper tears off more easily, and saves the integrity of your seams. In the end though, do what feels most natural and yields the best results for YOU! There are so many choices and options when it comes to quilting- it's important to try different ways of doing things, and to choose what you prefer, appreciating that someone else might make a different choice, and that's ok :)

Once you've perforated, go ahead and re-thread your machine, but keep your stitch length smaller than normal.

5. Now on to the piecing! Keep in mind that the pattern I'm working with in this tutorial may not be the pattern you are working with- so the templates will look different. That's ok- the process is exactly the same on every foundation paper piecing template.

Begin by aligning the fabric piece that fits with spot #1 on your template directly behind that patch. The printed part of the paper will be facing you, and the right side of the fabric needs to be facing away from you. It's very important that you have at least $\frac{1}{4}$ " on all sides of the A1 section. It helps to hold your paper up in front of a light source, so you can see that you've got the fabric centered directly under spot #1.



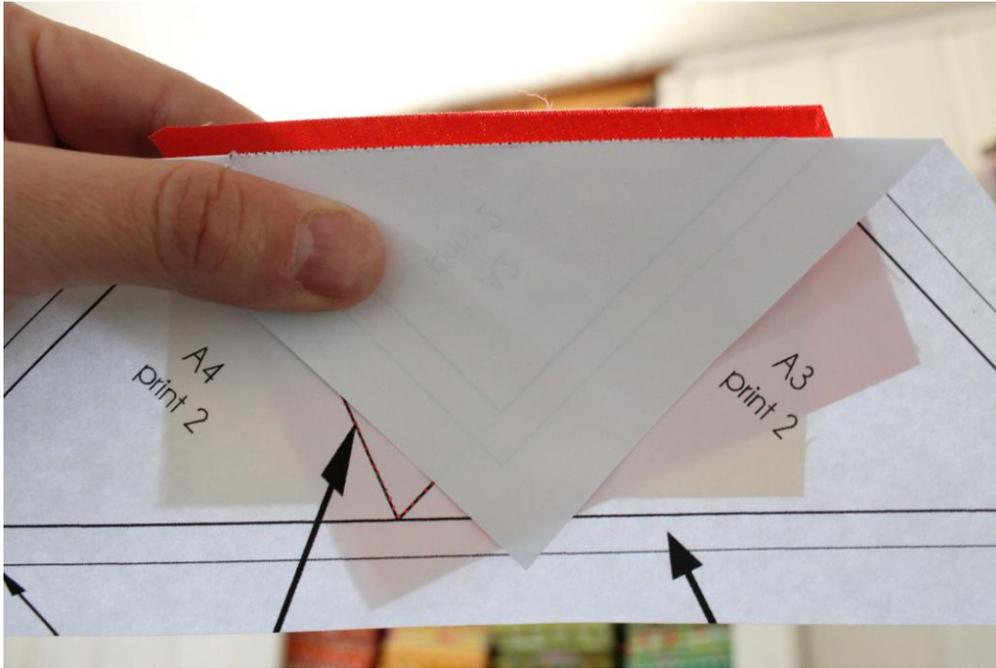
Hold the fabric in place either by adding a pin, or a dab of water-soluble fabric glue stick.

6. Next, lay the piece on a cutting mat, and fold the paper on the line between patches 1 & 2. Your perforation comes in handy here, making your paper fold easily and accurately, right on the line.

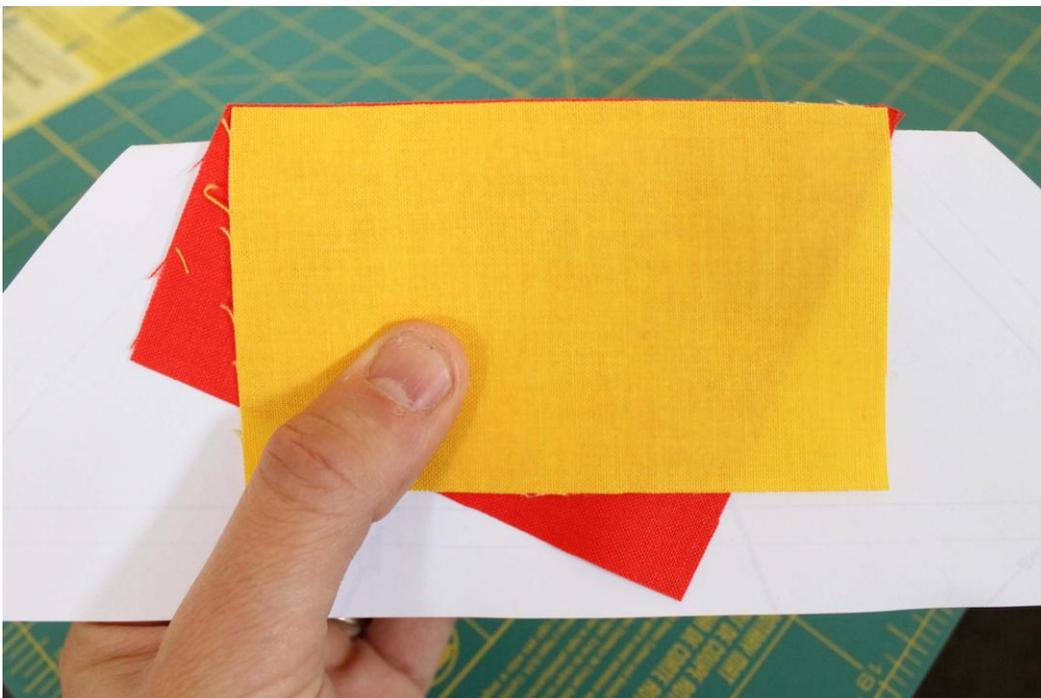
Align your ruler $\frac{1}{4}$ " past the fold line, and trim (this is creating your $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance).



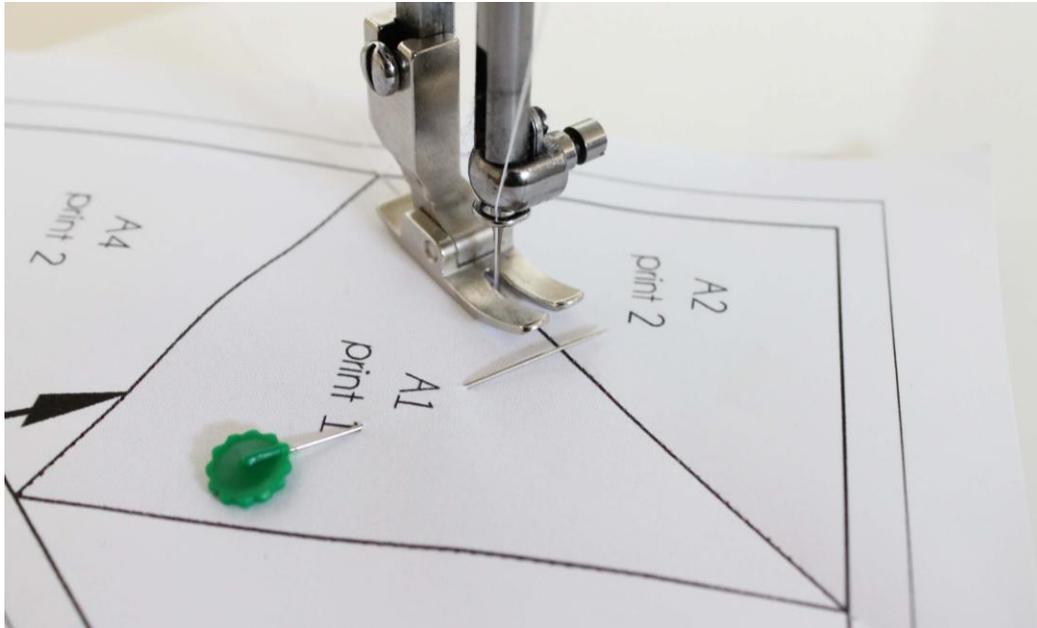
Now, with the paper still folded, take the rectangle that corresponds with patch #2, and align it along the raw edge, *right side of fabric facing you* (so the right sides of the fabrics are together). Hold it up to a light source again, and this time, look to see that it's centered over patch #2, the section that is folded over toward you. In this photo, you can faintly see that my yellow fabric (patch 2), is centered behind A2 (the triangle that you can see showing through the wrong side of my folded paper).



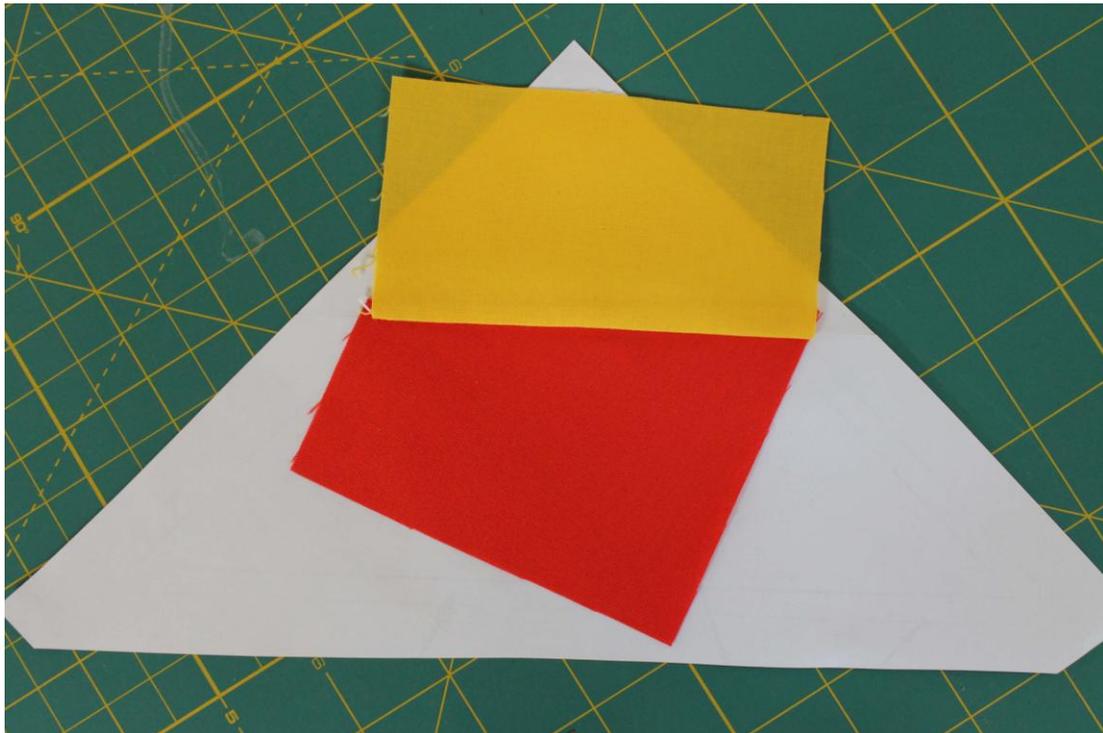
This is what the piece looks like from the back.



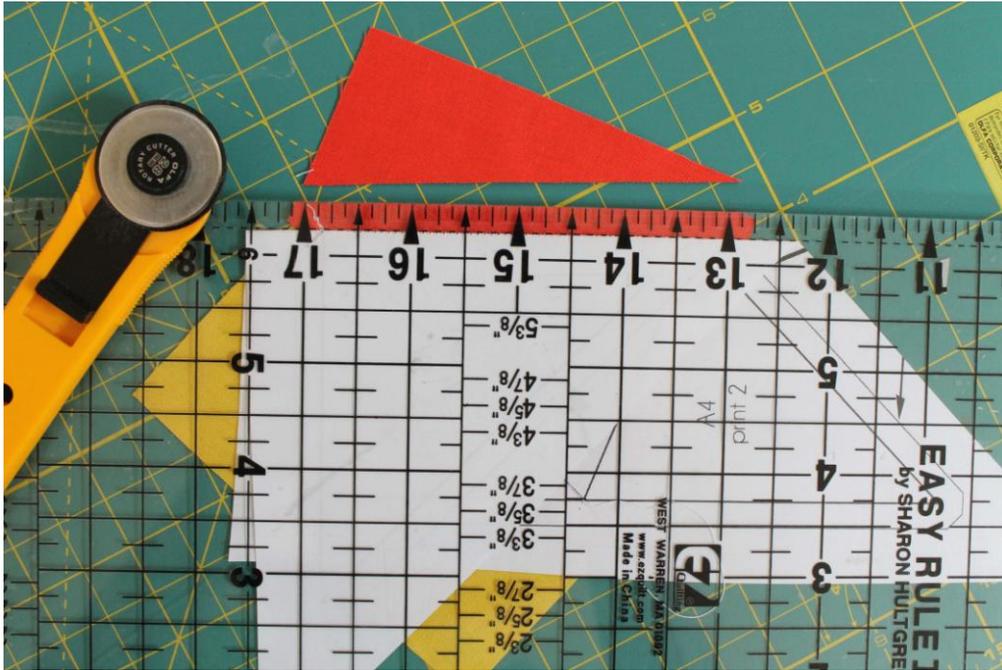
5. With the printed side of the paper facing you, carefully hold these pieces in place as you unfold your paper, and add a pin. Now, stitch directly on the line between spots 1 & 2, from beginning to end, removing the pin as you stitch, so as not to hit it. No need to back tack at the beginning or end of this seam.



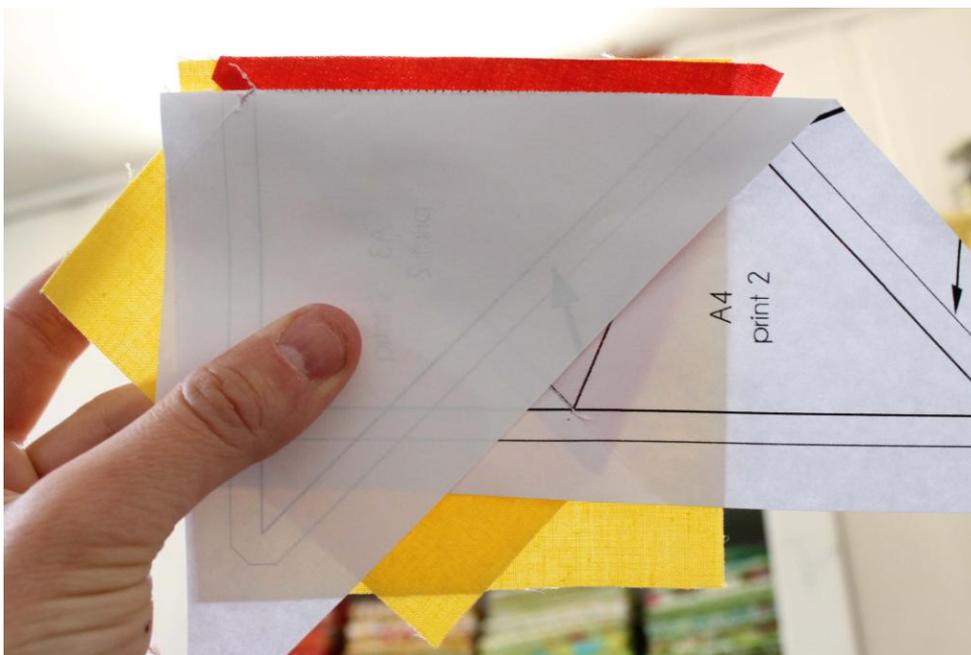
6. Flip the paper over, and press your pieces open. The seam will automatically be facing toward patch #2.



7. Now flip your piece back over, so the printed paper side is facing up, and begin this same process again for patch #3. Fold on the line between #3, and whatever you just pieced. Keep in mind that depending on your pattern, this line might be short or it might be long- regardless, go ahead and fold it, continuing the fold all the way across your piece. Trim to $\frac{1}{4}$ ", as you did before, and line up the corresponding fabric piece for patch #3 using a light source to help see through the paper. Pin, then open up the folded paper and stitch on the line. Repeat for A4.



Here's what my piece looks like with the third patch lined up, and ready to open up the paper, pin, and stitch along the line between patch #3 and the rest of my piece.



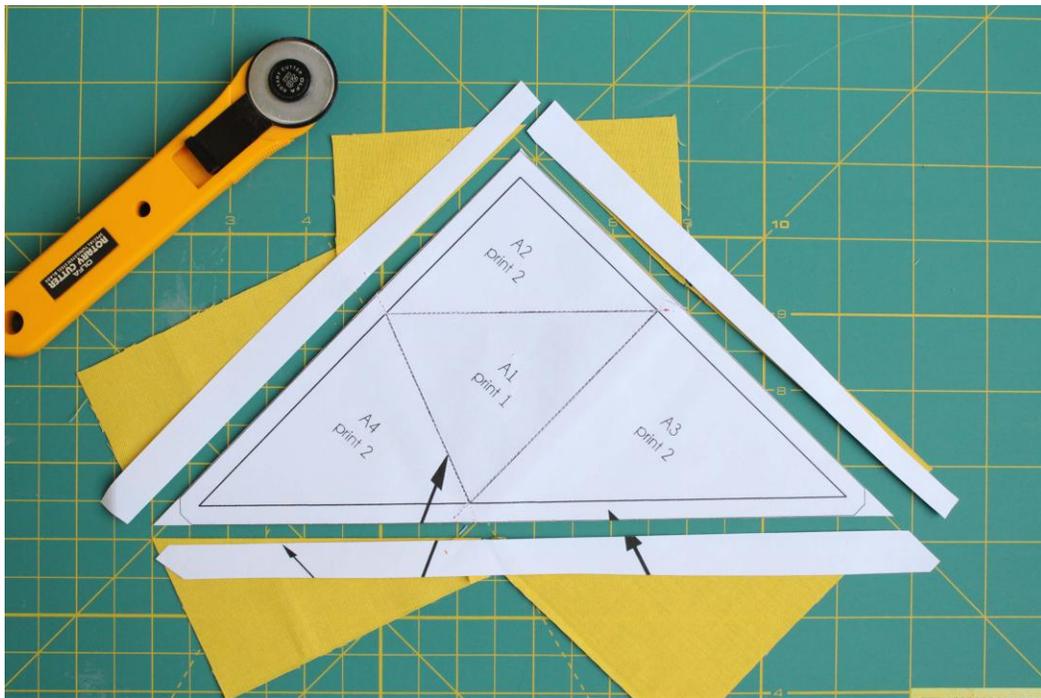
Press your piece open, and continue adding patches in this same fashion- folding on the line that connects to the patch you need to add, trimming, lining up your fabric, opening the paper, pinning, and stitching on the line.

Here's what my piece looked like after I added all 4 patches that were on my template.



8. Once you've stitched on all of your patches, press and starch your piece. Starching is an optional step, but since you'll be exposing and handling quite a few bias raw edges, it's a good idea and help prevent stretching.

9. Now lay the piece on your cutting mat with the paper side facing up. Using a ruler and rotary cutter, trim around the entire piece on the trim line (the outermost marked line). Be sure to double check whether or not your pattern has instructed you to add the seam allowance yourself before trimming, or whether it's already marked (all of my patterns include a marked trim line).



10. Carefully remove the paper, one patch at a time. Your smaller stitch length will help to keep your seams intact during this process, but you'll still want to take care at the edges, holding a finger on the end of the seam to support it as you tear. A seam ripper or straight pin can serve as a helpful tool for getting out little bits of remaining paper.

Congrats!!! You've paper pieced your first section!!! See, that wasn't too scary, was it? If you're nodding your head "YES IT WAS!", don't worry- you will grow more and more confident with each section that you piece, and before long (truly, not long!), this process will feel like second nature. Don't give up! If you got confused at a step, go back and review the photos, or perhaps check out my [Craftsy Block of the Month](#) online video series, and [click on the October lesson](#), to see me demonstrate this process on video.

Questions? Still stuck? Feel free to pop me an email at stitcherydickorydock@hotmail.com. I'd be happy to help in any way I can!

Happy Quilting!!!!