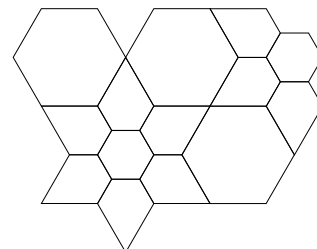




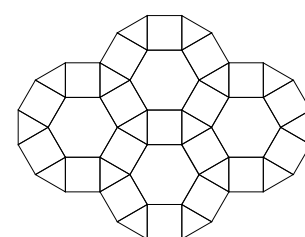
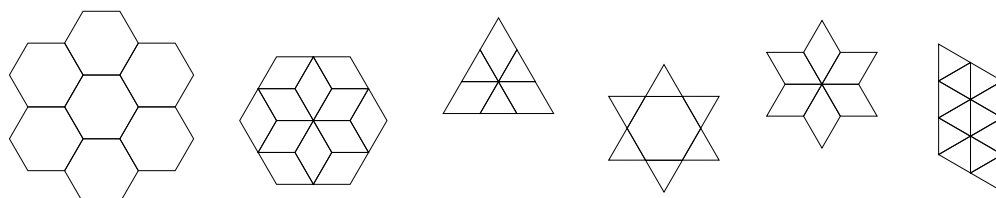
English Piecing

What is English Piecing?

The basics of English paper piecing are simple. Fabric is tacked over papers and then these shapes are joined together by oversewing adjoining edges. Shapes are chosen which fit together without any space between them to form patterns. Some are one-patch designs, such as the hexagon or equilateral triangle, where a fabric may be created by using just the one shape. More complex patterns may be made by combining several shapes which have shared characteristics. One example of this would be Merry Go Round, which uses hexagons, triangles and squares all with equal length sides. Texas Star is formed from 6 irregular pentagons stitched around a small hexagon and each star is separated from the next by a large hexagon. Some examples are shown at right and below.



Texas Star (or Pentagon Star)



Merry Go Round

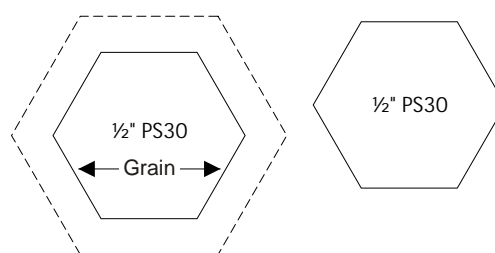
What are the benefits of English Piecing?

There are 4 major benefits from English piecing.

1. The piecing of corners or the centres of stars etc is exceptionally accurate.
2. The hand piecing generally makes for a handy "carry round" project.
3. Some shapes tessellate well but the edges do not necessarily form straight lines, eg Hexagons, Merry Go Round or Texas Star. This attribute makes them easy to piece using the English piecing method but rather more difficult by machine.
4. As the paper stabilises the fabric whilst sewing, it is less important for the fabric to be cut on the straight of grain. For more information about this read the hints and tips for getting a good result.

Basic Instructions - How to English Piece over Papers

1. Trace the fabric template onto the template plastic and mark the template with the size of the foundation shape, reorder number, the solid outline of the paper shape and the grain lines. Cut out the fabric template on the dotted line. The solid line indicates the shape of the paper. See example on the right.
2. Carefully cut out one foundation paper shape for every shape in your chosen design.
3. Place the ironed fabric right side down on a sandpaper board to stop fabric moving while you draw round the template. Place the fabric template on the wrong side of the fabric and trace around it with the pencil. Repeat as many times as necessary.
4. Cut out the fabric shapes on the drawn line.
5. Centre the foundation paper shape on the wrong side of the fabric shape and secure with a pin. Starting on one side turn the seam allowance to the back of the paper and tack through all thicknesses of fabric and paper to secure the seam allowance in place. Work around the shape, tacking each side to the paper and folding the fabric to make each corner neat. With wide angle shapes such as hexagons these corners will



Seam allowance = 3/16"

Diagram 1: The fabric template with the relevant information marked on it, and corresponding foundation paper.

lie flat. With narrow angle shapes such as diamonds and triangles it will be difficult to fold all the fabric to fit the narrow angle. The answer is not to try. Instead leave the excess fabric "flapping". When it comes time to stitch the shapes together this "flap" is folded aside so that it doesn't get caught in the stitching. See diagram 2.

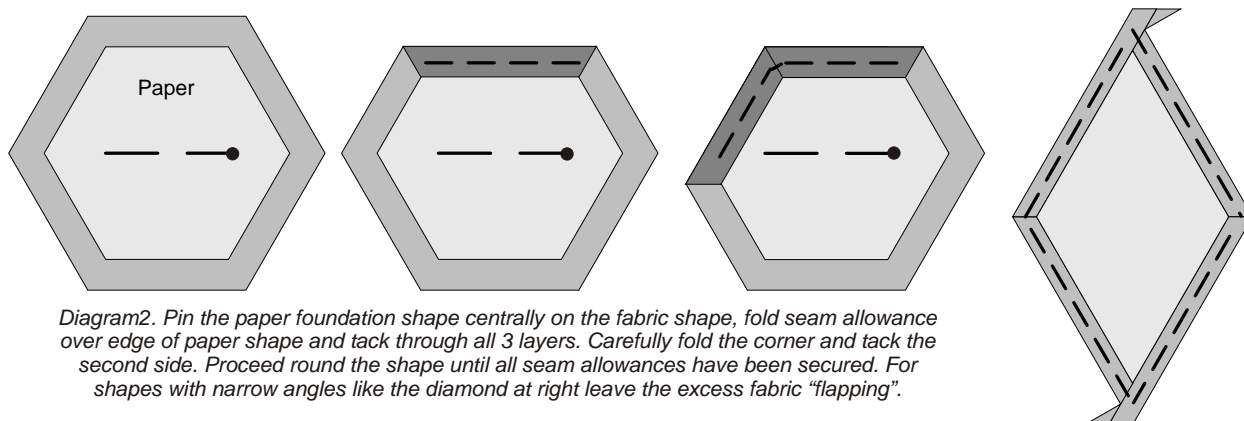


Diagram 2. Pin the paper foundation shape centrally on the fabric shape, fold seam allowance over edge of paper shape and tack through all 3 layers. Carefully fold the corner and tack the second side. Proceed round the shape until all seam allowances have been secured. For shapes with narrow angles like the diamond at right leave the excess fabric "flapping".

6. To join the shapes, place them right sides together, carefully matching the corners and edges (See diagram 3). Use a thread to blend with the colours of your patches, changing it if necessary when joining different coloured patches. Start sewing at an aligned corner. Always stitch along a straight edge so that you end up with a flat fabric. If you stitch around a corner this will have a 3D effect.

7. Take 3 or 4 tiny stitches in the same spot to start and then oversew the edges with tiny whip stitches, catching just 2 or 3 threads from each patch. Keep your stitch length as small as you can - an 1/8" is ideal. Take care not to stitch through the foundation papers. Fasten the thread at the end of the seam with 3 or 4 tiny stitches in the same spot.

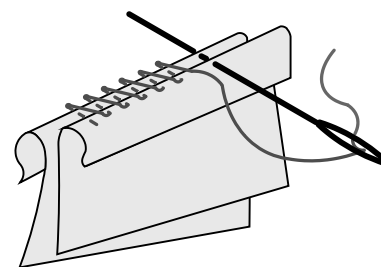


Diagram 3. Whip Stitch (or oversew)

Sometimes it is possible to start stitching the next seam without cutting the thread from the previous seam but take care not to pull this connecting thread too tight. It is still wise to start and finish each seam with 3 or 4 small stitches so that if one seam should ever break it does not affect the others close by.

8. Join shapes into sub units and then assemble these sub units to form the whole quilt. Use the progress chart provided to keep track of work completed.

9. Once all sub units are joined, carefully remove all the tacking threads and papers to prepare for backing and quilting.

10. Finish the quilt using one of the following methods.

Basic Instructions - How to Finish your Quilt

Quilts pieced using the English method often have parts of shapes protruding from the edges of the quilt. These edges are usually finished in one of the following 5 ways.

1. Often a straight edge can be formed by using part shapes to fill in the missing portions.
2. Table and wall quilts often look more interesting with a decorative angled edge which follows the contours of the shapes themselves.
3. The contoured edge could also be appliquéd onto a border panel.
4. The contoured edge may be bound.
5. The quilt may be "bagged".

More detail about these methods is given below.

1. Forming a straight edge using part shapes (See Diagram 4). Lizard of Oz project packs contain these shapes where appropriate. Turn and tack the seam allowances to these shapes in the usual way except for the seam allowance which forms the actual edge of the quilt. Leave this seam allowance "flapping". This ensures it will not get caught as you stitch shapes together so that it lies flat when you add the binding to your quilt. Remove the papers from the quilt top. Place the quilt backing right side down on a flat surface (floor or table), smooth out all creases and secure edges of fabric to surface with masking tape. Centre the wadding on top of the backing and smooth out all creases. Place and smooth quilt top right side up on the wadding. Pin or tack

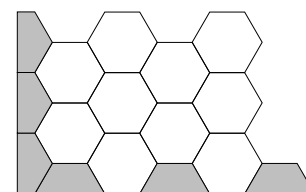


Diagram 4. Part shapes can be used to square off edges.

these layers together. Remove masking tape. Quilt.

2. Decorative angled edge. Make a duplicate round of the outermost shapes from the front of the quilt (*Diagrams 5 & 6*). Place the duplicate round right sides together with the quilt top and oversew around the edge following the angles formed by the shapes. Note that hexagons form a wide border automatically (*Diagram 5*) but that diamonds need extra shapes to fill in where only the corners of a diamond would be at the edge of the quilt top (*Diagram 6*).

Remove the papers from the quilt top. Remove the papers from the duplicate round one shape at a time and tack the seam allowance of each shape in the duplicate round to the back of itself. Place the quilt backing right side down on a flat surface (floor or table), smooth out all creases and secure edges of fabric to surface with masking tape. Centre the wadding on top of the backing and smooth out all creases. Place and smooth the quilt top right side up on the wadding. Pin or tack these layers together, being careful not to tack into the duplicate round. Remove masking tape. Taking great care not to cut the quilt top, cut excess backing and wadding to the shape of the quilt top edge, level with the seam allowance. Clip carefully into the seam allowance of any "V" shapes and trim excess fabric and wadding away from points. Turn the duplicate round to the back of the quilt and appliqué (small slip stitch) to the backing fabric. A satay stick is useful for making the points "pointy" as you turn the duplicate round to the back. Quilt.

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3. Appliqué shaped edge to a border (*Diagrams 7, 8 & 9*). Measure across the narrowest part of the pieced quilt centre length (A) and width (B) (*Diagram 7*). Cut borders and assemble to form an inner rectangular space which is smaller than the A and B measurements (*Diagram 8*). Place the pieced centre so that it sits evenly over the edges of the borders (*Diagram 9*). Appliqué the edges of the pieced top to the borders. Trim excess fabric from the back of the pieced centre to prevent shadowing of the border fabric through the quilt centre. Remove the papers from the quilt top. Place the quilt backing right side down on a flat surface (floor or table), smooth out all creases and secure edges of fabric to surface with masking tape. Centre the wadding on top of the backing and smooth out all creases. Place and smooth quilt top right side up on the wadding. Pin or tack these layers together. Remove masking tape. Quilt.

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4. Bound contoured edge. A bias binding is essential for a smooth finish.

5. "Bagged" Quilt. Tack the wadding to the quilt top. Place backing right sides together with the top/wadding combination. Stitch around the sides leaving an opening for turning the quilt right sides out. Turn through. Slipstitch the opening closed. Tack through all layers and quilt.

Quilting Suggestion. The symmetrical nature of most Lizard of Oz projects means that quilting 1/4" inside all shapes automatically forms a pleasing quilting design of adequate density to prevent shifting of wadding. Masking tape 1/4" wide is easily available and simplifies the process as no marking of the quilt top is required. Where it is appropriate to do something different to this the Lizard of Oz project packs contain a quilting suggestion.

Hints & Tips - Getting a Good Result

- If you are a complete novice the easiest shape to start with is the hexagon in a design which uses part shapes to give a rectangular quilt top on completion of piecing. This is because the wide angles make it easy to turn the edges of the fabric to the back of the paper and those turnings lie flat on the back of the work once the papers are removed. The narrower the angle, the more difficult it is to turn the fabric to the back of the paper as it is more difficult to make the extra fabric at the points lie flat on the back of the work.

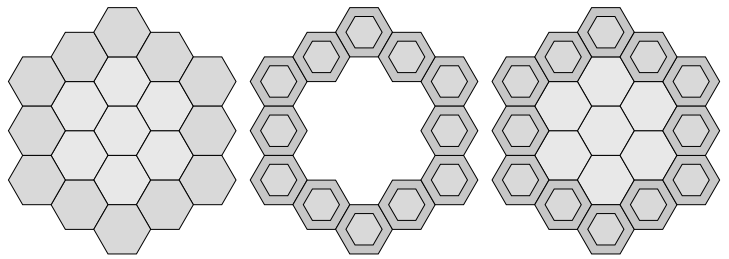


Diagram 5. Make a duplicate round of the outermost shapes, place right sides together with the quilt top (including wadding and backing), oversew outer edges together, trim excess wadding & backing, turn duplicate round to back of the quilt.

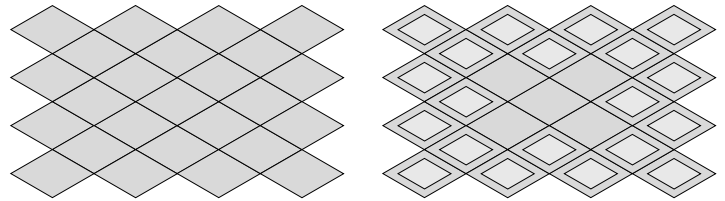


Diagram 6. Diamonds need extra shapes where only the corner of a diamond touches the edge of the quilt.

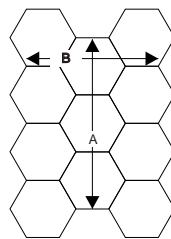


Diagram 7

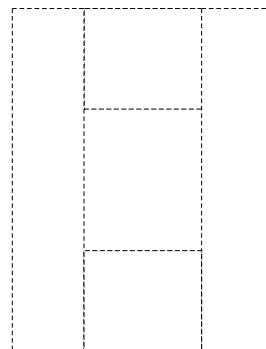


Diagram 8

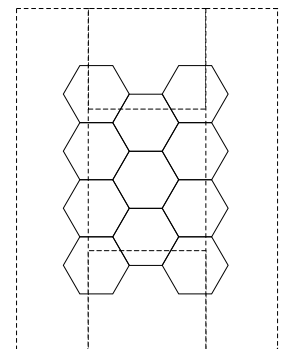


Diagram 9

once the papers are taken out. As a novice it is generally easier to start with shapes that have sides 1" or larger. Smaller shapes are more fiddly to handle and often have reduced seam allowances to cut down the bulk on the back of the work. Seam allowances are generally 1/4" but for some small shapes this may be reduced to 3/16" or even 1/8" for miniatures.

- The method affords great accuracy for the joining of shapes so long as great care is taken when cutting out the foundation papers. It is more important to be accurate cutting out the papers than the fabric.
- A sandpaper board helps to stop fabric moving while you draw round the template. This can easily be made by gluing a sheet of fine sandpaper to thick cardboard.
- When stitching shapes where several points meet (eg 8 point stars or Dresden plates) assemble the pieces in sets of 2, then join these 2's into sets of 4, 4's into 8's, and so on. Making 6 point stars in 2 halves makes it easier to match points in the centre.
- Template plastic is semi transparent allowing you to choose where to place the template. This means for example, that you can place the template so that a particular motif is centred on the shape, or so that the edge of a shape is always in line with the same stripe on the fabric. This technique is known as "fussy cutting" and can be used to great effect.
- I have often seen it recommended that the paper and fabric pieces be placed edge to edge to reduce paper and fabric waste. Whilst this seems possible in theory it is very easy to cut into an adjoining shape whilst cutting out another and so making that paper or fabric shape useless. I prefer to leave a small amount of space between the shapes to minimise wasting shapes.
- Once a shape is surrounded by other shapes and stitched into place, the paper foundation can be removed. Papers can often be used twice or more, but do not remove a paper to be used elsewhere until the shape is surrounded by other shapes that are stitched in place.
- For shapes with narrow angles the bulk of the excess "flap" of fabric may be trimmed once the shapes are joined together. The remainder of the "flap" is generally pressed the way it naturally wants to lay. For stars, and other patterns where several narrow angles come together at the same point, this often means they get pressed in a circular fashion.

Some shapes have alternative grain lines - these should also be marked on the fabric template. Straight of grain is in line with the threads forming the length of the fabric, cross grain is in line with the threads running across the width of the fabric and bias is a line at any angle to these. True bias is at 45 degrees to the straight and cross grains. Where grain is indicated it usually refers to the straight of grain. Alternative grain may run along the length of a shape for example, instead of parallel with the sides of the shape. The effect of using an alternative grain line with a 60 degree diamond is shown at right (Diagram 10). The final effect you wish to achieve needs to be taken into account when marking the fabric for cutting. Using an alternative grain line may mean that you can cut more or less shapes from a given piece of fabric.

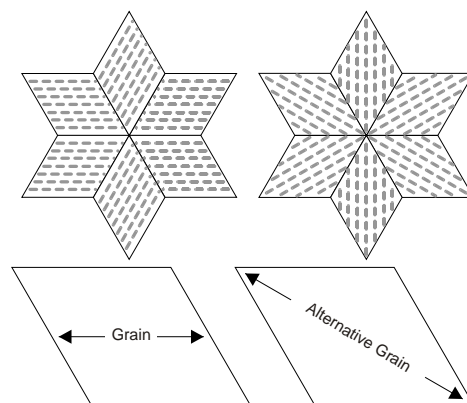


Diagram 10. This shows the effect of choosing an alternative grain line when piecing a 6 point star from 60 degree diamonds.

- Lizard of Oz foundation paper sheets are laid out to minimise the number of cuts required for each shape by using a steel rule and craft knife. Cutting with a ruler and knife is generally more accurate than using scissors. Having said that, scissors are sometimes easier for the smaller shapes. This also applies to the fabric template that you cut from template plastic. To cut out the papers use a steel rule with a cutting board and craft knife. Place the ruler over the shapes and line the ruler up with the edges of several shapes at once. Using a craft knife cut along the line. Aim to have half the width of the line on the shape and half the line on the scrap. Placing the ruler over the shapes means they are protected should you slip, so that any mis-cuts are into the waste paper area and not into the shapes.

There is one exception to the rule of cutting exactly on the line. That is when you are creating a large shape from lots of tiny shapes and the finished created large shape is to tessellate with other large whole piece shapes (Diagram 11). The thickness of the fabric means that once the tiny shapes are sewn together the overall created shape will be larger than the other large whole-piece shapes. See diagram at right. In this situation cut just inside the line on the smaller shapes. This allows for the thickness of the fabric so that the created shape is the same size as the others and doesn't "bubble" when joined to the other shapes.

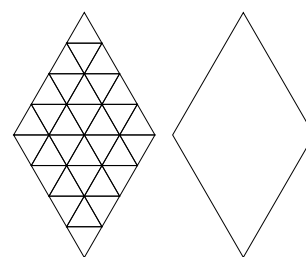


Diagram 11. If making a composite shape which is to be equal in size to another shape then it is wise to trim a "fabric's thickness" from the edges of the smaller paper foundations.