

First Monday Sew-day!

July 6, 2020

Spider Web Block: Foundation Paper Piecing

This block has several names, but Spider Web or Broken Spider Web is the most common. I'm using it as an introduction to a basic quilting skill: using paper as a foundation to make a quilt block. In early days, the pages of old phone books were used, but now we use either regular printer paper, or (my favorite) translucent parchment-type paper.

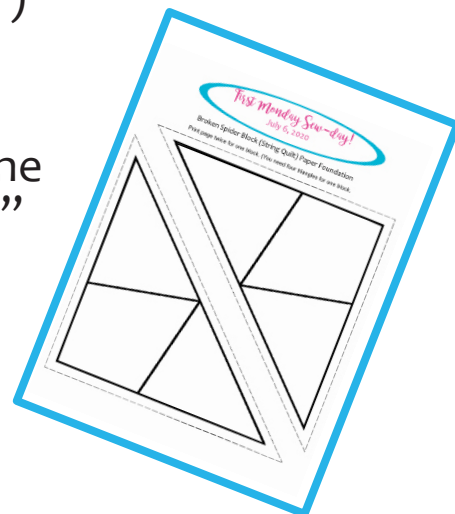
Basically, you print out the pattern, usually twice to get four copies (it's four to a block). Loosely cut around the shapes, the start sewing the fabrics to the papers. This pattern is a bit longer than usual, in order to teach basic steps.

This is a good block to use up long, skinny scraps.

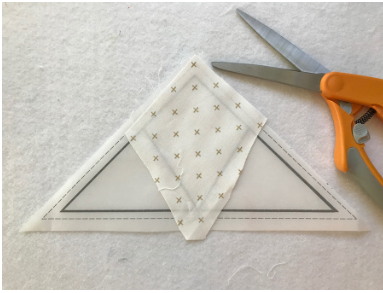


This is the basic unit in the block. Any color can be used in the center; I chose a light print (also known as "low-volume.")

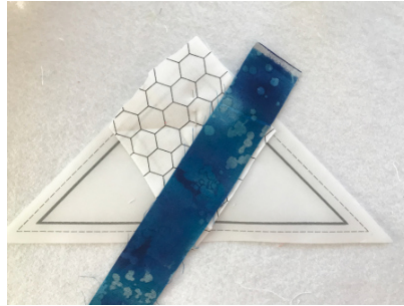
Print two of this page for one block. Block will finish at 9." It's the last page of this pattern.



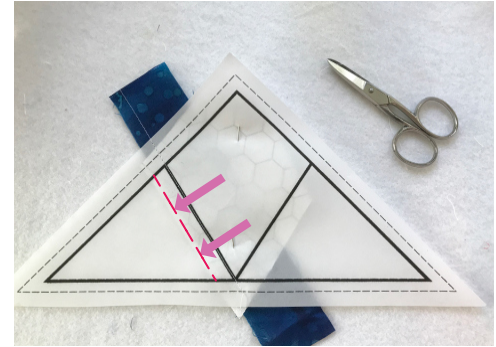
Making Foundation Paper-pieced Blocks



1. Rough cut a shape the size of the center diamond shape. Put wrong side of fabric to wrong side of paper; pin it to hold in place.



2. Lay a strip, right side down, along right side of diamond fabric.

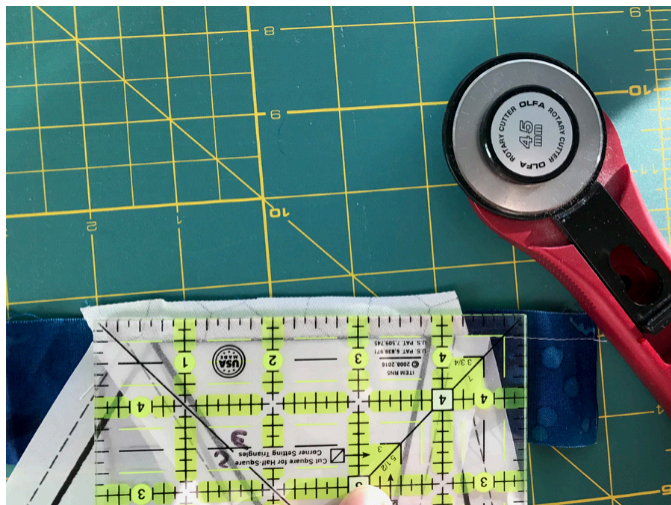
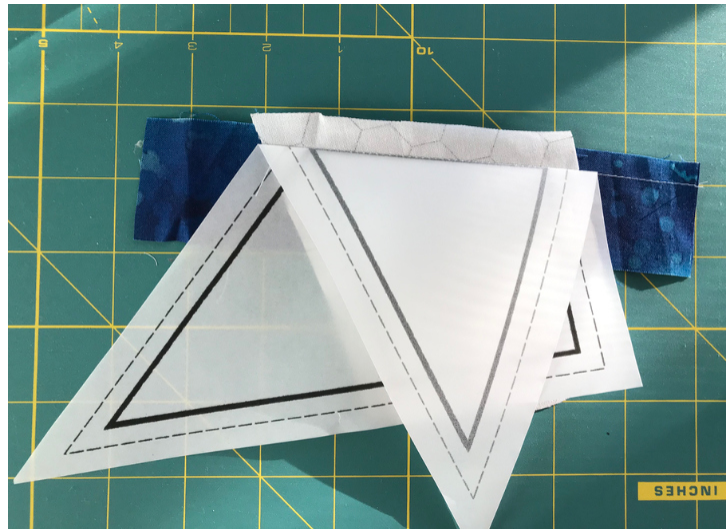


3. I will sometimes use a light box, or hold it up to the window, but I'm trying to get the long edge of my strip placed just $\frac{1}{4}$ " past that strong line marking the edge of my diamond. With paper side facing up, stitch exactly on the solid line.

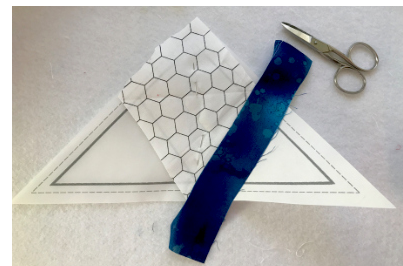


4. This has been stitched, but not trimmed.

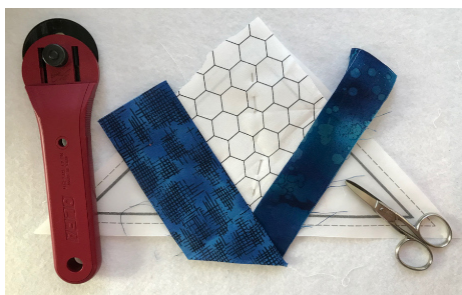
5. Lay triangle fabric-side-down on your cutting mat. Fold on the line where you stitched, so the pattern is almost in half. Make sure your fabric is smoothed down and away from this edge.



6. Place ruler so it extends $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from folded edge. This is the seam allowance. Trim it to $\frac{1}{4}$."

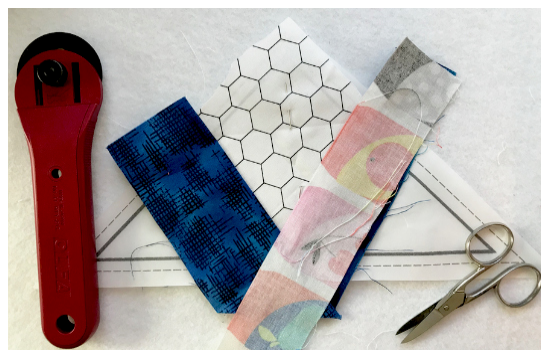


7. Turn over, and from the fabric side, press it away from center diamond.



8. Repeat on other side. Lay right sides together, lining edge of strip 1/4" over the strong line of the diamond. Sew from paper side, right on that line. Trim (fold paper and fabric out of the way), then press.

9. Start adding other strips. I chose to have dark blue strips (or "strings") for all of my center strips, but you may choose red, or another strong color, or you may choose to vary it. It's a scrappy block, so no rules!

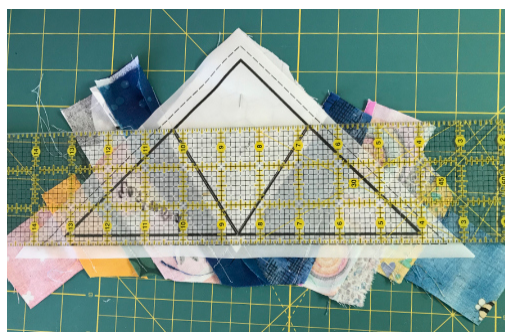


10. At the tip, often I will turn a wider strip of fabric 90-degrees (as shown) and sew it like this, so it will cover that narrow tip.

11. For this triangle, I sewed down the two anchor strips on the diamond, then add only to one side at a time. But I have also alternated sides, going back and forth, building up both at the same time.

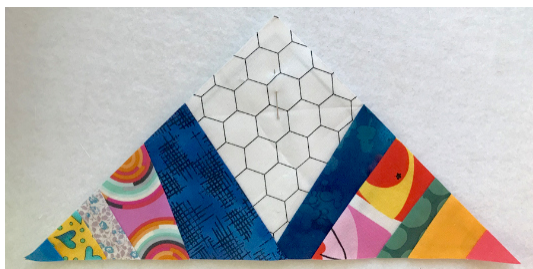


12. It looks pretty wild!

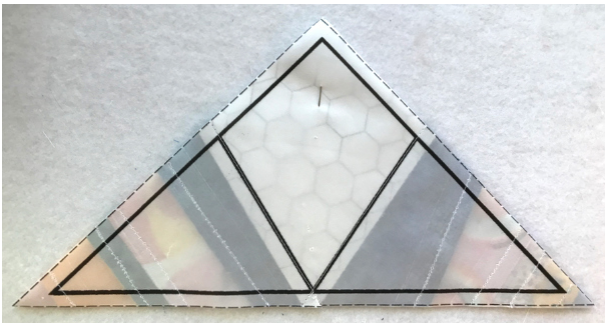


13. Turn it over, so paper is up. Align the ruler with the dashed line on the outside edge. Trim on that line.

First part, all done!

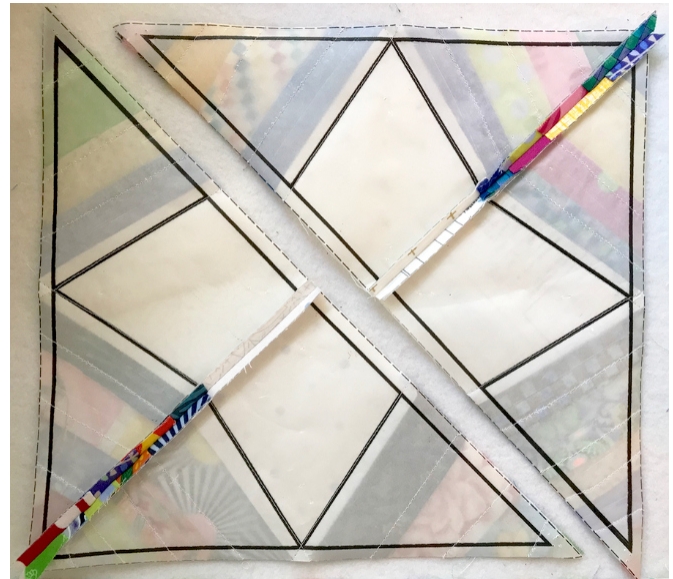


Now go make a bunch more...well, at least eight total, in order to have fun with the layouts.



The Back.

14. Here are four triangles. Sew two together, and press seam open. Try to remove that skinny strip of paper in the seam allowance. Then sew the two halves together.



15. Remove the paper. I find it easiest to think about taking it out like I'm ripping a sheet off of a notepad—I take it from the side and tear while pulling away. Try not to distort your stitching while you take out the papers.

Sometimes folding and creasing back the paper in that section (as shown to the left) will help with removal.

16. After removing all the papers, give it a good press, as the block can sometimes become distorted. Then take it to your cutting mat, and trim it to 9 1/2" square.



BEFORE

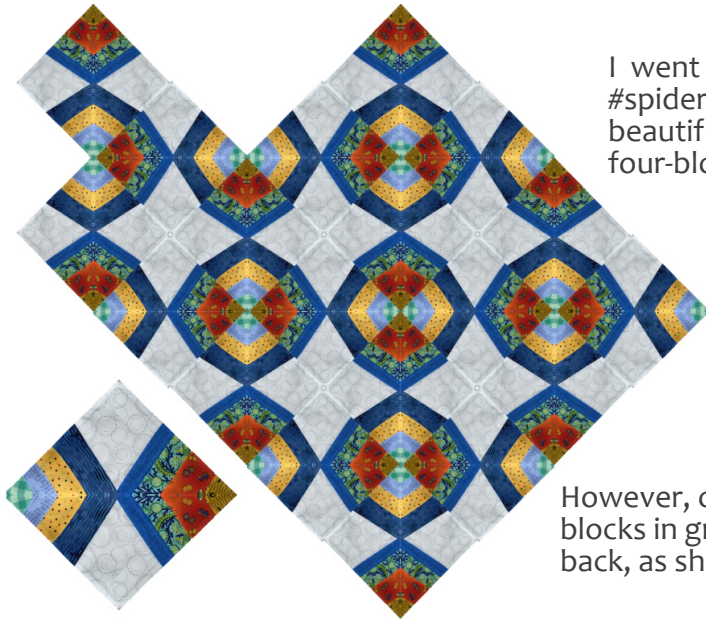
and

AFTER



I've been saving my "strings" or long skinny strips for years, and I just stuff them in this bag. Of course, I had to pull them all out for this project, but there are always more scraps!

Laying Out The Blocks



I went to Instagram and used the hashtag #spiderwebquilt and found so many beautiful quilts. Some appeared to use the four-block method I describe here.

However, one quilt looked like the put their initial blocks in groups of two, with the points back-to-back, as shown in the lower left.

So I played around with this layout digitally, and after a few repeats, it looks the same as if the initial triangle blocks had been sewn together in groups of four (see below).



Hope you have fun
sewing up some
Spider Web blocks!

First Monday Sew-day handouts are created once a month, and are made to assist beginning quilters in mastering basic skills. Other handouts can be found on OPQuilt.com.

They are given out free, so please do not copy or distribute. Send your friends to OPQuilt.com to get theirs.

Many thanks!

Elizabeth

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Broken Spider Block (String Quilt) Paper Foundation

Print page twice for one block. (You need four triangles for one block.)

