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## BEGINNER BASICS – Rotary Cutting/Sewing Seams/Piecing & Cutting Shortcuts

### CUTTING AND SEWING HALF SQUARE TRIANGLES (HST)

#### Paper Piecing Strips of 1/2 Square Triangles (#8 of 8 videos)

##### Transcript:

Paper Piecing or foundation piecing is a technique that can improve your sewing accuracy. You can use this when sewing together rows of triangles for borders or maybe for sections of a quilt block like this. At first, it can be very confusing because you are literally sewing backwards! But don't give up because it becomes easier as you go along!

To begin with, you'll need to make copies of your paper piecing pattern or you can purchase rolls or sheets of half square triangles. If using a copy machine, always double check the measurements. This is supposed to be a 2" square. So I'll use my ruler to make sure because sometimes copy machines can be a little out of line.

You'll notice that the pattern here has numbers. These numbers indicate the sew order. At times, you may find a pattern with no numbers. If that's the case, you will want to start at one end and work your way to the other side.

To get started, I cut out one of the strips around the dashed lines. On this pattern, the dashed line is the cutting line. The dark lines are the sew lines. Your fabric will always go on the back of the printed pattern. That's why I said you will be sewing backwards. Let's go over to the machine to get a better look at this process.

I'll use this as a guide while demonstrating paper piecing. Before you get started you will need a neutral color of thread. I'm using red thread so that you can see but a neutral color works best. If you are having difficulty tearing off the paper at the end of the project you can use a larger needle and/or a shorter stitch length to better perforate the paper.

I am using a regular sized needle and a regular sized stitch length. You always want to press your fabric before sewing. I'll be using scraps for this project. They've been pressed and they are ready to go.

You want to fold the line between #1 and #2. I like to use a greeting card or a post card to help with this. Every time I fold the paper, the fibers are weakened making it easier for me to tear this paper off later on.

Now I am ready to cut. There's no SET seam allowance so you don't have to worry about cutting accurately. You also don't have to concern yourself the straight of grain, the cross grain and the bias as

this paper foundation acts as a stabilizer. I want to stress that you do need to press your fabric before and after sewing each piece.

My first piece of fabric will go over this triangle marked #1. I'll cut my fabric big enough to cover this spot with extra for the seams. I did say there was no set seam allowance with the exception of this ¼" on the outside edges of the pattern. This ¼" seam has been added around the pattern for when you attach this to another block. So your fabric must not only cover this triangle but also this outside edge. So here's my fabric. And I put it over the top and I can see through to... I can see through my fabric to that ...that I am going to cover ... that I have covered that triangle.

The next thing I need to do is place fabric #1(this is my fabric #1) on the back of the pattern with right side up and wrong side down. So here's right side up facing you and the wrong side is down against the pattern.

Number 4 – I am going to pin and hold that up to the light. So let me pin that first. And I will take this over to the window; hold it up to make sure that everything is covered. I've taped this to make it easier to show you what you need to be looking for. It's not necessary that you tape it to the window. You just need to hold it up to some sort of light source so you can see the shadow from the fabric. You want to make sure that your fabric covers this ¼" seam on the edge and you also need to make sure that that fabric goes at least up to this dark line on the triangle.

My second piece of fabric will end up on top of # 2. I could cut a triangle like I did for #1 but I find it easier to cut a rectangle instead. I need to make sure that this fabric is going to cover #2. So if I put my fabric there, I can see that to cover that triangle it's going to need to be at least this big. So let me cut that. And it's better to cut it a little bit big and be safe. So I am looking here. It looks like it's got that covered; that triangle's seam allowance. Let's turn it to the other side.

So next, after I cut out the fabric, I'm going to place #2 fabric on the back. And I place it over #2 spot. Let me turn this back over. Here's #2. I'll hold my finger there and turn it over. Here's #2 spot and that's where that fabric is going to go. I like to say that it looks "like a bunch of nothing" and that's what makes it a little bit tricky when you are trying to sew this together. Just don't worry what it looks like. Just make sure it is placed over #2.

So when I sew, I like to put right sides together. I will be sewing fabric #1 to fabric #2 . Fabric #1 is pinned where it belongs so I need to flip fabric #2 over. Make sure that right sides are together. Then I like to come over on this side and take a pin and pin on that sew line. This is the line that I'll be sewing – this dark line right here. The reason why I like to pin there is I want to make sure that I've got this piece positioned where it belongs.

So let me flip it back over, I fold this down and I notice that if I were to take this and hold it up to the light I think that I don't need to do that because you can see that there's fabric here, fabric here, and this piece of fabric runs all the way across. There's extra. So I've covered this triangle. I've covered the seam allowance all the way around and it is ready to be sewn.

So I take this and put it under my sewing machine. Some people like to draw this line where I am going to be sewing out in the seam allowance but it is not necessary. I'll put my pressure foot down and I begin sewing. You just sew right on the line. You want to make sure that this pin is removed because you don't want to sew on pins. I'm taking my time. You can go a little bit faster and I am sewing all the way to the edge of the paper. Let me pull that out. I'll show you what that looks like. I'll take this pin.

I like to trim the extra...it's not necessary but it keeps everything a little bit neater and makes it easier to add the rest of the pieces. Whenever I trim, I want to make sure that the last two pieces (these two pieces that were sewn together) have the right sides together like this. Then I fold my pattern down in the opposite direction. So I've got the two pieces sewn together like this, my pattern folded in the opposite direction, and this is my seam that I am going to trim. I like to eyeball  $\frac{1}{4}$ " from here to here. So let's just trim that. Sometimes you'll have a light and dark fabric and the dark fabric will want to show through the light one. So sometimes you might have to trim one shorter than the other but in this case with these fabrics, it doesn't make a difference. So I fold my pattern back and I like to finger press this.

So I've trimmed my seam and now I am ready to fold the line between fabric #2 and #3. Let's turn this over and I see fabric #2 and fabric #3. I will use my card. You don't have to but it makes it a little bit easier. You'll notice that there's this line down here from stitches. And when I go to fold that's going to make it a little bit trickier, so it doesn't have to be a perfect fold; just try to fold as best you can. So I have folded that.

After I have folded the line between #2 and #3, I want to repeat the process starting with cutting the fabric. So here's #3 and this is my fabric. I want to cut a rectangle. So I know that if I cut a rectangle about this size (because that's the size of the rectangle I cut last time)... I know if I cut a rectangle this size it's going to more than enough cover that. Let me turn it over and my fabric; fabric #3, is going to go on the back. It will go in this spot. I put my finger there. Turn it over and put that fabric right over #3. This is what it's going to look like if it's all been sewn together.

I want to put right sides together when I sew. I can't move this piece because it's sewn to the back. So I'm going to have to flip this one over. Get right sides together. Now turn and I want to pin. I want to pin on that sew line between #2 and #3. There's my pin. Then I ... (let's pin that a little bit better—that just doesn't want to go). Ok so I will turn it over. Flip this back and I want to take this to the light.

Hold it up to the light and check and see if it covers. Let's see if we can do here without going over to the light. This fabric is going to come out here and cover this side. I noticed that the fabric is going to cover this and because it's all the way over here I know that this line is going to be covered but I do have some issue with down here in the corner. And this is what you need to be careful with on triangles. You need to really check these corners to make sure they're covered. So I think that this probably is not going to cover that corner very well. So I'm going to come back over here; reposition that fabric. Let's see. Let's move it a little this way and see if that works. Turn it over and let's pull this down. And now let's look and see. So I've got it covered here. I've pulled it down so it covers this part. It's going to cover over here. It looks like everything's covered.

I can take this to my sewing machine and sew. I want to put my pressure foot down. I'm going to start off of the paper here, this ¼" seam and start sewing. Make sure you take the pin out. You don't want to sew over the top of the pin. Let's speed it up a little. You really want to make sure that you are on the line when you come off the edge there because that's going to make sure that your points remain crisp. So let's get back and I'm going to pull this back and you can see I have #1, #2 and #3 but what I want to do is I want to trim and press this next.

So to trim it, it's not necessary but this ... you can see that this piece is probably going to get in the way. So before I trim I want to make sure that the last piece that I sewed is right sides together with the other pieces. And then I want to fold down this paper. And you can see that's kind of tricky because there's something sewn there but just... just do it as best you can. If... if you pull it that's okay.

Now I'm ready to trim and I want to eyeball from here to here. And I also like to trim these little threads off because they have a tendency to get caught in there. And last but not least, I want to press this so I can finger press that or I could take it over to the ironing board.

So I'll turn it over and see where we're at. We're on #3 and #4. Let's start it this way so you see the numbers a little bit better. I like to take and fold that line. I've folded the line. And some people (at this point) say, "Uh, I really, really do not like that extra fabric that's hanging up there; that really bothers me." So if you're one of those people you can take and fold and trim before you sew.

As a matter of fact that's what I usually like to do before sewing the next pieces. It helps me line everything up. So I've trimmed that. Let's go back. We're going to cover #4. #4 needs .... we need to cut a ... I like to cut a rectangle that (I know because I've cut this a couple times now) ... that it's going to be about this big. Let's make sure. This looks kind of small now that I cut it. So I lay that down and I see from here and look underneath there. It looks like that's going to be big enough. So there's ... a piece #4. I put my finger there. Turn it over. This is where that piece is ... is going to go. This is the spot...after I sew it but I do have to sew it.

And so I have to put right sides together. That means I have to take this piece and flip it on top of this one. And how I know that is this one's attached. I can't pick this one up. So this is the one that's going to flip. And I come over on this side; my pin. I pin that sew line. And I flip it over. I pull this back. Now I'm going to hold this up to light. Let's see if we get away with that ... not doing that. Oh yeah, looks like this one is going to be pretty easy. I can see that that fabric comes all the way over here. I can see that that fabric goes ... this corner is well taken care of. Here's the triangle I'm trying to cover and so this fabric goes all the way down to there. So I've definitely covered that triangle.

So after that ... I check that out, I flip it back and I'm ready to take it to my sewing machine. I put it underneath. It doesn't make any difference if I wanted to start at this end of that end; either... either way is OK. But what's most important is that I come right ... in those corners... that I come right in on that black line. You sew on that black line. It's kind of like color by number when you just sew on the line. Now I'm done.

I pull that out and I want to trim. So here we go. I trim that. Trim those little threads off. And because I trimmed before I sewed, I really don't have to worry about trimming this ... this but let's just go through it again. So the last piece I sewed is this one. I flip it to leave it kind of the way it came out of sewing machine. I fold my paper back and if I need to, I can come in and trim that to a ¼". I will trim that thread and I continue in this manner till I finish this piece.

I finish my paper piecing set of triangles and as I said earlier it looks like a bunch of nothing. Let me turn it over and show you where the stitch lines are. So now I'm ready to trim this down. I'd like to take my ruler. And even though there is a cut line there I still like to line this a ¼" away from that seam line. So it looks like everything's nice and lined up. I'll work my way around cutting off the excess fabric and now I have six half square triangles ready to sew into a pattern.

You want to remove the paper gently so as not to rip out any of the stitches. So let me pull this. Sometimes if you wet it a little it helps. And you'll see as I ... as I'm pulling, the next piece comes out a little bit easier. Ok? If you do pull out some stitches like this, you can just go back in and sew those.

You can find more information about cutting and sewing half square triangles at [LearnHowToQuilt.com](http://LearnHowToQuilt.com) under "**Beginner Basics**" – "**Cutting**" and "**Sewing**".