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## BEGINNER BASICS – Paper Piecing

### Sewing From the Center Out - Log Cabin Blocks (1 Video)

#### Transcript:

In this video, I'll show you how to paper piece this Log Cabin block. I'll also go over some quick cutting steps at the end of the video. The finished size for this pattern is a 3 inch square but you can use this same technique to make different sized log cabin blocks.

I want to point out something that is a little bit different from the first two blocks that we did in this paper piecing series. You'll notice that my completed block is the mirror image of the pattern. This automatically happens when I sew on the back. If paper piecing patterns are symmetrical, like these two, you won't notice any differences. If they are asymmetrical, like this Log Cabin pattern, you'll notice that when you start here on the pattern – number 2, 3, 4, 5. On the completed block, here's 1, and 2 is on this side, 3, 4 is over here, and 5 is up on the top. When you get a block like this turkey, on the pattern the turkey is facing this way. On the completed block the turkey is facing that way. This is one reason why paper piecing can be confusing.

To paper piece this simple Log Cabin block, you will need to download a pattern at **LearnHowToQuilt.com** and then cut around the dashed lines. It doesn't have to be perfect. I usually leave extra so I have something to hold on to.

These solid lines on the pattern are my sew lines which make it easy for you to be accurate even with small pieces. All you have to do is sew on the line. All you have to do is sew on the line. The numbers on the pattern show the order to sew fabric pieces. Your fabric doesn't go on this side of your pattern. When paper piecing, it always goes on the back of your pattern. This usually causes confusion because you are sewing backwards. At first it might seem difficult but after a few pieces, you'll find it much simpler.

I like to take an old postcard/card and fold the line between #1 and #2. There's the line between #1 and #2. Just fold it. Every time I fold the paper, fibers are weakened. Later on this will make it easier to pull off the paper. I also find this helps with fabric positioning and trimming seams. For this block, I like to fold all the lines first as I find it easier when I am sewing later on but it is not a necessity.

I'll be following this guide as I cut and sew. You can download this at [LearnHowToQuilt.com](http://LearnHowToQuilt.com) under Beginner Basics – Paper Piecing.

Here's my first fabric that I pressed with a hot dry iron. It has to be big enough to cover the #1 square with a little extra all the way around for the seam allowance. There's no set seam allowance but I still need a little bit of extra fabric so I can sew in those seams. I'll cut this down into a more manageable piece. I could take this over to my rotary cutter and my mat but I find it just as easy if I am doing one just to cut with my scissors.

Here's my #1 piece of fabric. I see that that covers that shape. I'll put my finger there. Turn it over and I know that it is going to go somewhere here. I've folded this pattern ahead of time so I can see my lines there or I could take it and hold it up to a light source and see those dark lines. I put this over the top of #1 and then I'll pin it. I can see that that more than enough covers that #1 spot.

Let me show you an easy way to make sure that your fabric is covering the #1 square. I'll use a flashlight so you can see the shadow from my fabric. And you see that it more than enough covers on this side, on the bottom, on this side, and then across the top.

After I see that everything is covered, I like to trim the shape. This isn't necessary but I find it helps me with fabric placement on the back of the pattern. I'll fold my pattern down on the line between #1 and #2. This is the section that I like to trim. It already looks like it is pretty close to a ¼" seam. That rarely happens. Let me just trim it down. I'm going to eyeball a ¼" to a 1/8".

For Fabric #2 I've cut a piece of fabric that's big enough to cover that #2 square and I also have to make sure that it is going to cover this seam allowance out here

up to the dotted line. I did say there's no set seam allowance but if I want to sew this block to another block, then I need a ¼" seam out here.

I like to put my finger on # 2 while turning the pattern over so I know where to place my fabric. Fabric #2 goes right here. This is what it is going to look like after it has been sewn with #1 here and #2 here.

When we sew, usually we are putting right sides together. This is also true of paper piecing. I can't move Fabric #1 because it is pinned BUT I can move Fabric #2 to put right sides together. I'll line it up along this edge that I just trimmed.

Now I could flip this pattern over and begin sewing on this line here between #1 and #2 but I like to check to make sure it will cover the shape after it is sewn. To do this, I like to put a pin on the sew line as a sort of temporary basting. Turn the pattern over and flip the fabric back to where it belongs. This is what it is going to look like when it has been sewn. I need to check on this side to make sure that that fabric covers up here. And I can see that that fabric is more than enough to cover that line here, that it covers this line over here – I can see that or I could hold it up to the light or use a flashlight. Also the fabric must cover that ¼" seam out here. I'm ready to take it over to my sewing machine.

To sew, I'm using red thread so you can see well. Usually I am using a neutral color of thread. A larger needle will help perforate your patterns to make it easier to tear off but it is not necessary. You can also use a shorter stitch length to help with this.

On my pattern, I need to start sewing one to two stitches before I hit this black line and then continue sewing on this black line till I get to the next black line. I'll go one or two stitches past that. I'll take that pin out. Just sew straight on that black line. When I get to this black line; one to two stitches and take it out.

Clip your threads. These threads have a tendency to get caught up in here, so I always make sure that I clip all my threads before I start on the next section.

Let me flip this back. I need to take this over to the iron to press it or if it is a little piece like this, I can probably get by with finger pressing.

Now I'm ready to add Fabric #3. I'll fold the line between #2 and #3 and actually this line is going to go between #1, #2 and #3. Fold this line back. And I'll trim that excess. I'll eyeball about  $\frac{1}{4}$ ", between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and a  $\frac{1}{8}$  of an inch. It doesn't have to be perfect.

Now I am at #3. I've cut out this piece ahead of time. You can see it more than enough covers the rectangle and the seam allowance. Put my finger on #3. Flip it over. I know that my #3 fabric will end up right here after it has been sewn but I have to sew it down. When I sew I usually put right sides together. I can't move these two pieces of fabric but I can move this one. So let me flip it over the top with right sides together.

Come over here. I'm going to pin that sew line between #1, #2 and #3. That sort of bastes it. And let me see what's going to happen when I pull this back. When I pull that back – let's flip that over here – I can see that it more than enough covers this rectangle here. It covers this  $\frac{1}{4}$ " on the bottom and on the sides. So I am ready to take it over to my sewing machine.

I'll take my pin out. Just like before, I'm going to start one or two stitches past this line. Some people like to draw that in but I can follow my crease. Sew all the way to the edge. Now this is a little bit different. When I get to the end of this line, I want to keep sewing all the way through the seam allowance here, past the dashed line. So I've sewn all the way down this line into the seam allowance and beyond.

Let's turn it over and you can see, I just barely caught that but that's OK as long as I have fabric in that seam. Flip this over. This is a bigger piece so I'll take this over to the iron before I go any further. I've pressed Fabric #3 and now I am ready to start on #4.

I'll fold the paper. You'll notice that this little stitch right here looks like it is about ready to come out. When you sew the next seam it will get caught up in that and you don't have to worry about it unraveling. Let me trim this. Fold the paper back.

This is where Fabric #4 is going to go. I've cut a piece this size. It is more than enough to cover. I'll put my finger on Fabric #4, turn it over. This is where it will reside. I'll flip this over on top of the other pieces and pin. I've pinned between #1 and #4 and I'm ready to come over to the sewing machine.

When these strips get longer like this strip, sometimes they have a tendency to pull back and they make a mess right here. So you might want to take your finger or you could take a pin and pin right in there. You want to make sure that it stays flat.

I'll sew one to two stitches before the line and all the way through to this dashed line, making sure to take out my pin as I sew. I've clipped my threads. I'll turn it over and fold that back. I'll take it over to the iron to be pressed.

I'm ready to add Fabric #5. Now I've got two places where those stitches may get hung up. I'll just hold it like that. Let me trim. It doesn't have to be perfect. I'll fold that back. Here's Fabric #5. I've cut it more than big enough to cover #5 rectangle and all these seam allowances around it. Put it on the back. It's going to go right here. Put right sides together.

Of all the blocks we've done so far, this is the trickiest one. For some reason, I think I've got it and I don't make it wide enough to cover that seam allowance line. So I'm going to put the pin there and check. I'll fold it back. Oh, you can see. I just barely make that seam allowance. I can adjust it a little. Let me just pull this back; just a little. I think this is going to work. As a matter of fact, I'm not going to use a pin to check.

I'll start sewing on the dashed line. I follow the black line. Sew all the way through to this dashed line. Trim. I'll flip this back. I'll finger press this for now and you can see that I've more than enough covered those lines all the way around.

This is a lighter colored fabric than the other pieces. Sometimes in paper piecing you have to be careful when you use a lighter colored fabric. You will notice on this seam this darker green and pink are a little bit wider than this white seam. You can get a fabric shadow there. Whenever I am using a lighter colored fabric, I

want to get in there and trim out that darker color. Let me get in behind here. I'm going to trim it a little less wide than that white. Do you see where I've trimmed that back a little bit? Sometimes that will help you not see that fabric shadow if you are using a light color of fabric.

Now I am ready to trim off the excess. I want to trim on the dashed lines. I can use my scissors to do that but I usually like to use my rotary cutter. If I am using my scissors, sometimes I will stitch a line between the dashed line and the solid line like this. I'll stitch that line all the way around to make sure this fabric doesn't "flap" up when I am cutting. Do you see? My fabric wants to come out. I do not think it is necessary if you are rotary cutting.

Here's my completed block. I often make many log cabins so I can put them together in a quilt. To save time, I rotary cut strips wide enough to cover this pattern. For this pattern, I like to cut strips about 1 ½" to 1 ¾". I then cut sections off each one of the strips corresponding to the numbers on the pattern. Then I line these sections up in the order to be sewn.

For more information about paper piecing, please visit [LearnHowToQuilt.com](http://LearnHowToQuilt.com) – **Beginner Basics – Paper Piecing.**