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BEGINNER BASICS – Crazy or Free Form Quilting

Strips or String Piecing (#3 of 6 Videos)

Transcript:

0:02 There are many different techniques that you can use when crazy quilting or today it's often referred to as free form quilting. This video is where I recommend you begin. I'll show you how to use fabric strips or scraps and straight-line piecing to complete a block.

0:18 To begin, we'll look at fabric choice. Here are three blocks made with strips and straight line sewing. Using solids can give you more of a clean look. Mixing different plaids jazzes it up a bit. The same strip technique is used in this third block but trim was also added. I could go further by adding embroidery to that last block but I think you can see that the craziness of your block can be upgraded by your fabric choices and by adding embellishments.

0:49 Before I start, I like to have an idea of how big my piece needs to be. For this video I've decided to use a six-by-eight rectangle but you can try any size. I like to make a frame so I can view the piece. I keep this nearby my workspace. It's not necessary but it's a useful tool.

1:06 To make my block, I'll need some strips. In crazy or freeform quilting there's no set pattern to follow so there is no set size to cut but I usually find strips one to up to about 3 inches wide work the best.

1:20 You don't have to measure and be precise. That's why this method of quilting is so relaxing and fun.

1:27 Now these strips are left over from past projects. They've been pressed. Always make sure to press your fabric and they're ready to be trimmed. All I need is just one straight edge on my strip. If you look at this gold strip it looks like there's a nice clean edge. Now this one has some messy edges so let me take my

rotary cutter and just trim that edge. You also don't have to worry that the strip is the same width throughout. You just need one straight edge that you'll follow when sewing.

2:01Let's talk about how long to cut your strips. You will be sewing strips together. You may want the strips to go in this direction or you might decide you like them in this direction. Either way is okay. It's up to you to decide what you like.

2:16The length of your strips should be longer than you need; at least one to two inches longer. Let me give you an example to show you what I mean by the strip length should be longer. This strip, if it's going across in this direction it's ... if I cut it exactly, you're close to that length. Remember we don't have to be precise but if I cut it this size it fits. I might want to put it at an angle. If I put it on an angle it's not going to be long enough to go across this piece so if I cut my strips a little bit longer; one inch to two inches on each edge - then I'm going to have strips long enough so that if I decide to put it on an angle like that or put it on an angle like that it'll be long enough to cover my rectangle.

3:11You don't have to worry so much about the size or the length of these strips. If your piece ends up being too narrow later on, I'm going to show you how to fix this.

3:22If you're starting with new fabric you're going to cut your strips about one to three inches wide. You don't have to measure be precise. Just make sure you get one straight edge. So let's see, I'll cut about two inch strips. There you go.

3:38If you don't have a rotary cutter you can use a ruler to mark a straight line on your fabric and then just use your scissors to cut that line.

3:47Here are the strips or scraps that I might use in my piece. I like to try some out and once I get a grouping that's pleasing to me, I take a photo so I can use it as a guide when sewing. I also want to check to make sure that this would fit on my six by eight. I could put it like this. If I want to go this way, I might not be able to make it. It's easiest for me to try it using this frame so if I decide to go this way it would probably fit and if I decide to go that way it would probably fit.

4:23 So I'm ready to go over to the sewing machine now. When sewing you can either start at the top, the bottom, or in the center? I prefer to start in the middle. I'm not quite sure why but anywhere you decide to start is fine. So let me pick up these two and I'll put right sides together. I notice this isn't such a straight edge so let me turn this so that we've got a straight edge here. I wanted it at an angle so maybe I'll put it at an angle like so.

5:00 Here's my straight edge but since this was a scrap I don't have much fabric down here so it's not going to be able to go the full length of that but it'll work out just fine.

5:11 I can pin this if I want to. I'll start out pinning maybe one at either end and one in the middle. I'm using red thread so you can see. You'll want to use a neutral color of thread. I'm also using a regular stitch length. The edge of my pressure foot will act as a guide for sewing my seam allowance. I have a quarter inch foot so my seams will be a quarter inch wide. If your foot is wider your seams will be wider. When crazy quilting, you get to decide on your personal seam allowance.

5:45 I like to use a little scrap of fabric or what I call a leader or feeder. It gets started, put that under and I just sew on that. I'm going to start sewing on my two pieces of fabric. You take this out. Here's my pressure foot and I will use that as a guide to come right down here along this straight edge of the fabric. Make sure you take your pins out when you're sewing.

6:22 Before I take this to be pressed, I like to trim this excess. Now I could use my rotary cutter but when I'm sitting down like this I just use my scissors. I'll just follow that seam allowance line. Oh, I wasn't too straight there. It'll be okay but you really want to try to have a straight line when you sew.

6:40 I pressed my strips and I'm ready to add the next strip. I decided that this would look good here but I wanted to add an angle. Now I could take this over to the sewing machine and sew that seam allowance right down the edge here like I did on the last piece. Another way to work with this is to take your rotary cutter. I need to back it up just a little. Now remember I said this isn't precise. I think

I'm going to lose that right there. Let me trim that off. I think that's where I'd like that strip to be.

7:19 Put right sides together. Pin this or I like to just hold it with my hands. Now I'll take this over to the sewing machine to be sewn. I've sewn my seam, pressed it and I'm ready to add my next piece.

7:35 I'm going to continue at an angle. I like this piece like this. So I have a choice. I can flip it over and sew that quarter inch seam or I can trim this off. I think I'll trim this down and make it. I think that's a little bit easier way to go. So let me get this here. Remember this is not going to be precise. If I want it to be exactly like that, I have to allow for some seam allowance. So maybe I'll back it up a little. I want to make sure I catch this in there. Whoops!

8:14 I'll put right sides together. I didn't cut this out. It's okay if you want to put the selvage in a crazy quilt but I really don't want it in this piece so I'll move that down a little. Line this up.

8:26 I'm going to use my presser foot to sew along the straight edge. I'm not going to use pins because I usually don't like to use pins. If you feel more comfortable using pins, this is okay but it's not necessary. So let me double check. Make sure that this is all lined up. I'm just coming right along the sides. Before adding another piece, I need to press.

8:51 I've added some more strips and I would continue adding strips until it gets large enough to cover my rectangle. I'm almost ready to cut this down to size. Here's my six by eight rectangle shape. You see I'm a little; maybe a little short here if I want to put it that way but I definitely have enough fabric if I position it this way.

9:17 So this is where that frame comes in handy. I can't really see underneath here. Let me move that and let's look at the frame. So if I were to put it this way, I'd be a little short up there but I could probably put another piece over there. Let me try it the other way. It's almost fitting this way. I just need a little extra down here.

9:40After fooling with this a bit, I think I like it best this way. I'm a little short here but that's okay. I'll show you what's going to happen after we cut this out. I'll put the six by eight piece of paper back in here. Take this away. Then I'll use my rotary cutter and my ruler to cut this out.

10:00So let's see what we've got after everything's been cut away. I'm still missing a little edge here but I can bring this piece in and add it to that corner. If I don't like the way it looks, I can just cut it up. And let me cut this off. Right sides together. I'll take it over to the sewing machine and stitch that seam.

10:25Here's my completed block. You could use this to make a mug rug or a pot holder or maybe you want to make a small pillow out of it or you might decide to make more blocks. You could put them all together into a much larger quilt.

10:39If you'd like to learn more crazy or free form quilting techniques such as what to do with all these leftover scraps, check out our "**Beginner Basics**" section; click on "**Crazy or Free Form Quilting**". In our "**Small Projects**" section you'll find directions for making these greeting cards.

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