

Basket-Weave Strings!!



Block size: 5 1/2"

Finished quilt size approximately 67" X 73"

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Do you have this need to save every scrap with the hopes of using them up someday? If you are like me you have boxes and bins of saved strips from leftovers. You can quickly turn these uneven, irregular strips (also called strings) into a beautiful quilt!

Let's Begin!



This is my bin of strings! :c) What a mess! But so much potential!

Into this bin I toss odd shaped pieces from squaring up backings, tapered ends from trimming up yardage when rotary cutting, anything that I don't feel like cutting down into uniform strips, and anything less than 1.5". This is the END of my fabric food chain! The last stop on the road to being "useable". But strings, as humble as they are...can be beautiful and so fun and rewarding to work with!

For this quilt I wanted to use up the short lengths of strips, and because the strips were uneven (not straight cut along the edge of the strips) some had torn edges, some had curved edges from trimming up an edge of a piece of yardage, etc....I chose to use foundation papers to sew my strips to. This ensures that I have a block that will lay FLAT, while if I were sewing these torn and "not straight" strips one to another without a foundation, I can end up with bumps and hills that don't press out. If you want to make this quilt without foundations, just be sure that you are adding a straight edge strip to another straight edge strip.

I sometimes recycle paper for use in paper foundation piecing. A zillion years ago I had a bunch of order forms printed. The size of the form is half the size of a sheet of printer paper, or 5.5" X 8.5". I had stacks of these! I just couldn't bear to throw them out, so they have been used quite often as foundations for projects like this. You can also use phone book pages.... anything! Just be sure that the ink isn't going to transfer onto your iron or your fabric. Test first.

Step one! I trimmed my paper foundations using an old rotary cutter I keep just for trimming paper. I cut the foundations 5.5" X 5.5" But you can cut them any size. This just worked with the papers I was trying to use.



1/4" seam allowance and sew until I reach the end of the paper. When I get about 1/2 way down the seam, I take my scissors and whack the ends of the strips off about 1/2" beyond the paper edge closest to me.

Without removing your pieces from the machine....and without lifting the presser foot, take another piece of paper and two more strips and sew them to the second piece of paper with right sides together, just as you did the first. Sew all the way to the edge, also trimming the ends of the strips 1/2" beyond the edge of the paper.



The one thing I didn't like about foundation piecing is the stop/start/stop/start and all the long threads that would come with that, so I work on TWO blocks at the same time, using each of them for the leader/ender of the other.

First off, use a slightly smaller stitch length. Smaller stitches make the paper easier to remove. I start by taking one light strip and one dark strip and placing them right sides together somewhere near the center of the paper foundation. I let the ends hang off the top edge about 1/2"...start sewing using approximately



Now, while still leaving your work under the presser foot, reach behind and snip the threads between the two blocks. I use a pair of little

spring snips that I always keep by my machine. It is easier than trying to reach behind there with a huge pair of 8" sewing scissors. Find something that works for you and keep them by your machine.

Take this block you just snipped, press the top strip open, and add another strip to the block...you are still sewing a continuous seam to the block you left under the presser foot. After THIS seam, you will reach behind and snip off block number 2...press the top strip open, add another strip, reach behind the machine and snip off the previous block, etc.

Are you getting it now? You are working on two blocks at a time, but all in one continuous chain so you never have to deal with long thread tails in your garbage, on your floor, hanging off the edges of your blocks.... this method works great for me and I hope you will like it too.

I keep a pressing mat next to my sewing machine with a little travel iron for pressing as I go. You might want to set something up like this, so you don't have to get up and down so much as you are sewing, snipping, pressing. A TV tray makes a good pressing table if you don't have a large enough sewing table to have one near you. Find something that works for you!

I sewed the strips light/dark/light/dark/light/dark across my blocks, but you can do them anyway you want.

When you fill up a block, start with a new paper as your next block and just keep working on 2 blocks at a time. This saves you from having to get up and down with a long string of chained blocks back and forth to the ironing board.

I would sew blocks until I had a stack of about 10 or 12, and then to give myself a break from the machine I'd get up, go to the cutting table and square them up. I like to square them up 1/4" beyond the edge of the paper by putting the 1/4" line on the ruler on the edge of the paper.



Trim all four sides on each block. This is a good time to remove the paper, and since you are only doing 10 or 12 blocks at a time, it doesn't take long. Better to take it out now than to wait until the whole quilt top is done!



Here is a pic of 4 trimmed blocks with papers removed! You will see the bottom left block has an outside strip of 3 fabrics together. This was a strip I had trimmed off of something else I was strip-piecing, and I used it in this block! You can

take strips that are too short for the length of the block, sew them together end to end, and use pieced strips in with your longer strips for more variety. I think this adds a lot of interest to the quilt!

I made this quilt with 98 string blocks. I know that sounds like a lot, but they go very fast! Especially if you work on them in groups of 10 to 12 at a time.

To set the quilt, you will need to lay out the blocks on the diagonal or "on point". There will be 8 rows down of 7 blocks across with the strings pointing one direction, then the alternate blocks (7 rows of 6 blocks across) will point the other direction. Here is a closer picture to give you an idea:



To set this quilt together you will need to cut setting triangles for the sides and the corners. These side triangles need to have the straight grain of the fabric along the outside edge of the quilt so they need to be cut a certain way.



Here is the math formula for finding out the sizes of triangles you will need for a quilt that is set "block to block" WITHOUT sashings:

Corner Triangles

Take the finished block size and divide by 1.414

Note: Round up to the nearest dimension on the ruler.

Add 7/8" to that number

Cut two squares the size determined above. Cut each square in half diagonally for the four corner triangles.

Example #1:

Finished block size = 12"

$12 / 1.414 = 8.486$ (Round to 8.5 = 8-1/2")

$8-1/2" + 7/8" = 9-3/8"$ squares to cut for Corner Triangles

Example #2:

Finished block size = 6"

$6 / 1.414 = 4.243$ (Round to 4.25 = 4-1/4")

$4-1/4" + 7/8" = 5-1/8"$ squares to cut for Corner Triangles

Side Triangles

Take the finished block size and multiply by 1.414

Note: Round up to the nearest dimension on the ruler.

Add 1-1/4" to that number

Cut this square in half diagonally twice with an 'X' to produce four Side Triangles.

Cut one square for every four side triangles needed for the quilt setting.

Example #3:

Finished block size = 12"

$12 \times 1.414 = 16.96$ (Round to 17 = 17")

$17" + 1-1/4" = 18-1/4"$ squares to cut for Side Triangles

Example #4:

Finished block size = 6"

$6 \times 1.414 = 8.48$ (Round to 8.5 = 8-1/2")

$8-1/2" + 1-1/4" = 9-3/4"$ squares to cut for Side Triangles

Since the unfinished block size for my quilt is 6" (5.5" finished block size) I cut the following:

Corner triangles: Cut two squares $4\frac{7}{8}$ " square and cut through them on the diagonal from corner to corner once giving you 4 corner triangles. (Two from each square)

Side triangles: Cut seven $9\frac{1}{4}$ " squares. Cut these on the diagonal twice with an X giving you 4 triangles from each square.

NOTE the math for arriving at this triangle size has you cutting $9\frac{1}{8}$ " squares. I rounded it up to $9\frac{1}{4}$ " because I like to square up the quilt top after piecing. The blocks will float inside the top a bit when pieced with bigger triangles, but I trim it down after the top is together.

Lay out the triangles and corners with your blocks. Begin sewing the quilt into rows starting at one corner. Your first row will have one corner block, two large setting "wing" triangles, and the corner triangle. Your second row will have three blocks, two wing triangles...etc. Each row will get larger as you get to the center of the quilt.

I like to assemble the quilt rows together as I go until there are two halves of the top.....and then sew the two halves together in one long seam.

After the top is together, use your ruler and rotary cutter to trim the edge of the quilt $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the corners of the blocks at the quilt top edge. This gets rid of all the dog ears from sewing the rows together too.



Here is a closer shot of what I used for the borders. I cut the inner border 2" wide, so it finishes at 1.5". The outer border is cut 5".

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