

FISH SCHOOL!

2021 Leader & Ender Challenge!



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Hey Quiltvillians!

Are you ready for something FUN??

It's time to kick off this year's Leader & Ender challenge - a fun little unit I'm calling FISH SCHOOL!

Why? Because put on point they resemble schools of swimming fish - but there is SO MUCH MORE that this little unit offers - let me tell you!



This year's focus for me is the 2" strip bin!

2" strips - you are going DOWN!

Over the past several years I tackled down the 1 1/2" scrap strips during our Checkerboard Rails, Shoo Fly Shoo and Easy Breezy Leader & Ender Challenges (Found under the Free Patterns tab at the top of my blog at Quiltville.blogspot.com)

When choosing our challenges, I look first at what needs to go, and then start playing with ideas to put these things to good use.

I want units without too many pieces, that can be cut ahead in small sets (held together with wonder clips is great!) and placed by my machine for quick access.

For this unit to amount to anything - I need to train myself to USE them in between the lines of chain piecing other things instead of just ending my thread or using a throw away scrap to sew on and off of.

And this applies to folks who have thread cutters on your machines too. Those cutter blades aren't cheap or easy to replace, and the beginning of your continuing seam will be STRAIGHTER if you have a leader/ender in your machine holding place under your presser foot before you start the next line of piecing. The leader/ender anchors the piecing as you go from one unit to the next, to the next, to the next and so forth.



It all starts with 3 half-square triangle units.



Guess who was helping yesterday as I did step out photos!

OH, LOLA!

My goal is to use my 2" strips, and I am using my Essential Triangle Tool to cut them in already matched pairs - ready to sew- by having the neutral and colored strips right sides together.

My Fish School blocks measure 3 1/2" unfinished and will finish at 3" when I sew them into the quilt.

You want to go bigger? Go with whatever size you like. You want to use a different method to make your half square triangles? GO FOR IT. Those of you with Accuquilt? Make whatever size triangles you want using your scraps in the way that helps you make a dent with them.

To cut with the Essential Triangle Tool:

Place the colored 2" strip right sides together with the neutral 2" strip. Square off one end and turn the end to your left if you are a right

handed cutter. Lefties will cut from the right end, in mirror image of the righties.

Place the 1 1/2" finished RED LINE for half-square triangles at the upper left corner as shown - placing the line ON the fabric, not above the fabric on the mat.

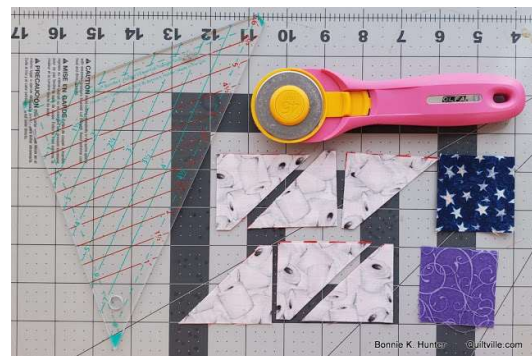


Pivot the ruler with each cut -

Keep that red line ON the fabric as you see here. If you leave your line off the fabric, on the mat, your triangles will come out one line-width too small.

Each Fish School block takes THREE half-square triangles, but since I am making a zillion of these I am going to cut 2 sets from this strip set just to use it up.

My goal is to use THE WHOLE STRIP, not put a shorter strip back in the bin - right?



Two sets of three triangle pairs -

And two scrap corner squares from the 2" squares bin!

LOADS of variety in my scraps - I love playing with them!

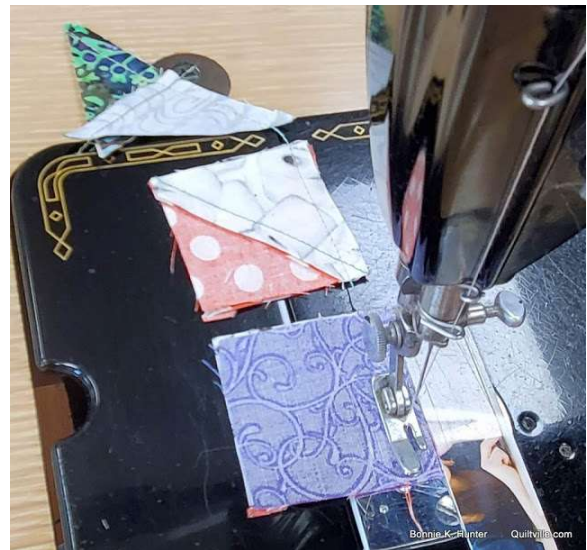


These guys go together like this!

How your leader/ender is up to you. It's about finding your own rhythm. I'll show you how to make the block in the traditional way, but you decide how many pieces to feed through your machine at a time as Leaders & Enders.

Stitch the triangle pairs with a slightly scant 1/4" seam. Press seams toward the colored fabric. Trim dog ears (ALWAYS!) and measure. They should measure 2" square on the ruler. Trim as needed.

If they are too small, your seam is too wide. Narrow it down a bit until you find the seam allowance that gives you the unit size that you need.



I *AM* Using them as leader/ender here!

Or is it that hourglass unit leader/endering the Fish School block?

Join units into rows.



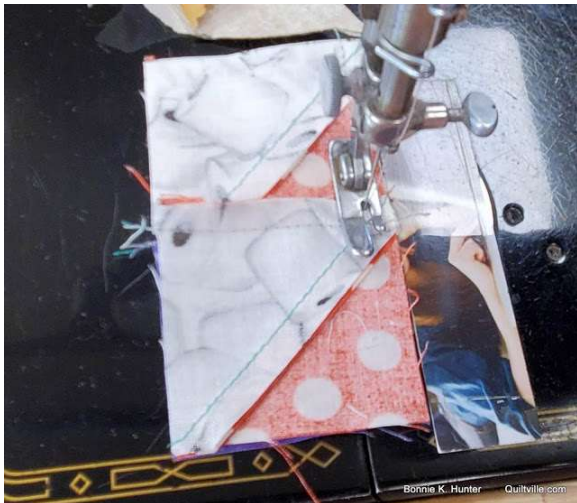
Double-Split 4-Patch!



Pressing on the back side.

Press the bottom row toward the solid square. Press the top row in the opposite direction so that center seams will nest. Snip the chaining thread in between the two rows if there is one.

(Of course, you can press EVERYTHING open all the time if you wish - up to you.)



When pressed this way, the top seam will point UP toward the needle. This will help you wiggle those two nested seams close together, and the

action of the feed dogs will work with you to keep those nested.



SPIN PRESS!

Hold the Fish School block wrong side up in this position. Top and bottom seams will already be heading in the right direction. With your thumbs, hold the right side seam allowance DOWN, and give the left side seam allowance a little lift. This allows a couple of stitches in the seam allowance to release in the center of the block unit which eliminates some bulk.

Notice that all seams on this one rotate in a clockwise manner.



If you are joining your fish school blocks to each other, without other units being added - all seams will nest from block to block to block without seams fighting, as long as you assemble them all the same, and all of the seams on the back of the unit spin the same direction.

These will nest to each other because of the spinning seams on the back.



My first 12!

Some of these fabrics are SO OLD - I am happy they are finding a place to land.



Is this a school of fish yet?

I will keep adding to these while working on other projects - stitching them as Leaders & Enders in between other things. My bin of scraps will go down bit by bit - and I will love pairing the fabrics with each other -

But remember the other bells and whistles that this unit brings with it?

What if you are not thrilled about fish?



Twist and turn them for many other layouts!

Because the seams are spun on the back, these will nest together just fine this way!

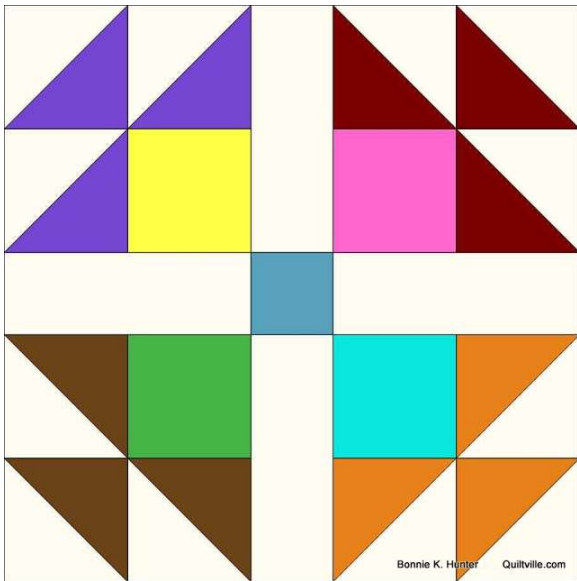


Or this way!



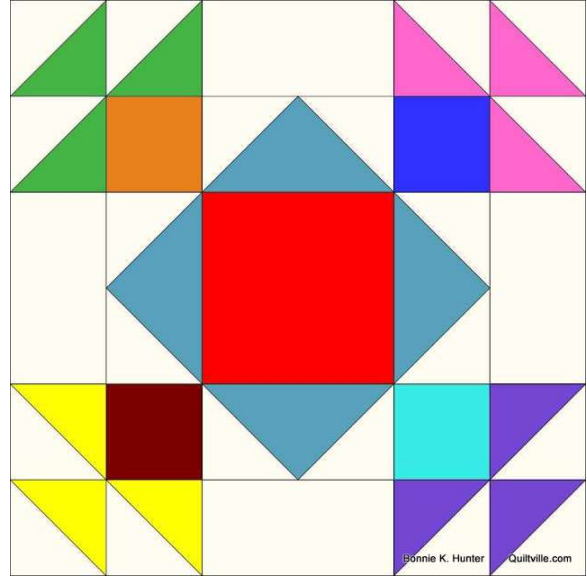
And even this way!

And here are a few other ideas I came up with:

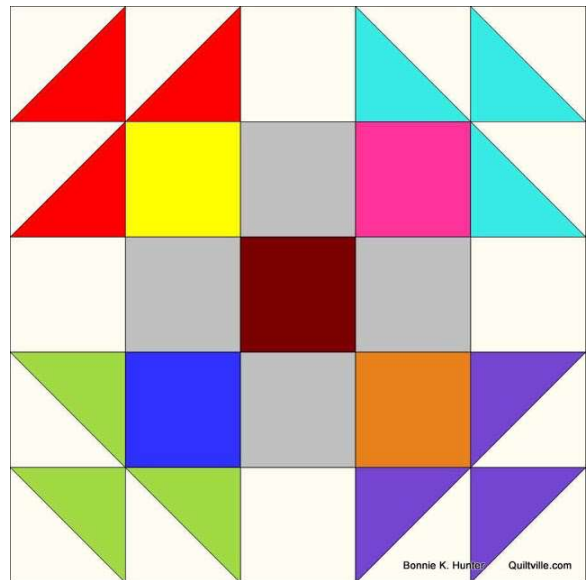


4 Fish School blocks -

4 Neutral sashes and a colored center!



4 neutral rectangles -
4 flying geese (matching)
and a colored center square.



4 Fish School blocks -
4 neutral squares -
4 grey squares -
and a colored center.

There are so many things you can do with these little units. Have fun with them. Play with them. Experiment with them. Give the odd scraps in your stash a chance to shine.

Not crazy about ALL scrappy everything? Since it is Independence Day weekend here in the USA, I started thinking of a whole mess of red/white/blue blocks for a patriotic variation.

Choose a color theme. You don't have to do all scrappy. Let your imagination run wild!

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