

Bonnie K Hunter of Quiltville.com & Quiltville.blogspot.com presents:

Those “Bonus” Triangles!



As a Vagabond Traveling Itinerant Quilter....I have come to learn that there are “two camps” to the idea of “Bonus Triangles!” Either people hate them, can’t be bothered to spend the time to find a way to use them....or they LOVE THEM so much they just can’t let them go!

I know I am in the latter camp....but it took many years of dealing with odd sizes to develop a way that would WORK for putting these little gems to good use.

Let’s face it --

The method of drawing 2 lines 1/2” apart from each other on the back of the square being added to the snow-ball block, the flying geese rectangle, or whatever else you were doing....just made that “Bonus” be more of a Bother and a Blunder....The math didn’t work out!

Let’s talk about a 2.5” square as the corner piece, for example --If you sew those so each piece gets that exact 1/4”....you end up with a bonus triangle you have to square DOWN to 1 3/4”. 🙄 I don’t know about you, but things that finish at 1 1/4” are just NOT user friendly with the sizes of scraps that I keep on hand. this would mean I would have to trim things down FURTHER to 1 1/2”....finishing at 1”...if I wanted to pair it with the other sizes of units I keep on hand---OR....cut all new fabric in weird sizes to go with them, giving me blocks that don’t fit nicely with the other things I like to do. I prefer blocks and units that finish on the even inch or half inch. Things that finish on the quarter-inch are just a Bummer!

So here is a little trick I use to ensure that I get the 2” unfinished size that I can readily use, finishing at 1.5” in the block!

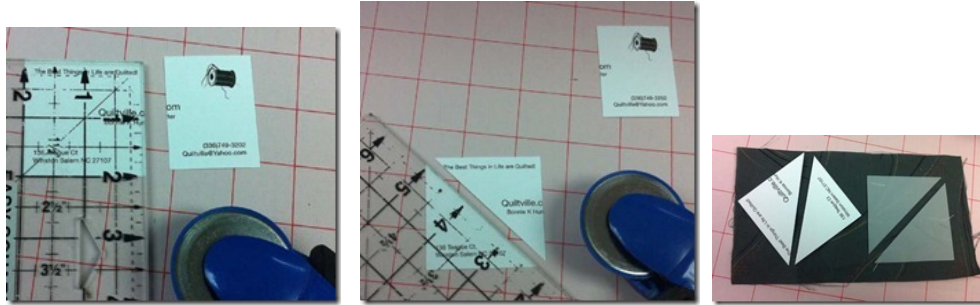
We’ll start with a 2” X 4” finished flying goose unit for example!

I pulled a 2.5” X 4.5” brick from the brick drawer for the base of the goose, and a pair of blue 2.5” squares for the “Wing” triangles.

But before we sew...we need to make a “triangle buddy” 😊

Determine what size you would like your unfinished Bonus Square to be. With the 2.5” square, I just subtract 1/2” to give me 2”. 2” unfinished is great!

In my workshops I pass out some “old” business cards ((You know how it is, the email address has changed, what am I going to do with a whole box of 1000 cards?))



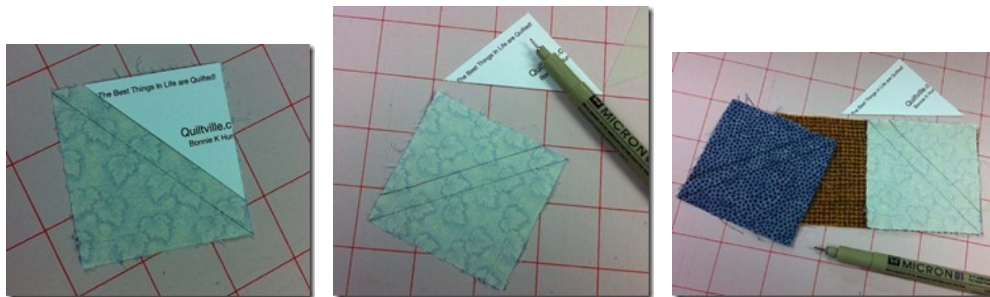
Business cards are already 2” tall, if they are standard! Cut a 2” square from the business card...discard the odd end. Now cut that 2” square on the diagonal corner to corner. You’ve now got TWO Triangle Buddies!

I use these a lot at home, so I’ve also cut them from template plastic and mark the size on them. They are not as high contrast for pics for this tutorial, so you’ll see me using the business card ones!

I am one of those who DOES like to sew on a line if I am doing this type of method. I’ve tried the line drawn on the machine bed...I’ve tried the piece of tape, I’ve tried that angler, I’ve tried folding—but I know me, and I prefer to use a pencil or a pigma to DRAW an actual sewing line if the square is 2.5” or larger. If it is smaller, I’m pretty well able to “aim and shoot”....But with 2.5” or bigger, I get the best results when I have a line to follow.

First: Draw your center line from corner to corner across the square.

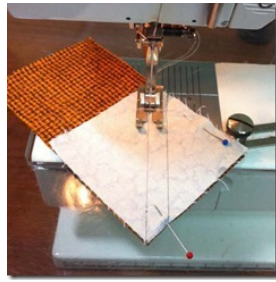
Next: Lay your Triangle Buddy in the corner, using it for the placement to draw your second seam line.



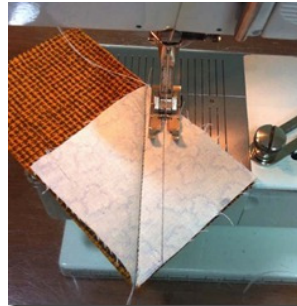
I know drawing the lines is boring. I usually save this for when I am sitting somewhere away from the machine, maybe while watching TV...I have a sand paper board that is great for this. With dark fabrics, I use a white ceramic pencil, with light ones, a mechanical pencil or this very fine pigma work just great.

Experiment with what you like to mark with, you want your lines clearly visible.

I’ve marked both of my squares for the wing triangles, and I am ready to sew!



When sewing, I like the left side of my needle to just “KISS” the inside of that center line. My stitching is JUST in the channel between the two lines but touching the lines. This gives me a bit extra for the triangle to fold up and over the stitching. Even though we are not sewing on a CUT bias, we ARE still sewing on a bias, and fabric can crawl, so I do pin just to hold things square. I also piece with very SMALL pins...Save those big yellow headed quilters pins for other tasks..I like these tiny glass head ones!



This is crucial! So many patterns say “Stitch, Cut, Press, Discard” in that order! I find it really important to flip that triangle back first, make sure it is going to meet the edges of that base rectangle nice and square FIRST! I give it a good finger-press and crease with my fingernail.

If it meets and is square, then and only then...do I flip it back and sew the second seam. Reason? If it isn't sewn right, who wants to un-pick TWO seams to fix it? 🤔

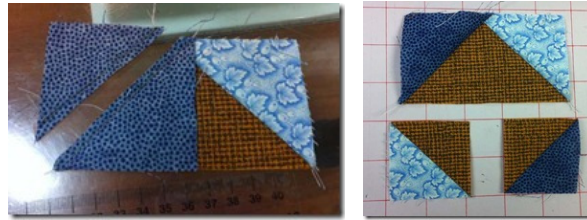
If it doesn't meet? Do double check the size of your square..if it is 2.5” X 2 3/8”...you aren't going to get a good result!



I do chain piece these....stitch all the center lines first, cut apart, then flip them to check placement, and then sew the second lines. Since I am snipping the units apart anyway, it's really easy just to use my scissors to cut between the two seam lines. Look at the two units you get! And because you used a “triangle buddy” to mark your line for the bonus triangle, it is ALREADY 2” square! All you should need to do is trim off the dog ears. Get those out of there...I never understood why some quilters keep them in?

They get in the way, they make seams bulky, you can't see where you are going....snip snip and they are gone!

Now listen to me---each seam allowance WILL be a bit smaller than the traditional 1/4" seam. About 1/16" less. I can live with this. When I've sewn miniatures, I've been told to sew my 1/4" seam and then grade it down by half to eliminate bulk. Your quilt will not fall apart! But I wouldn't go with any less seam than this...what is more important to me is the finished size of the bonus unit, NOT that each and every piece have an exact 1/4" seam. if the seam is in the proper place, the size of the seam allowance is neither here nor there. Remember, there are countries that use metric measurements, and their seams are not an exact 1/4" and their quilts are holding up just fine! 😊



Here I've added the second square, checked for placement, sewn the second line for the bonus triangle unit, and cut them apart! I've got one goose, and two spare goslings!

It's a simple concept. It's about leaving your extra bits in useable sizes that will work with other things. It's about finding purposes for squares and bricks you already keep on hand. It's about using that stash to its full potential and getting wonderful quilts out of it and minimizing the work and brain cramps at the same time! The possibilities are endless....

Go get creative!

Bonnie

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