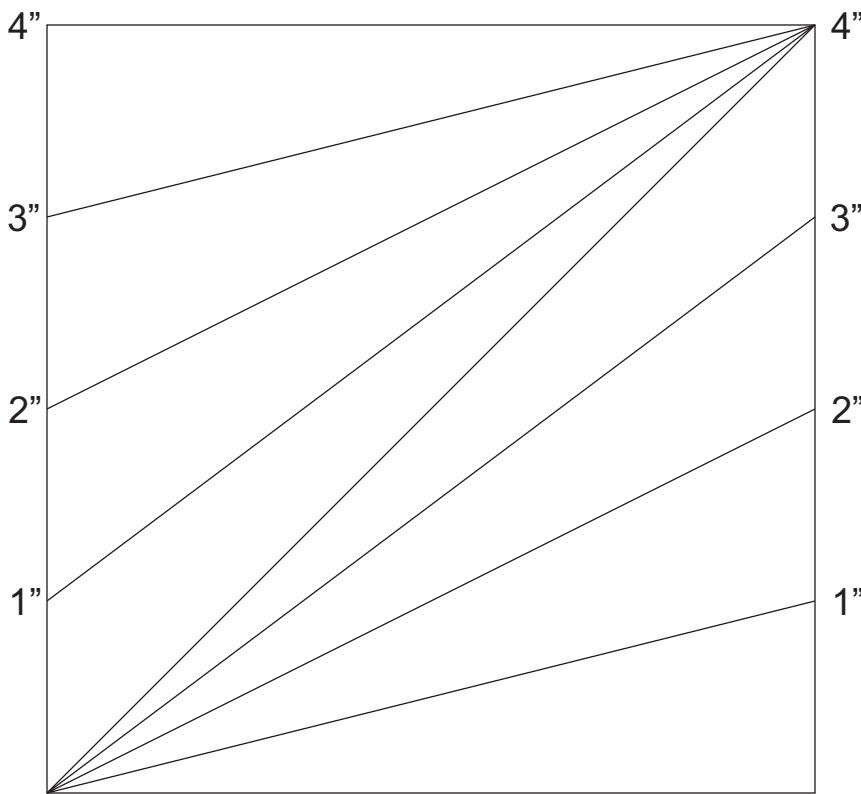


Paper Piecing

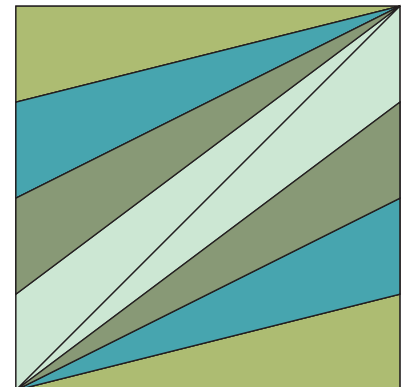
Why Paper Piece? First of all, it doesn't require a lot of precise measurement. As long as the template is drawn accurately, and you number the piecing order, most mistakes are completely eliminated: **Paper piecing is an easy way to make a complex block.**

It can be hard to paper piece a block when you use a conventional $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance ($\frac{1}{2}$ " total) for your fabric strips. I use a wider seam allowance: $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1" total for smaller pieces, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ " total for large pieces. To my mind, it's better to use a little extra fabric and then trim the excess after sewing. It makes it easier to piece, and prevents a lot of frustration: **ripping out a paper pieced seam because the piece is slightly short IS NOT FUN!**



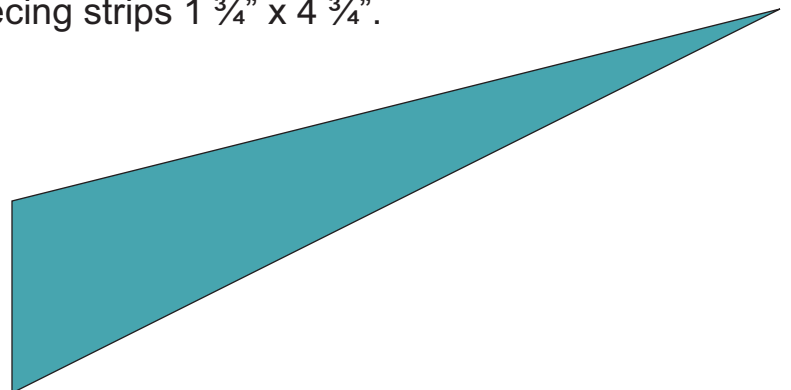
How to Determine Strip size

On the left, you will see a simple 4" block. The lines are all spaced 1" apart, and converge at opposite corners.

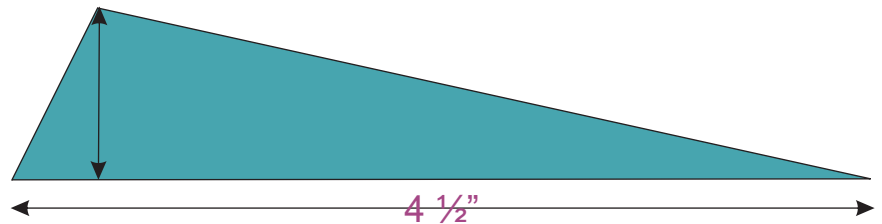


You'll note that there are 4 strips that are slightly different in size. I've color coded them so that the differences are easy to see. It is tempting to decide that because it is a relatively small block, you will cut the piecing strips $1\frac{3}{4}$ " x $4\frac{3}{4}$ ".

Trust me: that's not going to work.



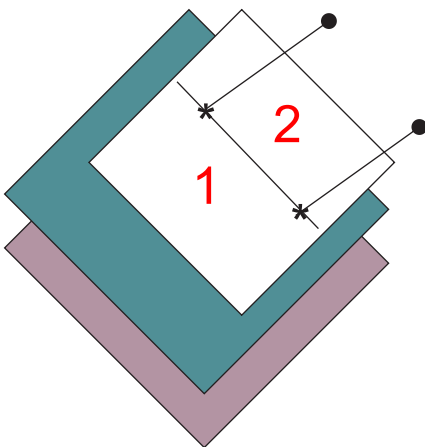
To find the length and width of the fabric strip, measure the template piece at the widest point and the longest point. Then add your seam allowance.



Since the strips are only slightly different in size, it is easiest to measure the width and length of the largest piece, and then give yourself a generous seam allowance, such as 1" all around. In the long run this doesn't use a lot of extra fabric, and it makes piecing much easier. The excess seam allowance and length can always be trimmed later. I have yet to see the Quarter Inch Police come and drag a quilter away for not using a precise 1/4" seam allowance when paper piecing!

To Pin or not to Pin - That's the Question

For many quilters, not pinning when paper piecing seems almost like a badge of honor. Personally, if the block is large: I pin. Honestly, when piecing a small block, I don't find it necessary, but larger blocks are another story.



First, write the piecing order on the paper template.

Tip: be sure that your template has a 1/4" seam allowance drawn around the perimeter. This will help you to trim the finished pieced block accurately. Locate the stitching line between the first two pieces. I start by putting a pin through my paper template about 1/2" from the edge of the template. I do this at both ends of the line. If the stitching line is long (8" or longer), I will put a couple of extra pins on the line. This will help to prevent the strip from wiggling when stitching.

Tip: be sure that your template has a 1/4" seam allowance drawn around the perimeter. This will help you to trim the finished pieced block accurately.

Take the first two fabric strips, and place them right sides together. Put the edge of the strips over the pins, allowing an approximate 1/4" seam allowance along the length of the strip. Each strip should extend a bit beyond the block's perimeter seam allowance. Secure the pins, and sew on the paper along the stitching line. Don't forget to sew through the seam allowance.

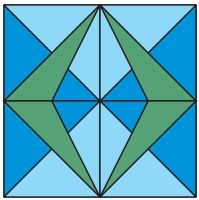
If necessary, loosely trim the fabric strips. You will precisely trim the block once it is fully pieced.

Press your Seam!

I press each seam (with an iron) once it has been sewn. This makes a flatter seam (the flatter, the better). Flatter seams will result in a more accurate finished block.

Once you have finished piecing the entire block, press it carefully once again. Place it on your cutting board fabric side down (template side up), and trim it to size. Don't forget the $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance: the 4" block in this example should be trimmed to a $4\frac{1}{2}$ " square.

The template paper is most easily removed using the reverse sewing order. Fold the template paper back along the stitching line, and crease it with your finger. It should then tear away easily.



Not all Paper Pieced blocks are as simple as the first example. However, as long as the piecing order is written on the block, it will be simple to piece.

Enjoy!

Ideas for Using this Block

Now that you have your template pieced, it's time to make a quilt. Here are some ideas:

