

Schoolgirl Sampler Sew Along

Week one

Welcome to the Sew Along, quilters! Here we go - Make Blocks numbered **1 through 6** on pages 40 - 42 of the book. If you finish these blocks this week and have time, you can start making half-square triangles for the sawtooth border if you're planning to add it to your quilt. You'll end up needing 92 of these so it'll be easier if you make a few at a time as we sew along. (See page 17 in the book.)

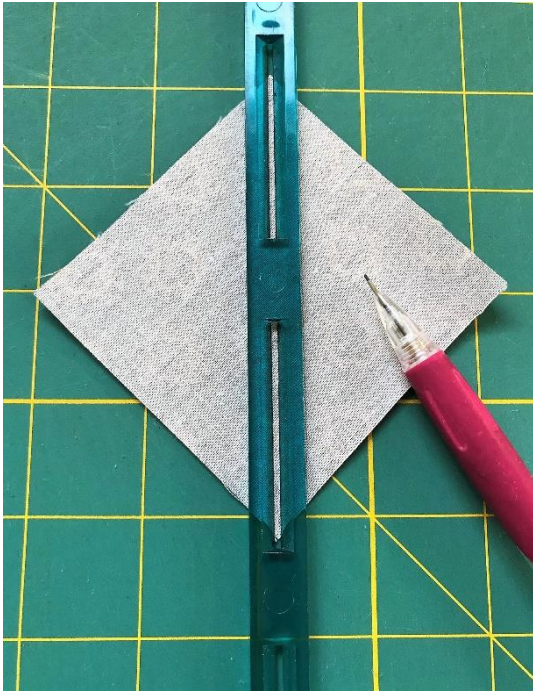


The easiest blocks are numbers 4 and 6 so some of you might want to start there. For those of you who are beginners or those who are not used to working with small pieces, the most difficult thing about this week's blocks is making the 1 ½" finished half-square triangles (HSTs). The rest should not give you much trouble if you cut and sew accurately. There are many ways to make half-square triangles. The book gives instructions for the traditional, simplest way. You may, of course, do it your own way.

One tool I like to use for making HSTs is the **Quilter's Rule Quick Quarter ruler**.

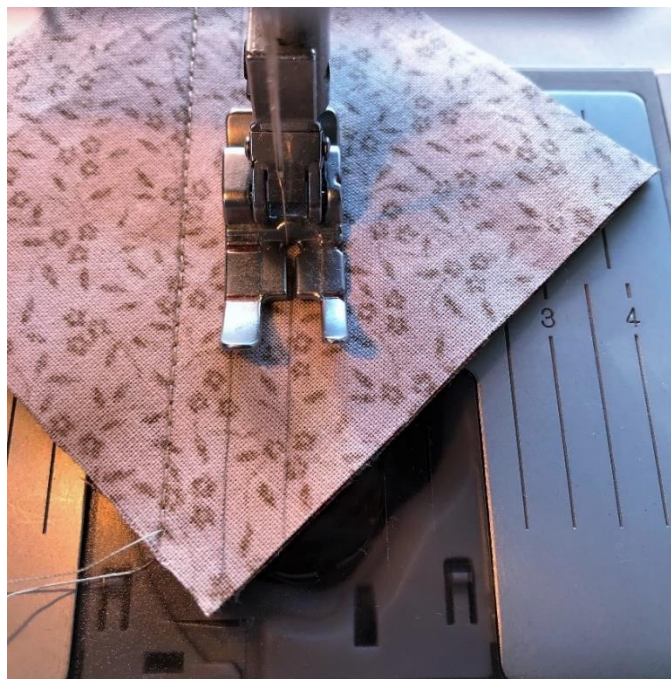


1. You can find this tool at JoAnn Fabrics or on Amazon. Here's how to use it: Cut your squares according to the directions in the book and layer right sides together. Line up the open notches of this ruler on the diagonal corners of your fabric squares as shown.



2. Mark a line along each side of the ruler with a fine lead pencil. These are the sewing lines. Lightly mark the center through the notches as well. This is the cutting line.

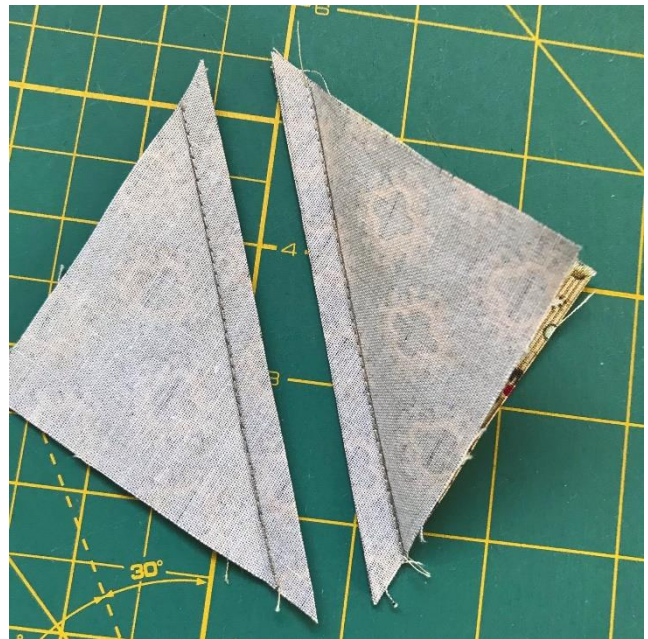
3. Now, stitch on the drawn sewing lines. Slow down and stitch your lines carefully. If you can see in the photo, I always stitch a tiny bit to the **INSIDE** of the line to make up for the extra fabric used when pressing open.



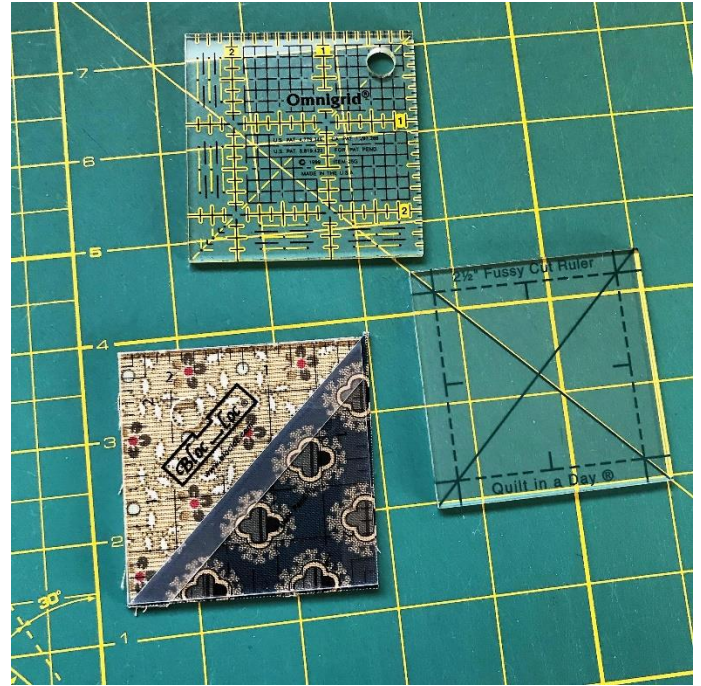
4. Chain piece several HST units along one side, then cut the last thread, flip and continue to chain stitch the other side. Cut the individual units apart but don't cut on the center lines yet. Your pieces should look like this -



5. **Here's a Tip:** After you sew on both lines, press the squares to set the seams. Flip open one side and press gently **BEFORE** you cut the squares in half. Switch and press the other side open. **THEN** cut in half. This will stabilize the bias edge and keep your blocks from stretching out of shape. If you cut and sew accurately and press this way, your half-square-triangle units will come out perfectly and will need minimal trimming.



6. After cutting the units, press both sides open again, carefully, so you don't stretch the fabric. Use your regular ruler, a small square ruler or a Bloc Loc ruler for the correct size to trim to the correct size. As you can see, after I made my HST units using this pressing method, I measured them and they need only the slightest bit of trimming. NO wonky units. Try it! Practice a little bit and you will find this saves time trimming later.



You'll always have perfect half-square triangles.



Quilters, this is also an excellent time to reinforce a good habit for when you begin making a quilt with many blocks - Trim, press and square up your blocks right after piecing. This will help eliminate time spent at the end when you're ready to assemble the blocks together. It's especially important in this project because the blocks are small and if each one is slightly off they will not go together well when you add the sashing. Do it now and you'll be all set to go when that time comes.

After pressing and squaring up your blocks to be EXACTLY 4 ½" x 4 ½" (you may want to purchase a 4 ½" x 4 ½" square ruler but make sure to check that it is an accurate 4 ½" and measures the same as your regular ruler.), place each block in your project box or a zip lock bag for safe keeping. I numbered each of my blocks with a pencil on the back inside seam. If you're planning on assembling your blocks in the same order that I used in my quilt, this may make it easier for you when sewing the blocks together.

Tip: This week, clean your machine (bobbin area) and replace your needle with a brand new one. There are several things that helped make me a better piecer: Here are two of them - I learned to use a size 75/11 Schmetz Universal needle in my machine instead of the more commonly recommended 80/12. (I will sometimes also use a 70/10 Microtex Sharp needle.) These are needles that are thin and pass through your fabric easily. I found I have fewer skipped stitches when using. They are best used with a finer thread, like Aurifil 50 wt. The needle hole is smaller and some threads will not slide easily through the thinner needle so you may have to experiment. I love using the Aurifil thread in a tan color for piecing both light and dark fabrics. The finer thread takes up less space in the seam when pressing and leaves very little lint behind so your bobbin area stays cleaner. Your machine will thank you! I also use 50 wt Aurifil thread for my applique in assorted colors. Very fine but strong and your stitches are basically hidden when you sew the shapes onto the background.

You'll all be working at your own pace. If you finish your weekly blocks and have some time, make a few half-square triangle units (HSTs) for the sawtooth border. You will need 92 HSTs for the border when we get to that part. According to the directions in the book, cut 46 light 2 7/8" squares and 46 medium or dark print 2 7/8" squares. Follow the instructions on page 8 to make 92 HST units that measure 2 ½" (These will be 2" x 2" when finished in the quilt).

Be sure to come back next week! The next six blocks will be posted on **Friday, January 8.**



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