

Nine-Patch Tutorial

Sassypacks ([order their super cool fabric!](#)) asked me to do a tutorial for ~~hesitant~~ beginner quilters for their blog. So ladies (and the occasional gentleman), if you've wanted to quilt but have been nervous about starting, here's the perfect chance to dive in!

Are you up for the challenge? Try it! This quilt top is small: 42x50. And easy: the 9-patch pattern. I love this pattern. It's uncomplicated and timeless and easy to modify to your own tastes.

I like to keep things simple, so this tutorial will have 5 steps.

- Supplies
- Prep
- Cutting
- Piecing blocks
- Piecing entire top

Did you just think, *Woah! That looks so easy!?* It's because you're smart like me. And you can do this. The key is to do it at your own pace.



1.) Supplies & Tools:

- Fabric. You will need 10 fat quarters for the blocks and 1.5 yards of the sashing color. Tip: pick 5 Fat Quarters (fq) of cool colorful fabric that you like (for the main part of the block). Then pick 5 fq's of solid or solid-patterned fabrics that complement the 1st five fabrics. You want good contrast within each block. I used [Riley Blake's Rainy Days and Mondays](#), which is available at [SassyPacks.com](#).
- Rotary cutter
- Rotary cutting mat
- Thread (off white will do)
- Scissors (I prefer the gold stork scissors for cutting thread, but regular scissors will work here, too.)
- Iron
- Sewing machine
- Pins

2.) Prep

- Wash your fabric (like you'd wash your laundry—I often toss mine in with my laundry, but only do this if you're using high quality quilting fabrics. I cannot vouch for the other stuff) and throw it in the dryer.
- Iron dried fabric.

3.) Cutting

We're going to make five different colored blocks for this piece, with 6 blocks of each of those colorways. $6 \times 5 = 30$, which is what we need when we're done. Making 6 blocks of each color combo also gives us the option of strip piecing, which makes things go faster and be more uniform.

The following are all the pieces needed to make this quilt. You may cut them all now, or do them as you go.

From each "colorful/main" fat quarter cut

- Five 2.5x15" strips

From each solid fat quarter cut

- Four 2.5x15" strips

From sashing

- Two 2.5x46.5" strips (for left and right sides)
- Two 2.5x42.5" strips (for top and bottom)
- Five 2.5x38.5" strips
- Twenty four 2.5x6.5" strips (do these shorter strips last to make sure you have enough fabric to cut the other sashing strips)

4.) Piecing

For the following instructions, pick one block color combo: 5 strips of the colorful/main fabrics, and 4 of the coordinating print. When you're done, you can go back and follow these instructions to do the remaining blocks.



Sew the strips together in the following sets:



Editor's note: If you want an A on this project I highly recommend pinning the dickens out of your fabrics when you piece them. Pinning separates the women from the girls. I pin about 2-3" apart.

Press seams to the side like this (this helps the fabric interlock as you start piecing). The rule is to press toward the darker fabric:



Now from each set cut six 2.5" strips.



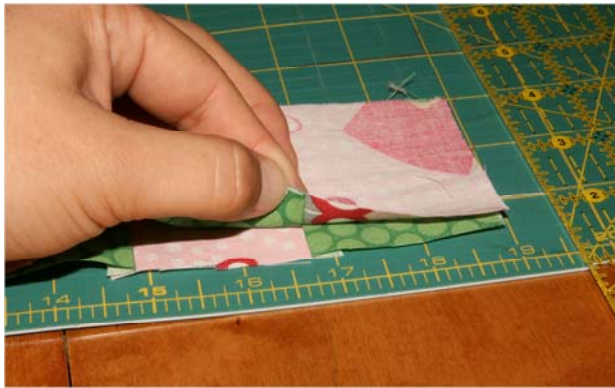
You'll end up with a bunch of these:



Look at you! 1/3 of a block already pieced!

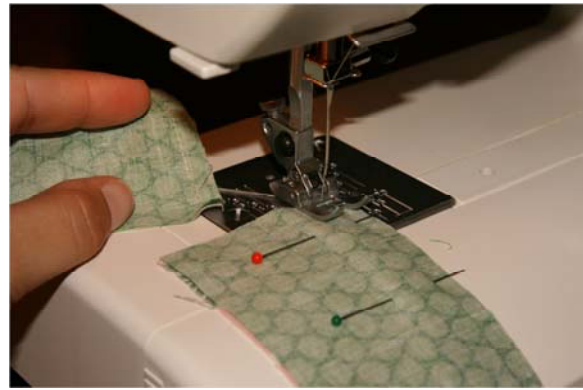
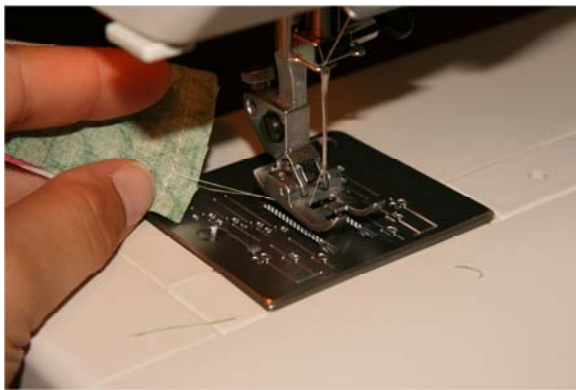
Now arrange them to form the entire block (as shown above).

Pin the first row of each block to the second row. Make sure the seams line up like this:



Then pile up all of your pinned pieces and get ready to sew.

Here is where strip piecing comes in. After you sew your first strip, instead of cutting the thread and putting in another piece, simply raise your presser foot, pull the fabric out so that you have 2 or 3" of thread hanging off, drop the fabric behind your machine, and put in the next piece.



This saves so much time cutting all those pieces of thread (you can just trim all the pieces after you've done all your piecing) and it also saves you from having the thread get sucked up out of the needle when you hit the gas to sew the next piece. If they don't line up perfectly don't rip out the seams a dozen times to get it right. We have to remember what's important here: this is a learning experience. Also, my finished topper has to look better than yours. I'm the teacher. ☺

Once you've sewed top and middle rows together, pin the bottom rows on and sew those. Press all blocks nicely. Pretty neat, huh?



5.) Piecing the entire top

Now that you have all 30 blocks assembled, lay them out in an appealing way. Like this:



(I did 10 blocks of the yellow because I really liked the yellow fabric, which gave me enough to do an “x” pattern. But you do whatever you want here.)

Once you’ve determined the block positions take a picture. It’ll last longer. Longer than your memory because once you pick up those blocks to sew the sashing on you’re going to get all confused on what goes where. Unless you have your photo.

Assemble each row, left to right.

This can be done by pinning each sashing piece to the right side of its left neighboring block. (Your blocks on the end of each row will not have a sashing to pin to it.) Strip piece all your pinned buddies. Lay them out in order again and pin the first piece in a row (which is a block + sashing on the right) to the piece next to it (another block + sashing). Keep working your way until you have each row looking like this:



We’re almost done!!!

Pin the long sashing pieces to the bottom of each row. Do not do this to the bottom row. Your sashing may be quite a bit longer than your block rows (row shrinkage happens to everyone).



If it is more than 1 inch longer, trim all sashing pieces down. Make sure they are still the same exact length. If your sashing is only slightly longer than your block row, just stretch the block row to fit onto the sashing piece.

When assembling long pieces, I use this technique. Place a pin at each end and then pin the middle. Then fill in the rest of the row with pins.

Once each row has a piece of sashing sewn to the bottom (except for the bottom row), sew all the rows together. Then attach the 46.5" sashing strips to the left and right sides. The last step is to sew the 42.5" strips to the top and bottom.

Iron, iron, iron.

YOU'RE DONE!!!



Welcome to the fun world of quilting!!