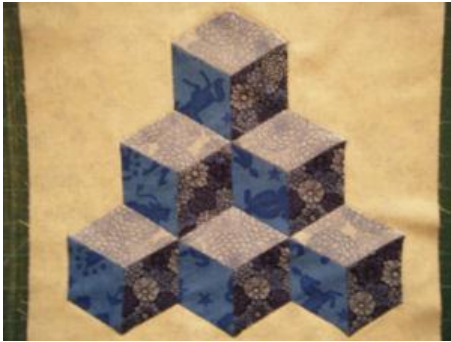


English Paper Piecing – Tumbling Blocks or Baby Blocks



Patchwork over papers is a traditional English method. This method of hand stitching can be soothing and very therapeutic to do as you can just sit in the evening or during a lunch break just working through the procedure of joining all the pieces together. There is not a lot to be carried around as well. The hexagon is one of the traditional shapes. In this block you will be using diamond shapes, which when joined will form the hexagon shape.

The design is made up of groups of three diamonds. Use three different fabrics, dark, light and medium. A fourth fabric is also required for the background on which the Tumbling Block tower sits. A plain fabric for the 4th fabric is an obvious choice for this, but you could also consider a small print.

CONSTRUCTION

On the last page you will find a page of diamond shapes which you can print. These are your templates. You will need 18 diamond shapes for the tumbling block tower. I used ordinary printer paper, but you could use slightly thicker paper. Can I suggest that you glue your diamond shapes onto card and then cut out the shapes.

On the wrong side of one of the fabrics, pin six of the cut out paper diamond shapes, long pointed corners on the straight of the grain. Next, cut round each paper shape adding at least a quarter of an inch seam allowance on all sides. Don't worry if you cut wider than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch as this will be useful when turning the seam, but do not cut less as you will find it difficult to turn the seam. The fabric at the long corner points can be cut across the tip to leave a quarter inch margin of fabric beyond the paper point. Take several paper clips and use these to turn your fabric over your diamond shape.

Thread a needle with tacking thread. Begin with a knot and sew a double stitch at the fold on one of the mid-points of your diamond. Run the thread to the point. The corner of the folded fabric extending beyond the sharp point should be folded so an "ear" is left protruding from the diamond shape. (See example). Repeat until your fabric is completely secure. If in doubt you can stitch through your papers but you will have to remove the tacking stitches when you need to remove the papers.



Turn the tacked shape over and check that the corners exactly outline the shape of the paper shape beneath.

Thread a needle with no more than 16 inches of toning thread, any longer than this will get into knots when you are stitching. Match the colour of the thread to the darker fabric as it is always less obvious than the lighter.

Take two diamond shapes and place them right sides together. Fix the corner you are working towards with a pin, so that as you sew the two corners will match exactly. Start at one corner with a double stitch to secure the thread, oversew with small even stitches to the next corner. As you sew the corners, push the seam allowances to one side so that they stick out beyond the edges. Once the papers are removed these flaps dovetail without adding extra bulk. Finish with a double stitch and cut the thread about quarter inch from the last stitch.

Open out the first two diamonds and add the third diamond, beginning with the double stitch to join the three diamonds together. When you come to a junction of all three, make a double stitch to strengthen the join. This completes your first hexagon. Continue until all six hexagons have been made. Join the hexagons in to the tower formation.

Once you have made the tower, take it to your ironing board and press. Take out the papers. These can be stored and used again. Any flaps that are sticking out can be folded back and pressed.

Cut a 13 inch square of fabric for the background. Although the finished size is 12½ inches, when one fabric is stitched onto another, the bottom fabric often draws up slightly finishing up smaller than when you start.

Place the Tower in the middle of the background fabric. Once you have placed it to your liking, pin or tack this to the background fabric. Using the same shade thread as the background fabric, stitch the tower to the background, using small even stitches. Use double stitches at each corner for strength. Remove the tacking and give a last press before you trim the block to 12 ½ inches.

