

ADDING PIECING INTEREST TO BLOCKS

SARA SHARP



Use skinny stripes and tiny bursts of color to make a big impact by replacing whole components of your favorite blocks with a little strip piecing. In addition to your usual sewing arsenal (sewing machine, cutting mat, quilting rulers, etc.), all you need is a traditional quilt block pattern (I'm using a simple four-patch), some colorful scraps, and strips of assorted widths.

1. FIGURE OUT THE SHAPE/AREA YOU'RE GOING TO COVER.

During the segment, you'll watch as I replace 9" unfinished squares in a traditional four-patch. If you're using a different traditional block, simply swap in your shape/measurement whenever I reference the 9" square in my example.

2. CREATE THE COLOR PACKETS.

Cut an assortment of skinny strips from colorful scraps or small precuts (think 2.5" or 5" squares). Piece them together following along with the demo. (Note: If you think there's no way you want to sew anything smaller than your pinky finger, fear not! Those little strips come together quickly and pretty easily, so give it a try! What've you got to lose?)

3. PREPARE AND LAY OUT THE STRIPS.

Cut strips of various widths in the palette of your choice. I love using neutrals to anchor bright bursts of color, so I chose an assortment of $\frac{3}{4}$ " – 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " long strips. (I like to cut them slightly longer (at 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " instead of exactly at 9") to account for any minor shifting when I sew them together later on.)

There's lots of room to play here, from the width of the strips to the placement of the color packets. As for the strip size, one thing to keep in mind is the overall size of the area you'll be swapping out—for instance, using 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " strips to cover a 3" square probably won't make quite the same impact as skinnier strips in the same application.

So go on, experiment with the layout! Sort the strips by value for a gradient feel, go with alternating strips to accentuate the striping—the possibilities are endless, just have fun with it. Add in the color packets as you go by laying them on top of strips you've already placed (you can either pre-trim them to match the width of the strips you've cut, or trim them to size once you determine exactly where you want them).

4. INSERT THE COLOR PACKETS INTO THE STRIPS.

"Inlay" the color packets into the strips using the steps demonstrated in the segment.

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5. ASSEMBLE THE 9" SQUARE.

Join all the strips together with a 1/4" seam.

6. TRIM YOUR PIECED SHAPE TO SIZE.

Trim your striped masterpiece to a 9" square.

7. SWAP OUT A PLAIN 9" SQUARE IN YOUR FOUR-PATCH WITH THE PIECED ONE.

And then... keep on going! When I originally dreamt up this project I wanted to make a patriotic four-patch by swapping out those plain ole' squares with stripes and stars. Turns out that was a little too much material to cover in a 10-minute segment, but don't let the stripes limit you! You can add just about any type of piecing to a traditional block to transform it into something fresh and new. Stars, stripes, mini-patchwork, paper piecing—if you can dream it up, I bet you can do it. And I hope you're inspired to try it out after watching the show!

ABOUT SARAH SHARP

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