

# Seams



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## Set-in

**H**ow many of you have avoided quilt patterns you love because you have night sweats thinking about set-in seams? Coming from a hand-piecing background, I never gave them any thought. Nothing is hard if you piece by hand. It's just the way it is. Yeah, yeah, it takes longer—but that's another topic.

I blame our fast-paced world for our quilting angst. Set-in seams don't fit into the quick and easy environment we have created. They do, however, fit into the "I've created an heirloom and will pass this quilt down in the family" environment. So, let's talk about how you can enjoy the set-in seam process.

When I teach set-in seams, I teach the traditional method as well as one that evolved from various attempts at simplifying the process. Let's discuss both methods and some helpful tools.

## Tools You'll Love (Photo A)

### Spray starch.

Starch your fabric. The less your fabric moves, the better off you will be, for all piecing. We in the quilting world prefer **Mary Ellen's Best Press™ Starch Alternative** but any will do. When do I use it? Constantly. I use it when I first press my fabrics, when I set the seams, when I finish the block, etc. Maybe it's overkill but I don't think so.

### Water-soluble marking tool with a sharp point.

Gotta have a sharp point, plain and simple. The fatter the point, the more room for error. Have you tried the **Sewline Mechanical Colored Pencils** yet? They are superb! They come in 5 colors plus one that is a combo of black, white and a tracer. They glide on (and off) beautifully!

### Tools for marking your 1/4" seam allowance.

We have a few favorites in our shop:

- **Mary Lowe**, our Saturday Sampler Program instructor, would positively shrivel up and die without the **Prep Tool™!** It marks a wonderfully scant 1/4" and is also a point trimmer.
- **Quilter's Rule™ Quick Quarter.** This little thing allows you to mark the 1/4" corners with just a dot. A fine mechanical pencil is a must if you use this tool.
- You can use a small ruler.
- **Hera.** We use this for scoring our 1/4" seam allowance in our second method.

**Glue.** Any quilting basting glue will work, but we like **Roxanne™ Glue-Baste-It.**

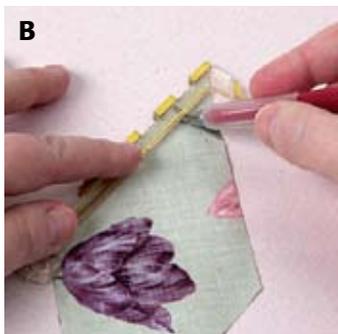


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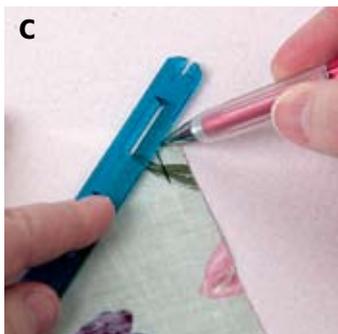
## Method A: Traditional Piecing

A portion of a star block is used as an example. Not all instruction for making the star will be discussed.

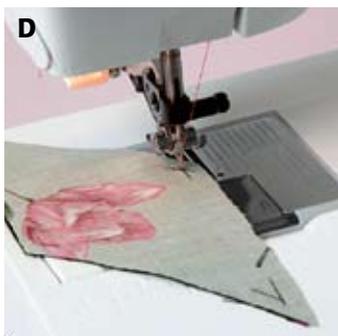
**1** First, we will mark  $\frac{1}{4}$ " lines so we know where to start sewing. On the wrong side of the fabric, place the  $\frac{1}{4}$ " line of a ruler (or use the **Prep Tool™**) along the edge and draw a mark (**Photo B**). Repeat on the second edge.



Alternately, mark  $\frac{1}{4}$ " lines using the **Quilter's Rule™ Quick Quarter** (**Photo C**).



**2** Place two pieces, right sides together. Start sewing AT the intersection of marked lines, not before or after, but AT the intersection (**Photo D**).



You need to **secure the stitches at all the V intersections**. You can either take a couple stitches then back stitch, use the locking stitch on your sewing machine if you have one, or take a few tiny stitches at the beginning, then increase to normal length. Regardless of your preferred method, you need to do this whether you start sewing at the V intersection or end at the V intersection.

**3** Press the seam open (**Photo E**).

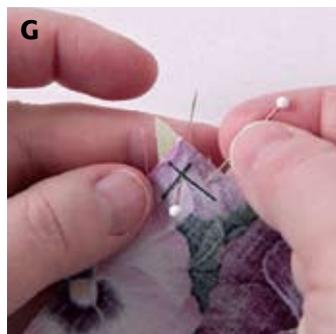


**4** We need to make more  $\frac{1}{4}$ " marks (**Photo F**) on:

- The right side of the star points.
- The wrong side of the three points of the triangles.
- The wrong side of three points of the corner squares.



**5** Get out your pins. Yes, quilters, you will need to use them. I know how some of you hate to pin! With the star facing right side up, place a square, right sides together with the left side of the star, and match  $\frac{1}{4}$ " marks (**Photo G**). Pin at the marks.



**6** Start sewing on the outer edge of the star, (you don't have to start sewing at the  $\frac{1}{4}$ " mark, it's strictly for placement), sewing towards the V intersection (**Photo H**).



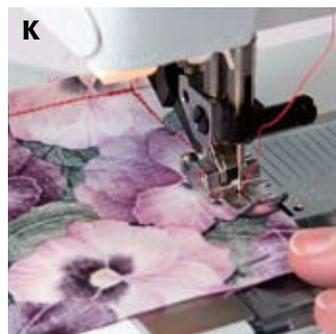
Stop at the  $\frac{1}{4}$ " mark (don't forget your securing stitches), exactly where you started stitching the two star units together (**Photo I**). You don't want to catch the previously-sewn seam allowances so make sure you move them aside. **Remove** from sewing machine.



**7** Time to pin again (**Photo J**) and repeat the sewing on the second side.



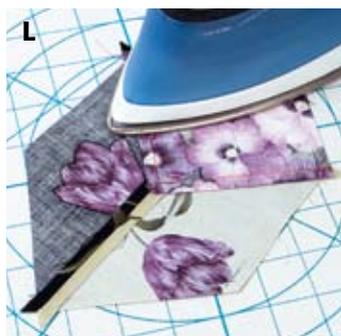
This time you will start to sew at the V intersection and sew out to the edge (**Photo K**).



## Method B: Simpler Piecing

The star will not be lying flat at this point. Make sure the marks match. You will basically be starting to sew exactly where you finished sewing the previous seam; you will have three seams starting and/or stopping at the same point.

- 8** One done! Press to the star so the square lies flat (**Photo L**).



The nice points of this method are:

- We eliminate many of the 1/4" marks.
- You can choose to cut the squares and triangles a bit larger and trim them after they are sewn in.
- You can prep several seams at once, then sit down at your sewing machine and whip them out.

- 1** Sew the star unit together as in Steps 1-3 of Method A. Press seam open.

- 2** Place the unit on your cutting mat, wrong side up. Using the hera with either the Prep Tool™ or a ruler, score a 1/4" sewing line on one raw edge of star (**Photo M**).



- 3** Finger press the seam allowance (**Photo N**),



then use the iron for a good, crisp edge (**Photo O**). Repeat on the other side of V intersection.



- 4** With unit wrong side up on an ironing surface, apply a very thin line of glue (or several drops) on the seam allowances (**Photo P**).



- 5** Place a square (or triangle) right side down, matching edges and tops (**Photo Q**). If you have cut the square/triangle larger than called for, you don't need to worry about matching edges and tops because you can trim them after you have sewn.



- 6** When glue is dry, it's time to sew! With the star facing right side up, fold 1 star patch over square, exposing the scored seam (**Photo R**).



Sew on the scored line (**Photo S**). Don't forget to secure the seam at the V intersection. Repeat on other side.



Life is boring if you do the same ol' thing, so give both methods a try!

*Block samples were made using the In Bloom fabric collection by Timeless Treasures.*