

Quilting Tips & Tuts #6– Strip Piecing Part One

Sew Many Strips, Sew Many Ways!

by Jane Schwarz, MS

There are as many ways to use strip-pieced fabrics as there are types of fabric on the market. Below I provide one example of a strip-pieced quilt. In addition, here is a link to a great online article describing strip-piecing a little differently. Whenever I am learning a new technique, I find it helpful to read a variety of articles until I thoroughly understand how to approach my own situation. <http://leahday.com/pages/strip-piecing-quilt-basics>

While there are many ways to use strip piecing, this first article deals with simple strip-piecing of thin cuts of fabric and offers some options on how to use the finished product. Some people refer to this type of piecing as string quilting, it was originally developed as a simple, fast way to use up every scrap of fabric, including the selvages! While the technique and end product are different than the above referenced online article, it is easy to see why strip-piecing is fast and friendly.

The picture shown directly below is of a quilt that has been in my family since 1942. It is a classic strip-pieced string quilt. The pattern is still available, it is typically called a spider web quilt, and here is a link to a free pattern on the internet. <http://www.quilterscache.com/E/EasySpiderWebBlock.html>

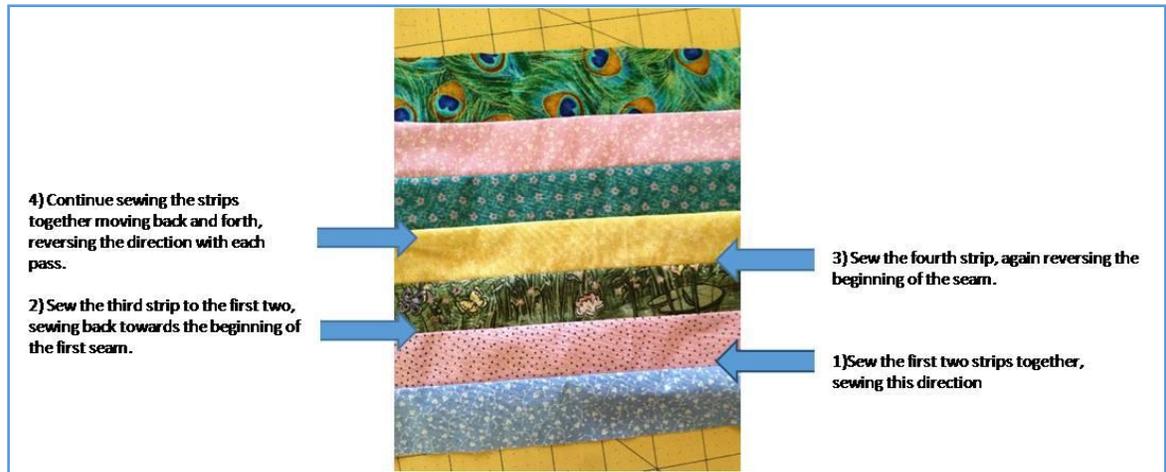


In our first strip-piecing article, we begin this quilt by cutting strips of fabric 1 ½" wide by however wide your fabric is. This can range from a few inches (if you are using scraps) to 22" or even 44" of fabric. For instance, if you are using a fat quarter, your width of fabric (WOF) is likely to be about 22" wide, however, if you are yardage, then your fabric is likely to be about 44" wide. The width of fabric will determine the number of strip-pieced units you will need to create in order to have enough pieced fabric to get the number of cuts you need.

Many times, quilters sew the strips onto a thin, sew-in interfacing or even computer paper. When the Spider Web quilt (shown above) was put together back in the 1940's it was stitched to newsprint and then sewn together into blocks. The diamond pieces were all cut from one fabric which pulled the quilt together aesthetically.

So, for the quilt we are discussing today, we cut the strips into 1 1/2" wide strips and sew them together. Because my brain tends to organize into patterns, and I wanted to randomize the strip placement, I cut the strips, dumped them into a box, stirred them around really well and then dug up a strip to add "randomly". The only rule I followed was that no two pieces could be next to each other if they were the same fabric.

Then, to minimize any bowing tendency, I alternated the direction that I sewed the strips together. I began sewing at whatever end I finished sewing at, rather than returning to the end where I started sewing.



When the pieced fabric is as wide as it needs to be, begin cutting the fabric into the pieces needed for your quilt. Here is what my pieced fabric looked like before I combined it with my 1/4 circle.



This picture shows the fabric cut and pieced into a block that I will use in my quilt.

Here I have included a few pictures of various ways that I might put the blocks together. The possibilities are really endless.



Here is another great online reference on strip-piecing. <http://blog.shopmartingale.com/quilting-sewing/simple-strip-quilting-designs-4-techniques/>

And here is another: <http://www.redpepperquilts.com/2014/06/checkerboard-quilt-and-strip-piecing-tutorial.html>

Here is a great tutorial on an Irish Chain quilt: http://quilting.about.com/od/rotarycuttingskills/ss/cutting_strips.htm

The really great thing about these sites is you can get some great ideas on different ways to use this technique before you spend a lot of money on patterns and books. Above all: have fun!!