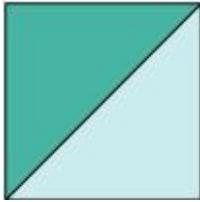


# Quilting Tips & Tuts #4 – Fabulous Half Square Triangles

*Fast and Easy Methods to Make Them*

*by Pam Wingate*



Half Square Triangles (HSTs) are one of the most common units for building quilt blocks - only the square is seen more often. This block is made of two triangles, each representing half a square, hence the name. Hundreds of quilt blocks include Half Square Triangles. The challenge is to quickly and accurately make these triangles in the quantities needed for a quilt. This traditional block can be made in any size but is also a component of many other quilt blocks. Light and dark fabric combinations in the same block allows for a variety of setting options, which can create a variety of effects.

## Methods for making Half Square Triangle Units

HSTs can be sewn the "old fashioned" way of cutting out all the triangles and sewing them together to make a square. This works, but it's time consuming and you are sewing two bias edges together which are easy to distort and stretch.

The easiest way to create half-square triangle quilt blocks is to work with squares. By using square pieces of fabric to create your block you will not have as many delicate bias edges to handle as you would if you were creating this block from triangles. Making the blocks a bit larger and then trimming them down to the perfect size makes this process almost foolproof, and using 5" print fabric squares is a great way to use up scraps and charms.

## The One Square Makes Two Units Method

**Step 1:** Begin with two squares 1" larger than your desired finished half-square triangle block. For example, if you are creating 2" finished half-square triangle blocks, you will use 3" squares of fabric to create your blocks. This method creates two identical half-square triangle blocks using two different fabric squares.

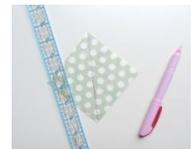
**Step 2:** Place two fabric squares right sides together. Draw a line across the diagonal on the wrong side of one of the squares using a mechanical pencil.

**Step 3:** Sew a scant  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam on either side of your drawn line. In the photo above, the sewing lines are represented by the two pencil lines.

**Step 4:** Cut apart on the drawn line. This creates two half-square triangle blocks, each made up of a triangle of each of the two fabrics.



**Step 5:** The final step in creating your block is to square it up to make sure your block is the exact desired size. Using a square ruler with a diagonal line across, line up the diagonal line with your seam. Be sure your block measures the desired size, trimming top or side edges as necessary.



## The Magic 8 Method

If you need to make lots and lots of half-square triangles for a quilting project, here's a quick and easy solution.

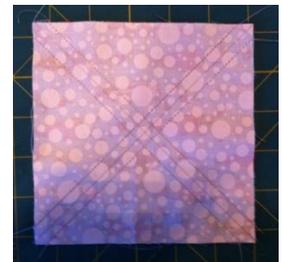
**Step 1:** Determine what size finished half-square triangles are desired.

For example:

- To make 3" finished half-square triangles.
- Add to your 3" measurement,  $\frac{7}{8}$ ". (Your total is now  $3\frac{7}{8}$ " )
- Multiply your total of  $3\frac{7}{8}$ " by 2. (That equals  $7\frac{3}{4}$ " )
- $7\frac{3}{4}$ " squares are the size needed to make your 3" finished half-square triangles.

**Step 2:** Cut two squares the desired size based on the formula above.

**Step 3:** With right sides together, draw two diagonal lines corner to corner.



**Step 4:** Stitch a quarter inch of either side of both drawn lines.

**Step 5:** Carefully cut apart without shifting the stitched fabric square.



There will be four cuts:

Cut 1: Vertical cut right down the center.

Cut 2: Cut down the center horizontally.

Cuts 3 and 4: Cut on both the drawn diagonal lines.

### The Strip Method

This method also allows you to make many HSTs at once and is really useful if you're working with jelly rolls or other sizes of precut strips of fabric. Here's a hint – you can make 2" finished HSTs with a jelly roll strip! However, this method will yield bias-edged HSTs, which can be more prone to stretching out of shape more easily than a straight-grain edge. Using starch when pressing them open will help to stabilize them.



**Step 1.** Sew along both long edges using a 1/4" seam.

**Step 2.** Align your ruler so that the unfinished measurement markings are on the seam – here, I am cutting 2.5" unfinished HSTs, so I have the 2 1/2" markings on the seam. Cut out the fabric around the ruler.



**Step 3.** Rotate the ruler to line up the markings on the opposite side seam and cut again. Repeat along the strip.

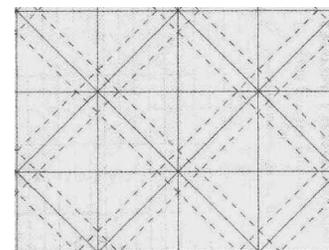
**Step 4.** Trim the dog ears off and press the HSTs open. Press seams towards the darker print so that there's no worrying about it creating a "shadow" behind the lighter print.

Strip Pieced HSTs Method	
Finished HST Size	Minimum Strip Width
1"	2"
1.5"	2.25"
2"	2.5"
3"	3.25"
3.5"	4"
4"	4.25"
4.5"	5"

This chart shows how wide to cut your strips based on the desired finished size. How many HSTs you can get per strip? It really depends on how long your strip is, what size HSTs you're cutting (ie. using a precut jelly roll strip but not necessarily cutting 2" finished HSTs) and how accurate your trimming is!

**Using a Grid for Multiple HSTs** - This is the most popular technique for making a lot of HSTs with the same pair of fabrics. Variations include drawing the grid on one of the fabrics, sewing through a grid on paper which you draw yourself or print out on your computer, or buying pre-printed rolls of paper with the grids pre-printed. I prefer to draw the grid on one of the fabrics and not have to pull the papers off the bias edges.

Each square should be finished size +1", laid out in a grid drawn on the wrong side of the lighter fabric as illustrated. Stitch a scant 1/4" from the diagonal lines and then cut on the diagonal, horizontal and vertical lines.



The example shown here is 4 squares x 3 squares and yields 24 HSTs. A grid of 7 squares x 6 squares would yield 84 HSTs!

Below are some of the many variations of layouts for HSTs!

