

Getting ready for October

Notes prepared by Becky Fiedler for Grand Quilt Guild's 2020-2021 Border of the Month program.

Once you've chosen what you will use for the centre of your quilt, you will be ready for the first border. We're starting with an easy one -- four patches!

Please decide for yourself, what size blocks best suit your centre. If your quilt centre has many small details, you might prefer to make your four-patch blocks from strips measuring 1.5". If your centre has chunkier pieces, consider making your four-patch blocks from 2" or 2.5" strips. My centre has larger pieces, so I used 2.5" strips.

- 1.5" strips yield a 2.5" unfinished or 2" finished block
- 2" strips yield a 3" unfinished or a 2.5" finished block
- 2.5" strips yield 4.5" unfinished or a 4" finished block

Your four-patch border can use any colour scheme you think will complement your centre: a riot of scraps; a checkerboard of dark and light fabrics; a subtle combination of various shades of a main colour; or even a collection of neutrals! The image to the right is a corner of Bonnie Hunter's 2016 Mystery Quilt, *En Provence*. The outer border of neutral four-patches is amazingly effective --- even if my photo fails to convey that.

For next month, please sew enough four-patches to make four borders a little longer than your centre's measurements. While you're at it, make four extra four-patches. Pages 2 and 3 of this handout have tips for the task.

Sew your four-patches into four borders --- one for each side of your quilt centre. Don't worry that your borders are too long. We'll cope with that next month. Set the extra four-patches and the four borders aside until next month.

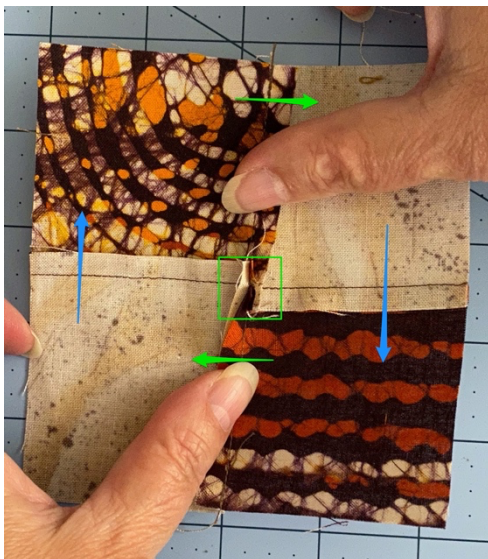


Tips

One of my favourite tips for sewing four-patches is to stack a two-patch unit on top of another two-patch unit, right sides together, seams nested. Feed the units under the presser foot with the dark patch on top, going under the needle first. The raw edges of the seam will be flipped toward the presser foot. This seam is already stitched, but you can see how I positioned the units to go under my presser foot.

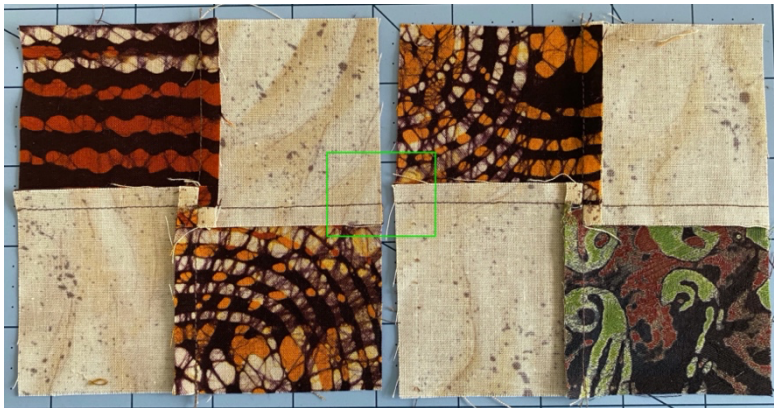
The presser foot pushes the top piece ever so slightly which pushes the nested seams together. When you open up the block, you'll likely see that you have more accuracy at the intersection. If you consistently make your four patches this way, the next tip will be very beneficial.

This tip is useful just about any time you are nesting seams.



Another useful tip is to “spin” the seams of your four-patches. The blocks lie flatter and the seams nest more easily. Before pressing the second seam, identify the direction of the seams that have been pressed (blue arrows). Then, push the remaining two seams in the same direction (green arrows). This will cause a few threads to break in the centre (green square). You might need to pick out a stitch or two with your seam ripper. To make the seams a little more secure, I generally set my stitch length at 2.0.

A tiny little four-patch forms in the centre. See green square. Press flat, being careful not to distort the block. With all seams going in the same direction, a quilter can rotate the four-patch blocks for optimal colour placement and the seams will nest!



The area enclosed by the green square shows these seams will nest if sewn into this position. But, I have two identical fabrics diagonal to each other. I don't care for that. What happens if I rotate the block on the right?

The seams will still nest! This is the benefit of spinning the seams on four-patches. Now, I have two identical fabrics separated only by a light square. That's still too close and I will choose a different block to put here.

When I put the new block in place, the seams will nest because I've made all of the blocks the same way and spun the seams.



I'll be back next month to show you how to cope with borders that don't fit.