

Block of the month... 2012 – 2013 ... It's a String Thing !!!

Surprise! We will be playing with string blocks for the next year!

String quilts have been around nearly as long as quilting. These simple stash busting blocks have so many possibilities. The popularity of these blocks has stood the test of time, and a quick internet search of “string quilts” will keep you mesmerized to your screen for hours looking at all the possibilities.

Stitching these blocks can be like potato chips... I bet you can't stitch just one! They are addicting. And I swear... the more I stitch, the more strings seem to appear in my string bins. (Probably because I'm stirring them up.)

String blocks can be stitched in a variety of ways... but we will do ours on paper foundations, so that the foundations can be torn off, rather than leaving the extra bulk of a muslin foundation. The **phone book** provides a great foundation. (And they are FREE! You probably have at least one or two in the bookshelf right now.) You can use the **deli wax sheets** that line sandwich platters. (Available at Costco or Cash N Carry.) There are also 9 x 12 **Doodle pads** at the Dollar Tree that have 60 sheets the paper is soft like a coloring book. (Available at the Dollar Tree for a dollar.) You may also have some old sewing patterns around, and the **tissue** works great.

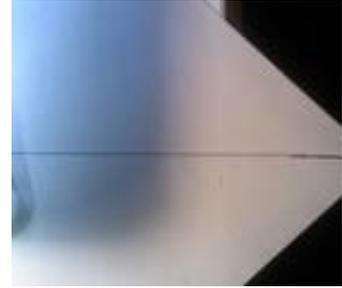
Note. Standard copy or typing paper can be used, but it doesn't tear off quit as easily as the above 4 choices. If you are determined to recycle what you have on hand, make sure you use a larger needle and a smaller stitch.

There are several wonderful tutorials (check out the links at the end of this sheet) on string piecing, but here are a few quick pointers to get you started.

- Use a size 14 or 16 needle and reduce the length of the stitch on your machine to about 1.5 mm. This will make the perforations on the paper both larger and closer together. The four papers recommended above will just about “POP” off if you bend the block and give a slight tug on each side of the seam.
- Start with a foundation paper slightly larger (1/2” in both directions) than your desired size.
- Press as you go! I work on about 10 blocks at a time, chain stitching both sides of my center ... and then I press. Your blocks really will lay better. If you find that your paper wants to curl, turn off the steam.
- Once your blocks are stitched and pressed, tear the paper off **BEFORE** you trim to the final size.
- Trim to size and then press again, using a starch or pressing spray such as Best Press.
- Vary the value and scale of the prints you use for best visual effect.
- Also vary the width of your strips. Keep the scale of your blocks in mind. For a block that will finish 9-12” square, a 2” strip is ok.... But you probably don't want to use all 2” strips on a 6” block, unless it's your center strip. (Then again, maybe that is the look you want.)
- I use a variety of widths that are anywhere from 3/4 “ to 1 3/4” wide.
- Your strings **DO NOT** have to be straight. They can be the uneven piece you trim when you get ready to rotary cut. Instead of trimming of just that 1/2” to square your piece.... Take it just a smidgeon further and give yourself a 3/4” string to play with from that fabric.
- Traditionally, the more fabrics in a block, the better it looks. Use lots of variety.
- **MOST OF ALL HAVE FUN AND RELAX!**

Basic Instructions:

1. Start with your foundation paper. If stitching diagonally, draw a line across the paper to give yourself a reference point.

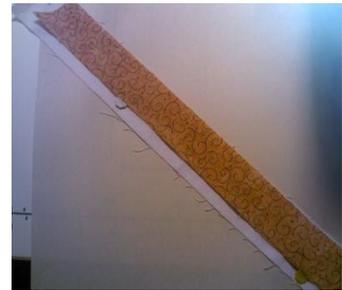


2. Lay your first string in the center of your block with the right side facing up. This is quite often on the diagonal. If you are afraid of it moving on you, you can use a pin or two to keep it in place until you stitch



Choose the string that will go next to the center.

3. Lay it right side down, aligning the edge with one of the edges of the center string. If using long strings, trim the string just past the edge of your foundation paper.



4. Stitch using a 1/4" seam. Open the fabrics apart exposing the right sides of both strings.



5. Finger press, flattening the strip down.



6. Repeat with another string on the other side of the center string. Before you start the next set of strips, press the strips out, making sure that they lay flat. A mini iron next to your machine works nicely, but I like to get up and give my legs a stretch and get a fresh glass of water.



7. Repeat, adding strings to the outside of the center until you are near the corner. This is where you can use some of those odd triangles that you trim off making snowball blocks or flip n fold segments.



8. Once your paper is completely covered, it will look like this from the back.

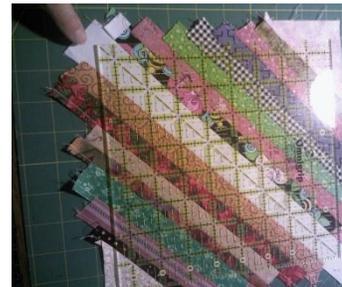


9. This is when I like to remove my paper. Give a gentle tug diagonally against the stitching. The paper should separate along the stitching lines. Pull the paper off in strips.

Now, give the block a good pressing, using a starch or pressing spray. (I like Best Press). Once the block has dried and cooled, it is ready for trimming.



10. Working from the right side of your block, line the diagonal line of your ruler on the center of the center accent strip. Trim the block to the desired size.



11. Here is your finished block. I like to give it a second good pressing being careful not to stretch it out of shape.

Again, a pressing spray or starch will help to stabilize the bias edges and keep your block true until you are ready to stitch your top together.

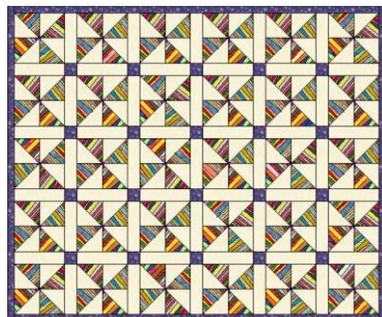
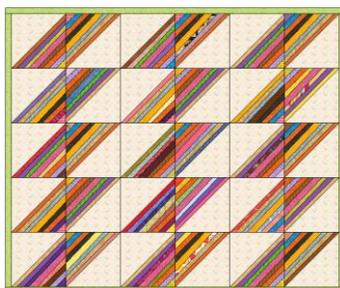


Here are just a few possible ways to use these blocks. Let your imagination run free. Most any setting that you can use for log cabin blocks works very well for string blocks.



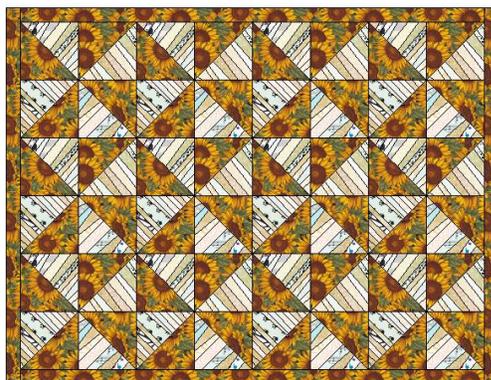
Here is just one possibility of what you can do with string pieced blocks if they are cut in half in the same direction of the strings..... Two blocks can be made from each string block.

Spin the solid parts around on every other block, and you create a chevron look.



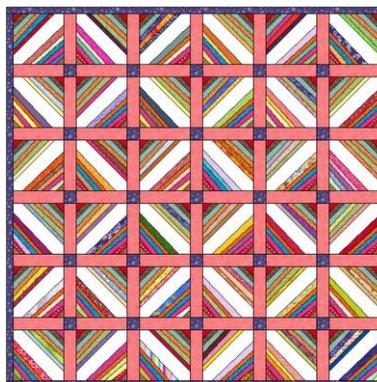
If the string blocks are cut in half across the strings, we can do something like this...

We can make the neutral part of the block the strings,
and use a beautiful focus fabric for the pinwheels



With a wide white center strip... a large X is formed, looking
something like this...

Add a sashing and it looks like this...



A narrow white strip takes a much different look....

And with some extra planning... it can look like this



Here is another setting option, using 2 color blocks...

Strings can also be found in other shapes than squares and triangles..... there are tumbling blocks, hearts, bow ties, spider webs, and string stars. Strings are also sometimes used in wonky log cabins.

References and Links:

[String Block tutorial here](#)

<http://www.quiltville.com/stringquiltingprimer.shtml>

http://quilting.about.com/od/quiltpatternsprojects/ss/string_piecing.htm

<http://www.with-heart-and-hands.com/2008/05/string-quilting.html>

<http://maryquilts.com/strings-heartstrings-red-centers/>

http://quilting.about.com/od/quiltpatternsprojects/ss/string_piecing_7.htm

<http://www.victorianaquiltdesigns.com/VictorianaQuilters/CharityQuilt/CharityQuilt.htm>

<http://www.quilterscache.com/C/ChineseCoinsBlock.html>

String Quilting Patterns:

[Amish Stripes and Strings Instruction Sheet \(PDF file\)](#)

[Click HERE to Download Happy String Flowers for Baby \(.pdf\)](#)

[Basketweave Strings](#)

[Bonnie's String Quilting Primer](#)

[Chinese Coins ~ Coins Border](#)

[Chinese Coins ~ Easy Version](#)

[Chinese Coins ~ Easy Version #2](#)

[Chinese Coins ~ Uneven Version](#)

[Kaleidoscope String Quilt Tutorial](#)

[HeartStrings Quilt As You Go Blocks](#)

[Lattice Quilt](#)

[Out on a String](#)

[Spiderweb Quilt](#)

for the instructions to [String Diamonds](#)

[String Quilts](#)

[String Tumblers](#)

[String Fish Aquarium](#)

[Strips & Strings Log Cabin](#)

[Strip Twist](#)

[Strings ~ Half Square Strings](#)

[Strings ~ Hearts](#)

[Strings ~ HeartStrings - Red Centers](#)

[Strings ~ HeartStrings Quilt](#)

[Strings ~ Patriotic Star](#)

[Strings ~ Purple Project Quilt #1](#)

[Strings ~ Purple Project Quilt #2](#)

[Strings ~ Rectangle Strings](#)

[Strings ~ RWB Coins](#)

[Strings ~ RWB HeartStrings Block](#)

[String-X](#)

[String Quilting](#)

[String Quilting: QuiltvilleString Spiderwebs](#)

[Strip Twist](#)

[Victoriana Quilters Free \(String Quilting\) Charity Quilt Pattern](#)

[Wonky RWB Rails \(PDF file\)](#)

*[Comfort Quilts](#)

*[String Pieced Prayer Pocket Pillow Tutorial](#)