

ENGLISH PAPER PIECING – GETTING STARTED

This is one technique for English paper piecing. There are other methods on the net, so do have a search and to find one that suits you.

SUPPLIES

MATERIALS

- scraps of fabric
- pieced paper templates
- coordinating thread
- contrasting thread [dayglo orange works great]

TOOLS

- hand-sewing needle
- scissors
- fabric pins [optional]
- rotary cutter and mat [optional]

Paper piecing can be done with almost any repeatable shape. Whenever a hexagon is referred to in these notes, you can substitute the shape you are using.

CUTTING YOUR TEMPLATES AND FABRIC

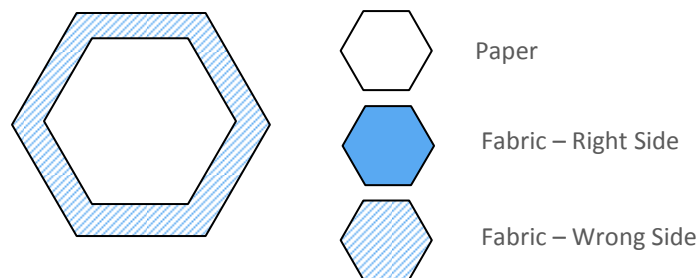
Begin by cutting out a few templates to get you started. If you are feeling lazy or want more accurate shapes, you can buy precut templates. Check your local fabric shop or look at Lizard of Oz, online.

For each petal, cut one small hexagon out of paper and one larger hexagon out of fabric. If you are using study paper for your templates, you may be able to reuse them.

BASTING YOUR HEXAGONS

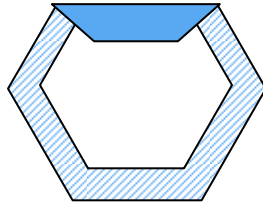
First, thread a needle with a long piece of contrasting thread. Secure the end with a quilter's knot. [Ask someone next to you to show you, if you haven't made a quilter's knot before. Once you learn, you'll never look back.]

Place the paper hexagon on the wrong side (back) of the fabric roughly centered. Optionally pin together in the center.

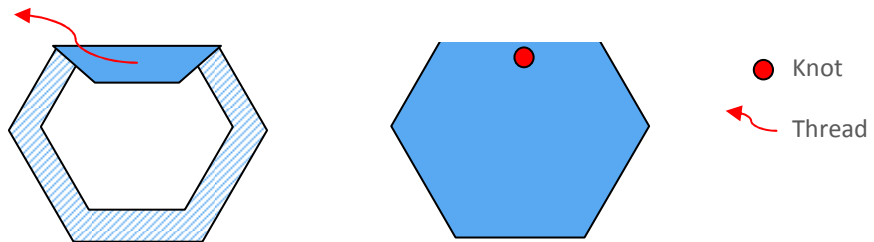


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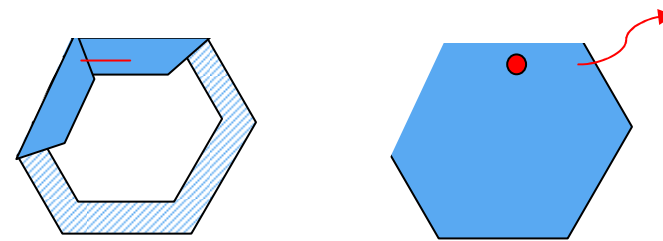
Begin by folding one edge of the fabric over the hexagon.



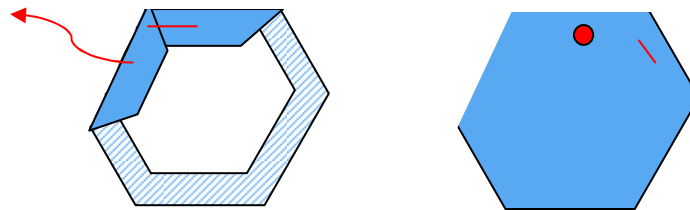
Then draw your needle from the front to the back of through both pieces of fabric in the center of your fold. Your knot should be on the front side of your hexagon.



Now fold over the next edge of the hexagon and pass your thread into the corner from the back side to the front leave a small thread across the back to help tack down the corner. These stitches do not need to be perfect. They will be removed later.



Continue to tack down the second side by pulling your needle from the front to the back in the center of the second section.



Continue around the hexagon in this manner until all sides are tacked down. When you get to the end, tie off the thread with a knot on the front side.



Congrats. You've prepped your first hexagon! Repeat this process to create a small stack of hexagons to work with to make your first flower.

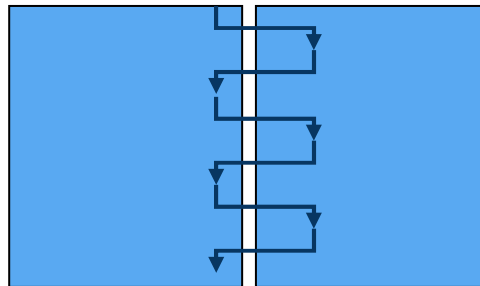
ATTACHING THE HEXAGONS

Next we are going to attach the hexagons. You can use either a whip stitch or a ladder stitch to do this. Traditionally, a whip stitch is used because it is faster and more secure, but I prefer a ladder stitch because it works up nicer with less visible threads. You can decide which you prefer. [These diagrams are pretty crap, so do ask, if you haven't done either stitch before.]

LADDER STITCH

The basic ladder stitch has you draw the thread from one side to the other. Each stitch is taken just under the surface before continuing to the other side

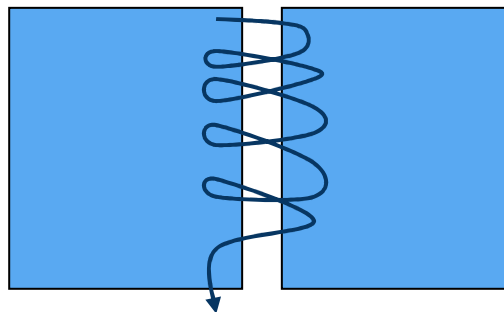
Ladder
Stitch



WHIP STITCH

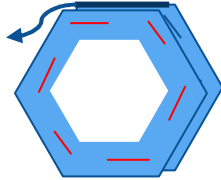
With a whip stitch, you work from one side to the other in a loop fashion. The stitches go from the top of one piece to the bottom over to the other side. Then you go from the bottom to the top to create small loops as you stitch.

Whip
Stitch

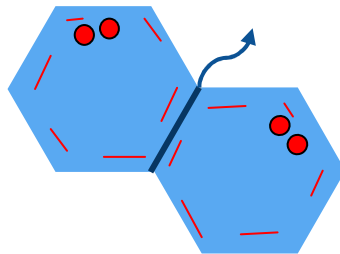


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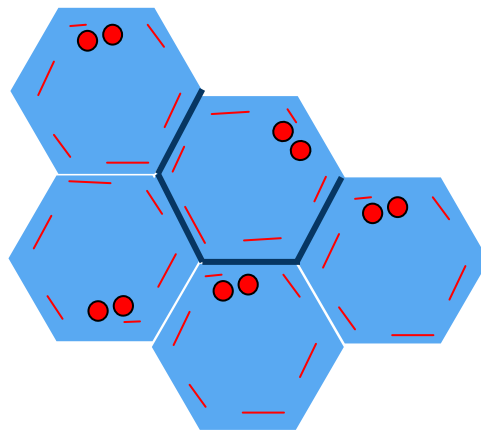
Start with two hexagons, holding them with right sides facing. We are now going to attach them together along the top edge using coordinating thread. I like the hide the quilters knot under the folded edge of the fabric. Using either a ladder stitch or whip stitch work across the top edge. Try to work in very tiny stitches.



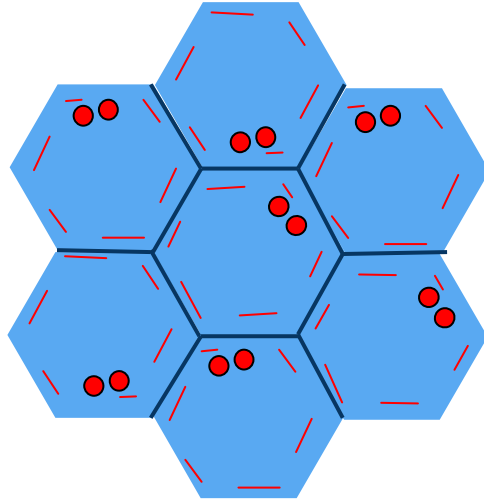
When you finished with the top edge you should be able to open the hexagons and have the thread dangling from one side.



Now continue adding hexagons in the same manor working your way around the first hexagon until you run out of thread. Secure with a knot. Do not worry if the radial spokes aren't yet connected. We'll come back and get those later.

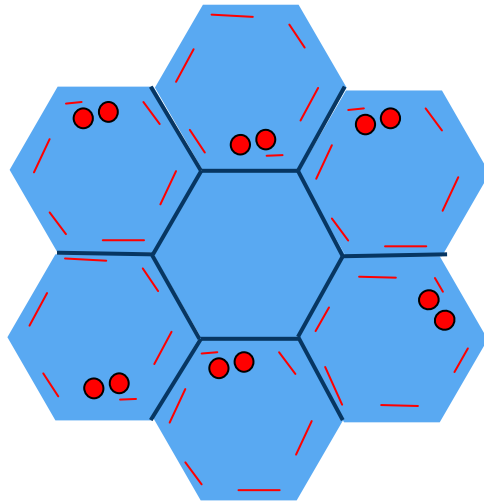


Using the same technique of having right sides facing, finish attaching all of the hexagons and edges. In some cases, you may need to fold a hexagon in half temporarily to help attach a nearby piece. Also fill in the spoke edges at this point. This may involve lots of knots and tying off of thread. If you prefer, you can avoid this by doubling back over the area that you've just worked. This takes longer, but reduces the number of knots used and makes for a sturdier quilt.

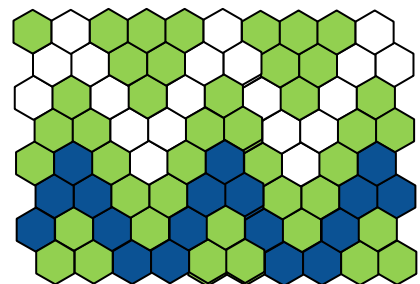
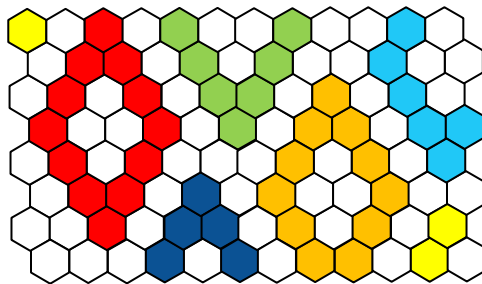
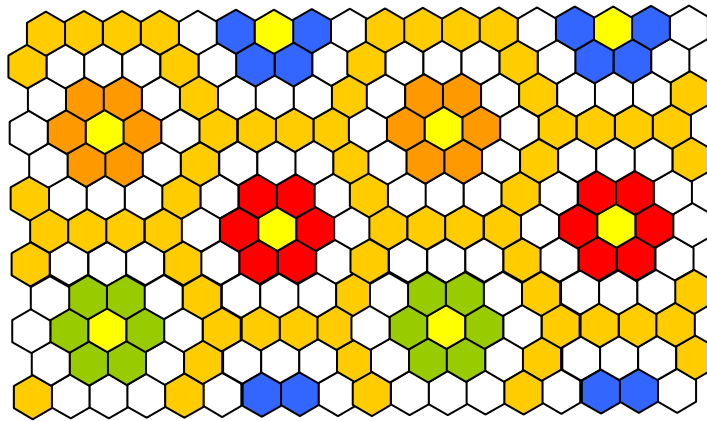
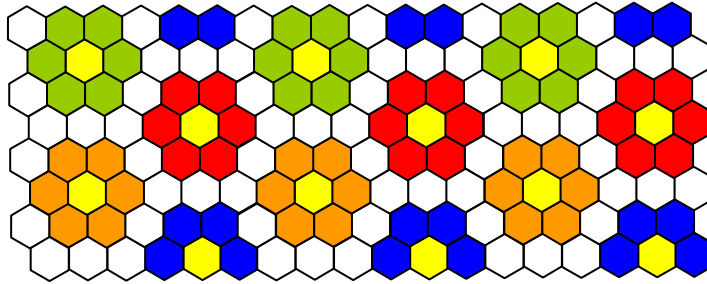


REMOVING THE PAPER

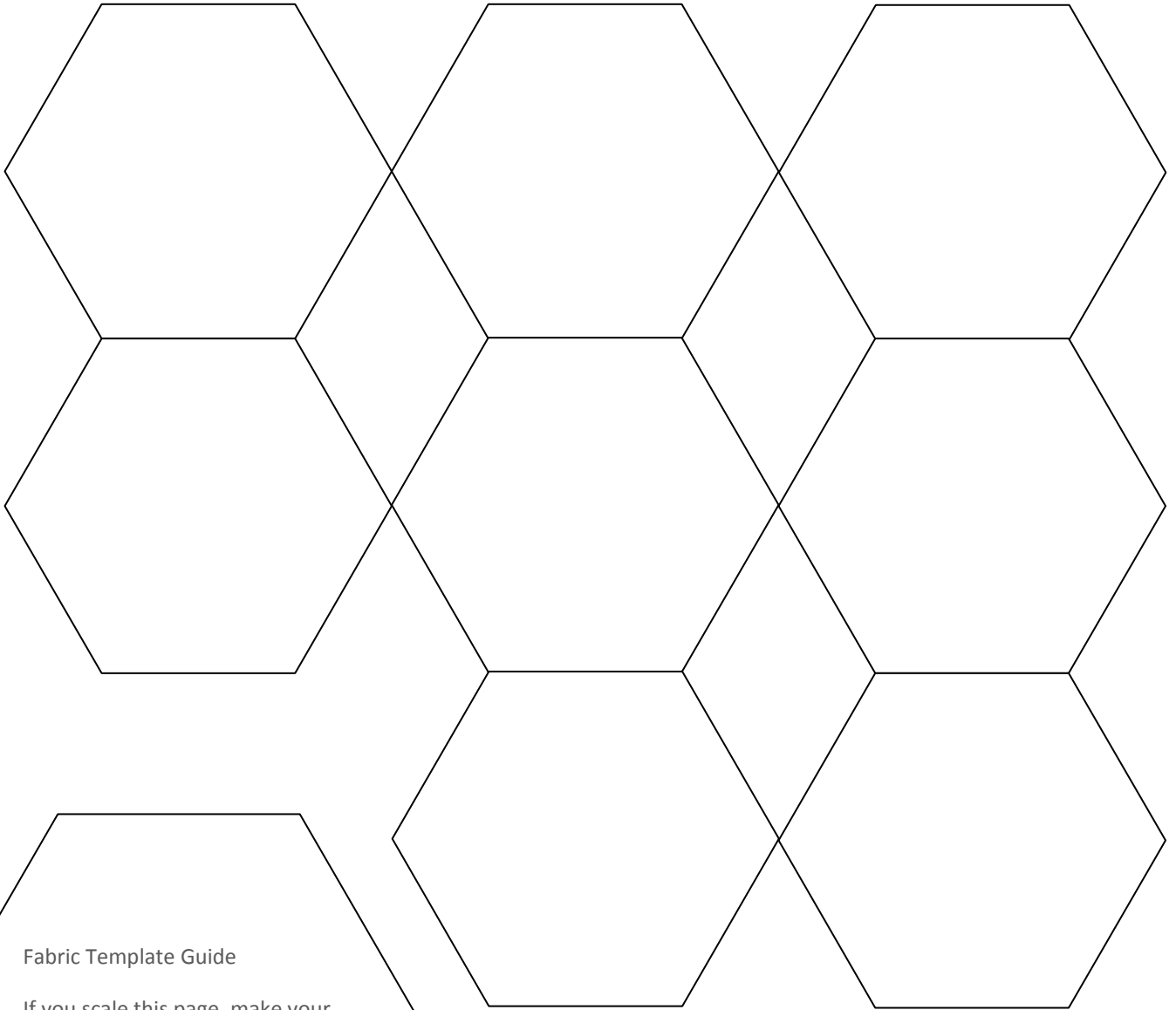
After a hexagon has six spokes and sides complete, you can remove the basting threads and paper. To do so, cut the front knots of the basting thread, and make a small snip halfway around the front. Gently pull these threads away which will free the paper from the back. I like to do this step in large patches at a time, as it becomes a big rhythmic to do.



Now that you have the hang of it, have a look around the net to decide what pattern you'd like to create or you can work randomly. I opted for the simple flowers below, but there are many possibilities.



Continue piecing hexagons in this manner until you've finished your quilt top. When you get near the edges you can decide if you want to appliqué your edges onto a border for a straight edge or continue with the hexagonal broken edge border which will be more tedious to bind, but retain the shape of the quilt.



Fabric Template Guide

If you scale this page, make your fabric at least $\frac{1}{4}$ " wider on each side than you paper template.

TEMPLATES FOR FLOWERS

You'll need 7 hexagons for a simple flower



TEMPLATES FOR A BALL

You'll need 12 pentagon to make a ball

