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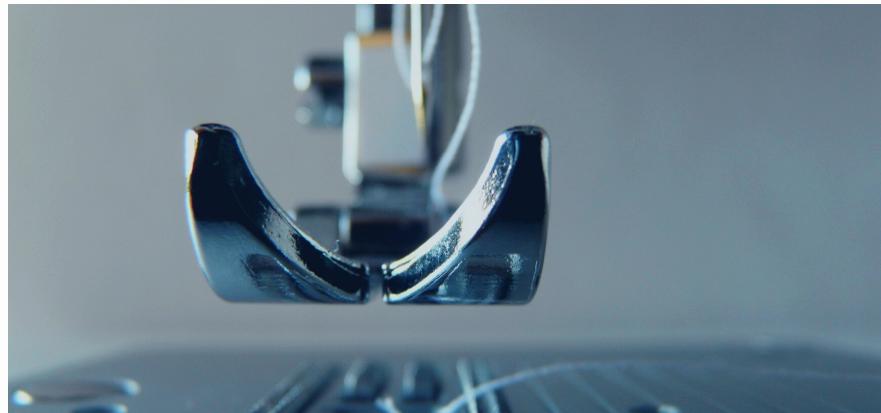
Hall County Quilters
Guild Newsletter

JUNE 2020

THE HCQG EXECUTIVE BOARD HAS MADE THE DECISION TO CANCEL ALL GUILD ACTIVITIES UNTIL JULY AT LEAST. THIS INCLUDES OUR JUNE GUILD MEETING. THERE WILL ALSO BE NO PROJECT DAYS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

At this time the Board is waiting on word from the church about when they will reopen. Board will be meeting mid June to discuss when our next meeting might be.

In the meantime here is a whole newsletter on English paper piecing. Enjoy! Happy sewing! Miss you. Hope to see you all soon!



The History of English Paper Piecing

English Paper Piecing (EPP) is a trend in modern quilting that shows no signs of abating, yet its origins go back centuries, transcending time and cultures. Given its popularity today, I wanted to explore its roots, understand more about how the technique came about, and who the early quilters were who made quilts in this way. I invite you to come on this historical journey with me! This is the first in a series of articles, exploring the history of EPP and then looking at how it's evolved to become a method that we know and love in modern quilting today. Finally, I shall be considering how hand stitching can be a form of therapy and mindfulness, enabling us to slow down and stitch slowly as an antidote to our often very busy lives.



What is English Paper Piecing?

What I have learned already from my research is that EPP is also referred to as mosaic patchwork. A fabric that's a quarter inch bigger is wrapped around a paper template by tacking/basting down and then oversewing or whipstitching the shapes together by hand. Once the quilt top is complete the papers are then removed. Initially, English paper pieced designs primarily featured squares and half square triangles, but in around 1790, geometric shapes such as hexagons, octagons, and diamonds started to appear. This method was popular because it allowed for greater accuracy than regular piecing and these shapes tessellate beautifully, often creating intricate and secondary patterns. For this reason, many of these shapes are still used today.



English Paper Pieced Hexagons

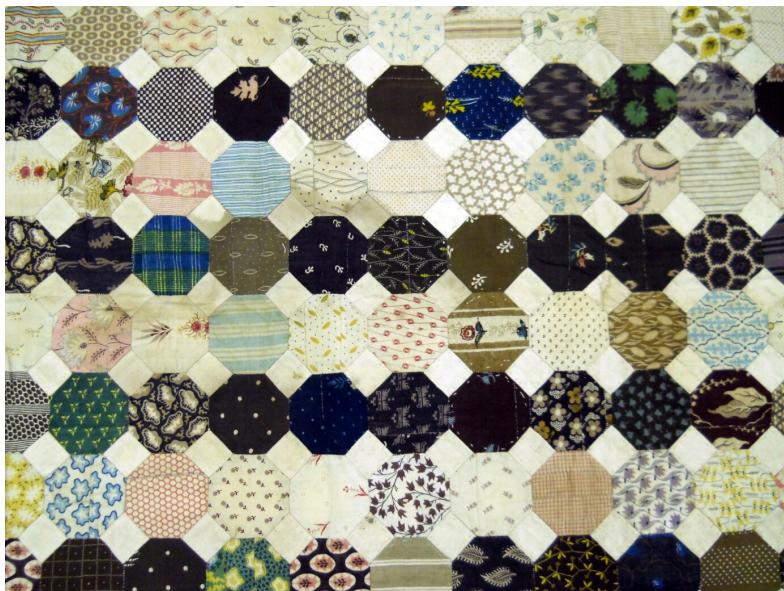
It's the hexagon shape that's been predominantly used throughout the centuries. EPP was popular throughout Europe and specifically England, and it became exceptionally popular in the USA towards the late 18th Century when anything English was thought to be highly fashionable. Even today, the ubiquitous hexagon is usually the starting point for many quilters embarking on their EPP journey.

The earliest known American made hexagon quilt is dated 1807 while the oldest coverlet to include English Paper Piecing is the 1718 Coverlet, which is the earliest patchwork in the UK Quilters' Guild collection. This beautiful silk coverlet contains several geometric blocks that are paper pieced, allowing for greater accuracy and precision amongst the detailed appliquéd motifs. Although the maker of this quilt is unknown, the maker has stitched her initials EH into the piece but her identity still remains a mystery, the use of expensive papers in this quilt tells us that the family were of a good social position, and that there was a lot of leisure time for honing skills, as the quilt is pieced accurately and with 15-20 stitches per inch. While as far as we know this is the oldest coverlet using this technique, there are likely to be many more earlier undated examples, which may not have survived to today.



Who made English Paper Pieced quilts?

But who were these quilters who used these methods to make such accomplished pieces? Usefully, as with the 1718 Coverlet, many EPP quilts maintained their papers, either as a way of providing an additional layer of insulation or because the quilt top remained unfinished and they had yet to be removed. The paper was often recycled, sometimes from a letter, poem, shopping list, newspaper, or children's handwriting practice, helpfully providing many clues as to the background of the quilt maker, her family, how wealthy, travelled, and stylish she may have been. There are also clues in the fabric; often velvets, upholstery fabrics, silks and dress cottons were used, taken from a fabric stash that may span years or even decades. This suggests that patchwork was a fashionable pursuit for the ladies of the gentry and upper middle classes in the eighteenth century. This is contrary to many beliefs that quilts were made for utility and practicality. Although this was often the case, EPP in particular was more of a leisure activity due to the time it took and the complexity of the geometric shapes.



How did English Paper Piecing spread around the world and gain in popularity?

In the first half of the nineteenth century, EPP quickly spread as people started traveling more. As British officials began taking their families to the colonies, the quilts went with them and the women not only were able to feel a connection with home through their craft, but would be able to teach their skills to new audiences. In 1835, Godey's Lady's Book published a Honeycomb quilt design and this is thought to be the first pieced quilt pattern published in America. The article boldly proclaimed "Perhaps there is not patchwork that is prettier or more ingenious...than the hexagon or six sided: this is also called the honey-comb patchwork." The English loving American's loved to emulate English culture, and so this technique and pattern, now in a mainstream periodical of the time, became very popular.

It wasn't long before a pattern called the Grandmother's Flower Garden emerged, which comprises of colours arranged in flower shapes, made from several rows of hexagon, with a solid 'garden path' border of white or green running between them. This has become one of the most easily recognisable patterns, and grew in popularity in the 1920s and 1930s most likely because it can easily be made with scraps, which was such an important factor during the Depression era. Even today this is a popular pattern, not only because it is so pretty but simple in design and construction, but perhaps because it is a connection with quilters of the past, who also gained great pleasure from such a simple yet pleasing design.



English Paper Piecing Templates

One thing we take for granted when we work on an EPP piece is the easy access to templates in so many wonderful shapes and sizes, allowing for greater accuracy and precision. So often these templates are free with magazines, or can be purchased inexpensively, often with a choice of sizes to choose from. Nineteenth-century templates were cut from oak, tin, and card; others were made from zinc, pewter, silver, brass, and copper. These were often homemade by the men of the household, and although it may seem archaic compared to todays acrylic and plastic templates, brass and copper were excellent choices because they are so hard wearing and durable.

We also enjoy ready availability of pre-cut papers that we baste our fabrics to. Again, these are often free with magazines, can be readily purchased or even printed from a home computer or cut with a home laser cutter. No such luxuries existed in the past, and although there is no record of when papers first began to be used, there have not been any examples of English paper piecing dating earlier than 1700. Templates had to be made by hand, using a pair of compasses and a protractor, with precision being the key. I'm not sure many quilters would relish the prospect of having to do this today!

So there we have it. We call ourselves modern quilters, yet we are using the exact techniques that quilters were using centuries ago. What makes us 'modern?' That's a debate for another time. What we do know is that through English Paper Piecing we are honouring those who came before us, and that we are still finding joy, creativity, and solace through slow mindful stitching, exactly as quilters did then.

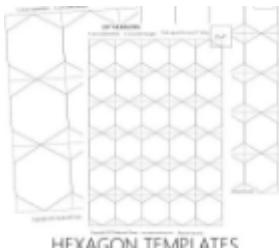
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- www.womanfolk.com
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Article and Photos by Sarah Ashford

<https://community.themodernquiltguild.com/resources/history-english-paper-piecing>

Click here for printable templates



Hexagon Templates Set of 10 - English Paper Piecing

You will find 10 different sizes of printable hexagon templates. These templates are...

[Patchwork Posse](#) / \$2

Got fabric scraps? Get quilting!

Before you get started, you should know that making one hexie may lead to a serious hexie addiction. Don't say I didn't warn you.

Supplies:

English Paper Piecing 1" Hexagon Template PDF,
printed on cardstock at actual size (full scale) or hand trace on cereal box

Cotton fabric scraps or fat quarters, two contrasting prints or colors
Hand quilting thread, a color that will blend in with your fabrics
Glue stick

Tools:

Fabric scissors
Hand quilting needle
Paper scissors

Before you begin:

Print the English Paper Piecing 1" Hexagon Template PDF at full scale on cardstock, then carefully cut out the individual hexagon shapes.



Tutorial: English Paper Piecing, Hexies Part 1

Step 1

Apply a small smear of glue to the back of a hexagon template.



Step 2

Press the template in place (glue side down) on the wrong side of the fabric, centering it on the part of the pattern that you would like to display on your hexagon.



Step 3

Use your fabric scissors to cut the fabric out around the template, leaving a $\frac{1}{4}$ " to a $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance around the template.

Step 4

Fold the fabric snuggly over one edge of the template and finger press the crease.



Step 5

Fold the fabric over the next edge, creating a nice sharp corner where the two sides meet. Finger press this crease too.

Step 6

Thread your needle and knot off the end, then insert the threaded needle into the folded edge of the fabric on both sides of the corner, just below the point. Take care NOT to sew through the hexagon template.

Step 7

Pull the thread through the fabric until you reach the knot at the end, then reinsert the needle into the same place in the fabric.

Step 8

Pull the thread all the way through the fabric one more time, completing the stitch and securing the corner.

Note: These are basting stitches that are used to hold the fabric in the correct shape around the template as you sew. The stitches do not need to be deep or large, and you should never sew into or through the paper template. In most cases, the stitches—along with the paper hexagon template—will be removed once a project has been pieced together. (That said, if the fabric is thick enough that the stitches aren't visible in your finished project, you can just leave them in. It'll be our little secret.)

Step 9

Fold the fabric over the next edge and secure the next corner by following the instructions above.



Step 10

Continue folding the fabric over the template and placing stitches at the corners until all of the corners have been secured in place.

Step 11

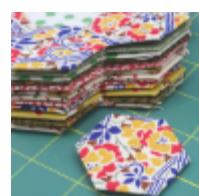
When you get back around to the first edge that you folded, bring the needle through the center of the folded fabric and clip the thread, leaving a short tail.

Step 12

Inspect your finished hexagon to make sure that the edges are straight, the fabric is stretched evenly, and the corners are sharp.

To prepare for part 2 of this tutorial, follow the steps above to make a total of 6 hexagons in the first fabric pattern/color and one hexagon in the second fabric pattern/color.

In the next post in my English paper piecing series, I'll show you how to join the hexagons together to create a quilt block or a geometric pattern!



Tutorial: English Paper Piecing, Hexies Part 1

redhandledscissors.com

Tutorial: English Paper Piecing, Hexies Part 2

Step 1

Gather six basted hexagons in one fabric color/pattern and one basted hexagon in a contrasting color/pattern, then choose hand quilting thread in a color that will blend in well with both.

Step 2

Select both the contrasting hexagon and one of the other six hexagons.

Step 3

Press the two hexagons together with right sides facing, making sure that all of the corners line up.

Step 4

Thread your needle and knot off one end. With the two hexagons pressed together, insert the needle carefully into the point of one corner, piercing both hexagons in the same place. Pull the thread all the way through to the knot to complete the stitch.

Note: Just like when we were basting the hexagons in part 1, you should never sew through the paper template while joining the hexagons. Instead, carefully insert the needle into the fabric, then, if needed, gently feel around for the edge of the template with the tip of the needle before stitching.

Step 5

The two hexagons will be joined along one edge using very small whipstitches. After making the first stitch in the corner, move the needle over about $\frac{1}{8}$ " and insert it carefully into fabric along the edge, sewing through both hexagons but not the paper template.

Note: Keep holding the sandwiched hexagons in the same position as you stitch, always inserting the needle into the top of the stacked pieces and pulling it out through the bottom. This will wrap the stitches around the edge, joining the hexagons and creating a secure seam. For best results, the stitches should be spaced $\frac{1}{8}$ " or less apart.



Step 6

Continue whipstitching along the full length of the edge.

Step 7

When you reach the next corner, put a neat stitch through the points, securing the corners of the two hexagons together, then knot off.

When you're finished, your two hexagons should be securely joined along one edge and the corners at each end of that edge should be neatly aligned.

You now have the center of the flower with one attached petal.

Step 8

Now it's time to add another petal to the center. To do this, select the second of your six hexagons, then place it on top of the center (contrasting) hexagon with right sides facing, making sure that all of the corners line up.

Thread your needle and knot off the end. Then, starting in the same corner where you knotted off in step 7, insert the needle into the corner of the new petal, then carefully stitch down into the same hole that you made when joining the corners of the first petal and the center hexagon. Pull the thread all the way through to complete the stitch.

Step 9

Just like in step 6, whipstitch all the way along the full length of the edge, joining the second petal to the center hexagon. To avoid confusion, your stitches should be worked in the direction that moves away from the first petal.

Once you reach the next corner, connect the points with a final stitch, then knot off.

If you lay the hexagons flat, you should now have two petals joined to the center piece.



Step 10

Continue joining petals to the center hexagon until you've attached a petal to all six edges.

Step 11

Next, we'll join the side edges of the petals to one another to create one solid quilt block.

To start, with right sides facing, pinch two petals together with your fingers or a clip, aligning the corners. (It's okay if you need to fold the paper template in the center hexagon to get the corners to line up.) Then, just like in previous steps, insert your threaded needle into the corner points (start with the points farthest from the center) and stitch through both hexagons.

Step 12

Whipstitch the two petals together along the length of the edge, working toward the center. When the center is reached, neatly stitch through all three of the corner points, connecting the seam between the two petals with the center hexagon. Knot off. (Joining the points at the center can be a little bit tricky at first, but it gets much easier with practice. Cut yourself some slack on the first few tries!)

Step 13

Continue joining the side seams of the petals together, working your way all the way around the quilt block. To finish, snip away any excess lengths of thread from the knotted areas.

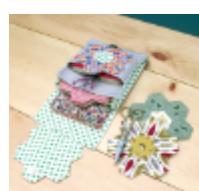
Step 14

In the final part of this hexie series, we'll be putting our finished quilt blocks to work in a portable hexagon sewing kit project. (Squeee!) To get ready for part 3, you'll need two completed flower-shaped quilt blocks.



Tutorial: English Paper Piecing, Hexies Part 2

redhandledscissors.com



Tutorial: English Paper Piecing Travel Kit, Hexies Part 3

redhandledscissors.com