

# CABIN FEVER:

## PIECING IN THE HOOP

BY LINDEE GOODALL

**P**iecing in the hoop replicates the process of foundation piecing, also known as paper piecing. If you've done foundation piecing with the sewing machine, you will immediately grasp the concept. While a little more intensive than regular embroidery, this technique really only requires attention to detail.

Use the patterns to pre-cut all your pieces. You can spray templates with TESA or print on fusible paper and apply to the **front** of your fabric pieces for cutting. Be sure to keep the pattern piece attached until ready to place the fabric in the hoop to avoid using the wrong piece.

### SKILL LEVEL

Basic embroidery and rotary cutting skills



*These designs are sized for a finished block size of 5" (design size is 5.5" to allow for seam allowances). Designs should be easily scalable for larger or smaller hoops using appropriate software. If you are shrinking the block, select blocks with fewer small pieces for best results. Keep in mind that the pattern pieces will no longer be accurate and adjust accordingly.*

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Suitable fabrics for blocks, pre-washed and pressed (Tip: If fabrics are especially soft, starching can reduce distortion when stitching.)
- Printed block pattern and templates
- Rotary cutter, quilting ruler and mat
- TESA (Temporary embroidery spray adhesive) or water soluble fabric glue stick
- Stabilizer (heat fusible tearaway works well)
- Appliqué tacking iron
- Regular sewing thread in needle and bobbin in a color that coordinates or blends with your fabrics
- Double curve appliqué scissors
- An embroidery machine with a minimum sewing field of 5.75" x 5.75" for the blocks

# Piecing in the Hoop

## WHAT'S INCLUDED WITH THE COLLECTION

- Twenty designs digitized for piecing in the hoop (18 blocks and 2 borders)
- Full size patterns and templates for each block
- Color sequence PDF with images of sample blocks
- This instructional PDF

## PRELIMINARY NOTES

If you've done foundation or paper piecing, you'll notice there are a few variations:

1. In paper piecing, fabric is applied to the back side of the printed pattern and the sewing is done on the printed side. When embroidering pieced blocks, all sewing is done from the fabric side.
2. In paper piecing, excess fabric is trimmed off as you go by folding back the pattern and rotary cutting. When embroidering pieced blocks, excess fabric is trimmed off as you go with double-curved appliqué scissors.

## PREPARATION

1. Open the corresponding design PDF in Acrobat and print the full size pattern and corresponding pattern templates. **Make sure Acrobat does not scale the pattern.** For your convenience, a 1" square is printed on the first page of each block's templates for easy verification.

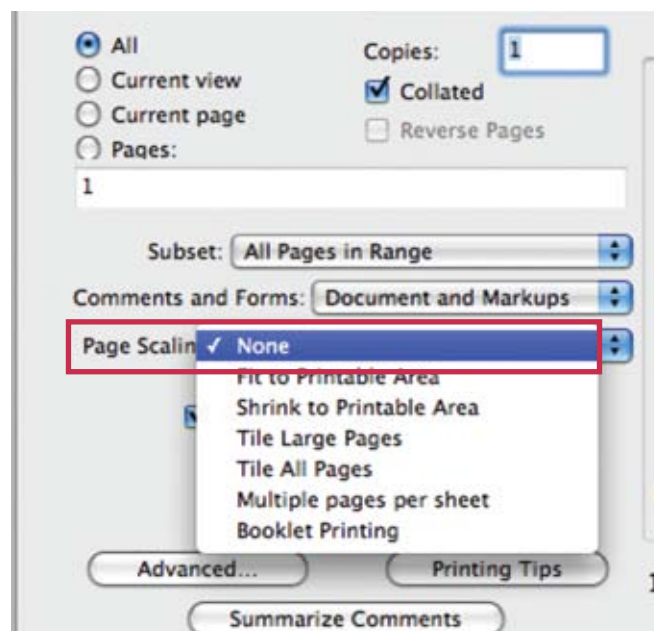
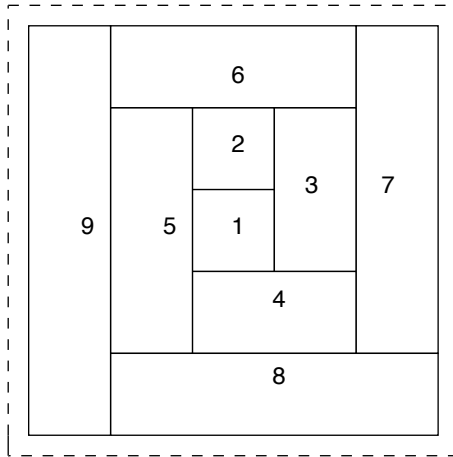
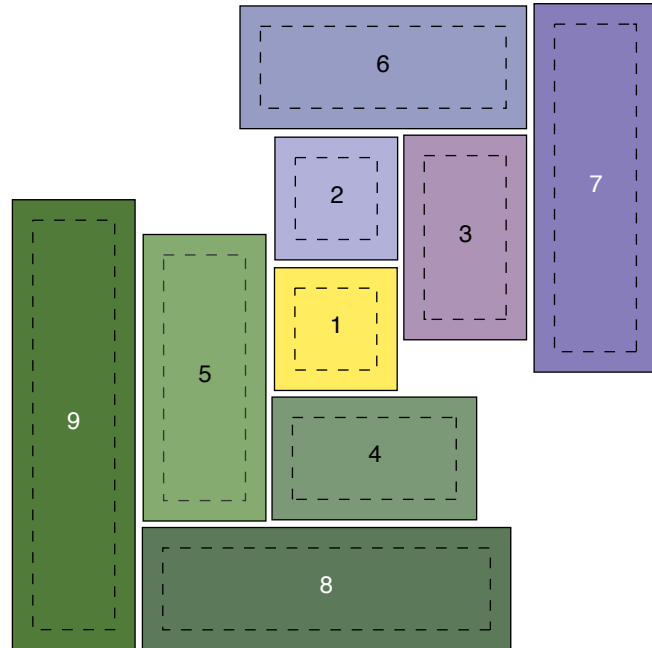


Figure 1. For accurate templates, make sure scaling is set to None.

2. Use the pattern to plan your design layout. You may want to cut your fabric pieces slightly larger than the actual pattern pieces. The numbered pattern will show you the order the pieces will be sewn. The stitching line is the line between the two pieces being sewn.



**Figure 2.** After cutting the pieces, I find it helpful to organize them according to their position in the finished block.



3. Hoop the stabilizer, fusible side up.

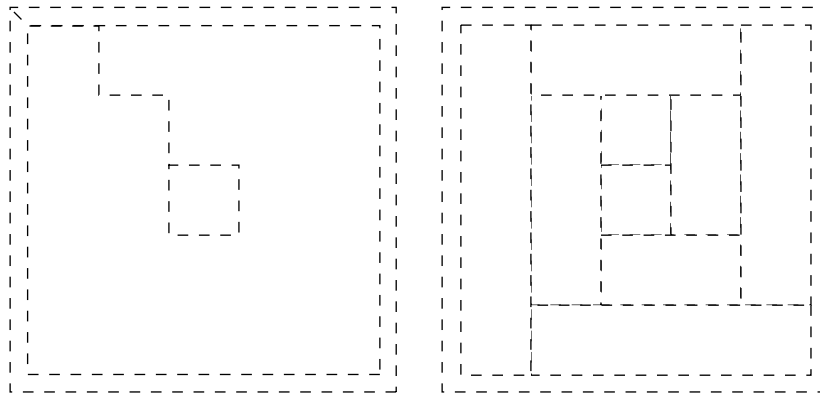
Using a fusible stabilizer with an appliqué tacking iron will let you avoid using spray adhesives. If you need a more permanent stabilizer, I recommend a no-show mesh cutaway. Using a cutaway will stabilize the block in the event you are using fabrics cut off grain or that are otherwise less stable or sturdy. A no show mesh is thin enough not to add excess bulk to the overall block's seam allowances. If you choose to use a water soluble, use a fiber based stabilizer and not a film. These designs have shorter stitches intended to make removing tearaway easier and a film will fall apart during the sewing process.

4. These designs are generally set up as 3 color designs. Color 1 sews the outer cutting line, the finished block seam line, and the outline of the first piece. Color 2 sews the outline of the rest of the blocks. This was set as a separate color change to allow more design flexibility in case you want to skip this color. The third color is the rest of the design with a stop placed after each piece placement. These stops will appear as color changes in non-native (stitch) file formats. The entire design can be sewn in one color; choose one that you would use for the seams if you were piecing the designs traditionally. Because you're sewing seams, you should choose construction thread instead of embroidery thread.

# Piecing in the Hoop

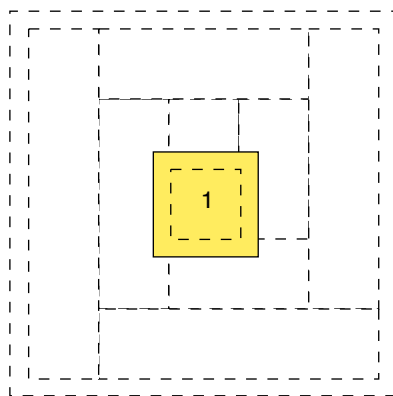
## AT THE MACHINE

5. Sew colors 1 and 2 directly onto the stabilizer. The outlines sewn represent the **seam lines, not the fabric edges**. When placing fabric pieces, keep this in mind to avoid any gaps or inadequate seam allowance which could ravel out. When using standard quilt weight fabrics, you can feel these stitched seam lines through the fabrics for placement.

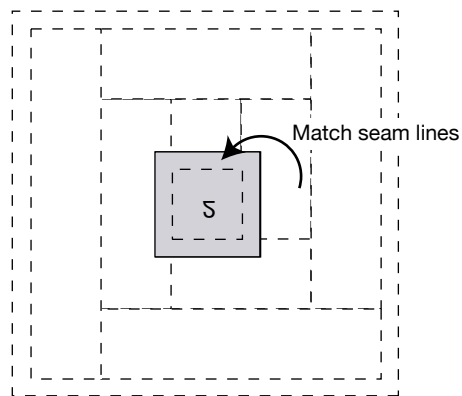


**Figure 3.** Left, shows the design after color 1 and right, shows the design after color 2. In the event that you don't want the extra stitching for the seam guidelines, skip color 2 at the machine.

6. Align the first fabric piece face up. You may wish to use the appliqué tacking iron to lightly fuse it into position. Place the second one face down aligning the fabric seam lines over the stitched outline. With most cotton fabrics, the pieces will stay in position as you sew without any need for adhesives. In many cases, you can place the fabric without removing the hoop from the machine.

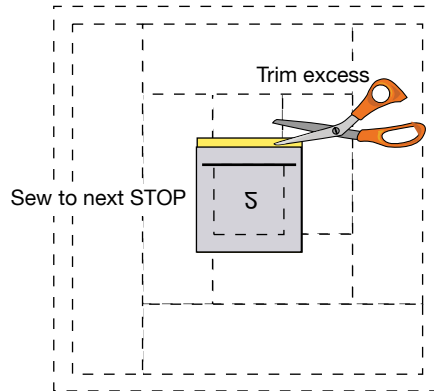


**Figure 4.** Position the first piece RIGHT SIDE UP, aligning seam lines (dotted lines on colored pieces for illustration purposes only)

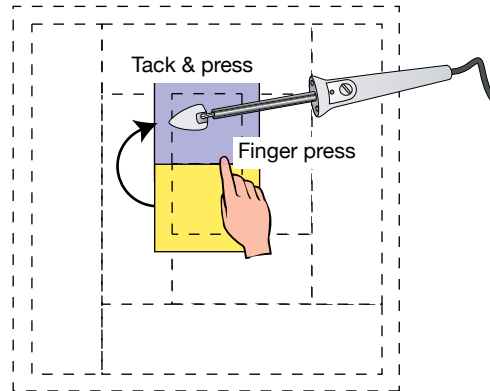


**Figure 5.** Place the second piece (and all subsequent pieces) RIGHT SIDE DOWN matching seam lines (not necessarily raw edges).

7. Sew the next color. Trim off any excess seam allowance to 1/4" using the double curve applique scissors. Fold open the top piece and finger press the seam open. Use the applique tacking iron to further press the seam and lightly tack it to the fusible backing.

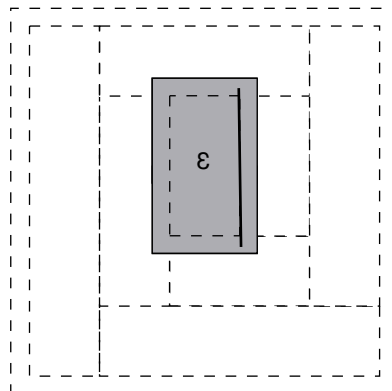


**Figure 6.** Sew the next color stop, which stitches the seam. Trim off any excess fabric with double curve applique scissors.

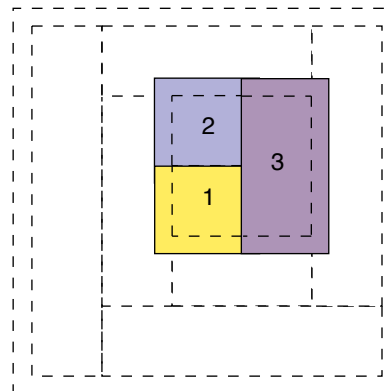


**Figure 7.** Flip open, finger press the seam, and then press with the applique tacking iron.

8. All remaining pieces are sewn in order, placing them face down, sewing the seam, trimming the seam allowance and pressing open. Remember to use the stitched line as your guide and not the edge of the previous piece. Accurate placement is the key to adequate seam allowances on all sides of each placed piece.



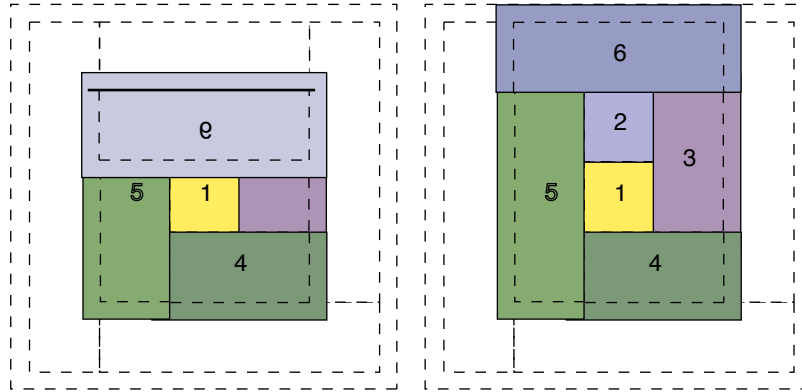
**Figure 8.** Place and stitch the next piece.



**Figure 9.** Press open. Make sure each new piece extends adequately beyond the seam lines on all exposed sides.

## Piecing in the Hoop

9. When placing pieces along the outer edge of the block, make sure the fabric will extend to the outer cutting line or slightly beyond. Having a little excess on these outer pieces is a good idea.



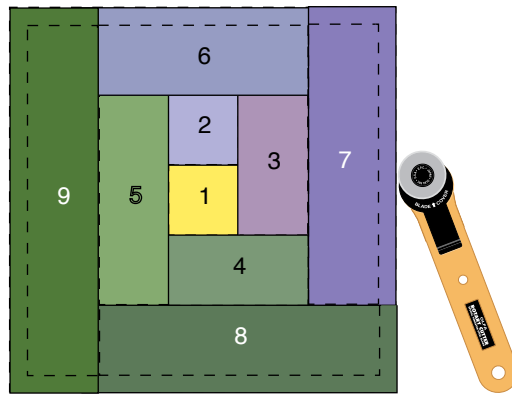
**Figure 10.** The outer edge pieces must extend to the outer stitching line to ensure a quarter inch seam allowance.

10. When the design is complete, remove from hoop, place face down on a cutting mat and trim off excess with a rotary cutter and remove the stabilizer.



*If you sized the block design, use the finished block seam allowance stitch line as a reference to cut a quarter inch seam allowance instead of the outer cutting line.*

As with standard foundation piecing, stitch length was shortened to increase perforations to permit easier removal of the stabilizer.



**Figure 11.** After removing the finished block from the hoop, use a rotary cutter to square up and trim off any excess fabric along the outer edges of the block

11. Continue making blocks as required for your project. Assemble blocks using traditional machine piecing techniques.

### SUMMARY

Piecing in the hoop produces a highly consistent and accurate result provided you follow the steps precisely!

