

English Paper Piecing

By Kelly Lock

History

English Paper Piecing is a patchwork technique that uses paper shapes (cut to exactly the correct size), basting fabric onto them, before piecing them together by hand. The earliest quilt that has been found to use this technique is from the 1770's, and afterwards this method of construction continued to increase in popularity. Godey's Ladies Book published the first hexagon pattern, complete with instructions, in 1835 for use for ladies at home.

As paper was often in short supply, women often reused paper from around the house. Paper is generally removed from the quilt once the patchwork is completed, however there are many historical examples where the paper remains, and this has made it easier to date these examples from the paper.

Jane Austen, her sister Cassandra, and her mother made a quilt together using the English paper piecing technique. Jane mentions it in a letter to Cassandra in 1811, "have you remembered the pieces for the Patchwork? – we are now at a standstill." The quilt is made from a variety of printed cotton chintz fabrics, and is now on display at Chawton.

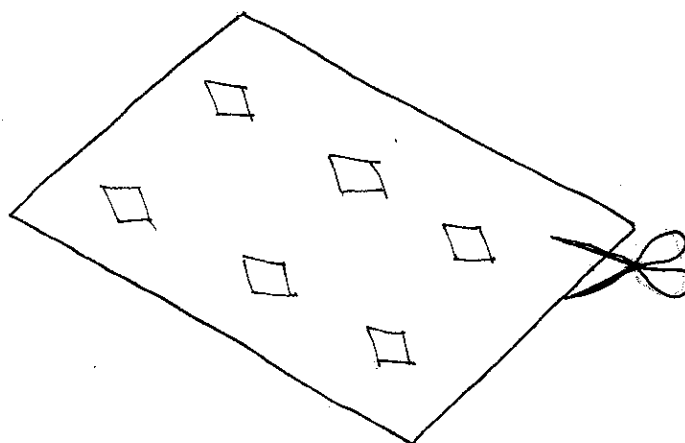
Materials:

Cotton fabric (different colour fat quarters)
Matching cotton thread
Paper shapes
Basic sewing kit (scissors, pins, thread, etc...)

Construction Steps:

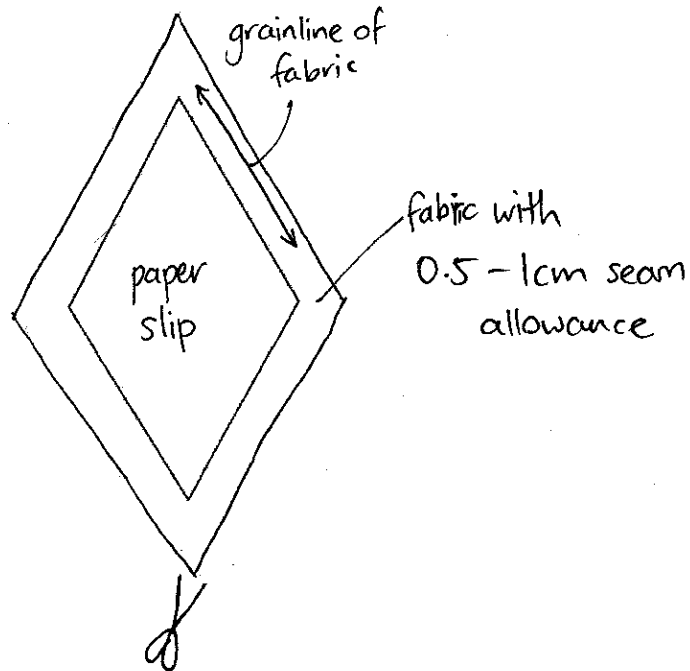
Step 1: Paper pieces

- Make sure you have your paper shapes handy. There are a variety that can be useful, including diamonds, hexagons, triangles and squares.
- If you have not purchased any, print off the paper shapes that are attached here.



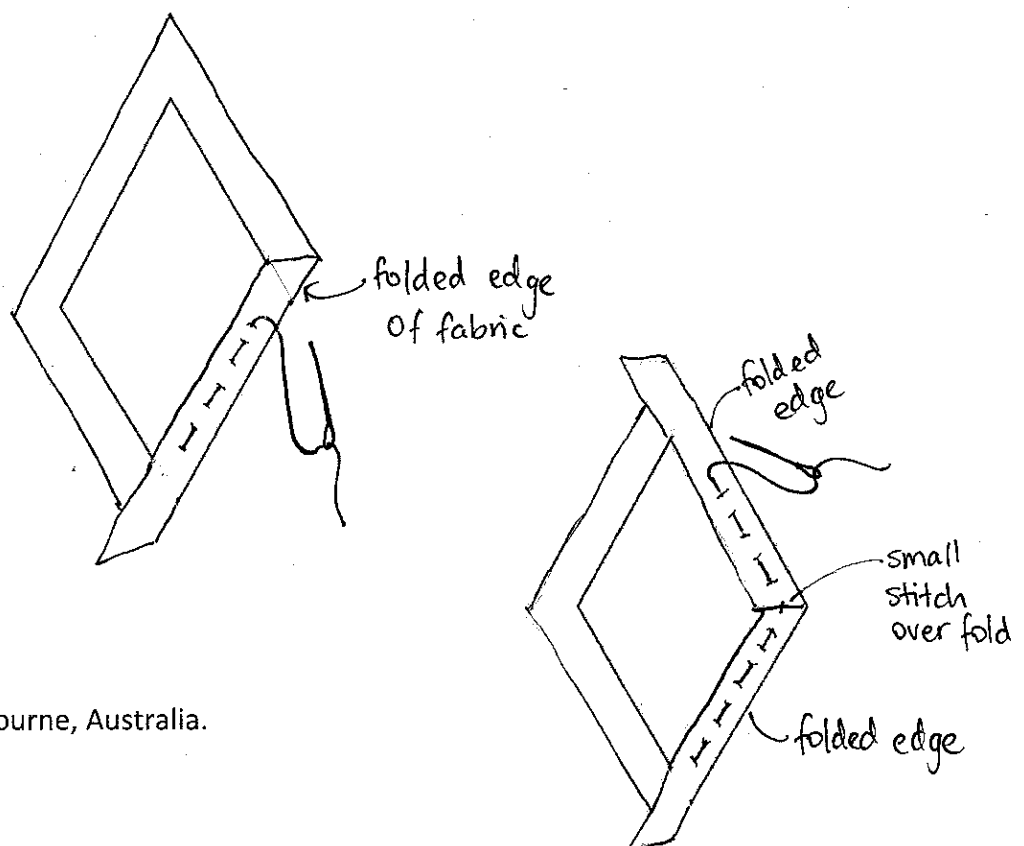
Step 2: Fabric Pieces

- Cut out your fabric, using your shapes to guide you.
- Make sure that you align one of your straight edges with the grainline.
- You also need to allow a 1cm seam allowance to fold over the edge of the paper.



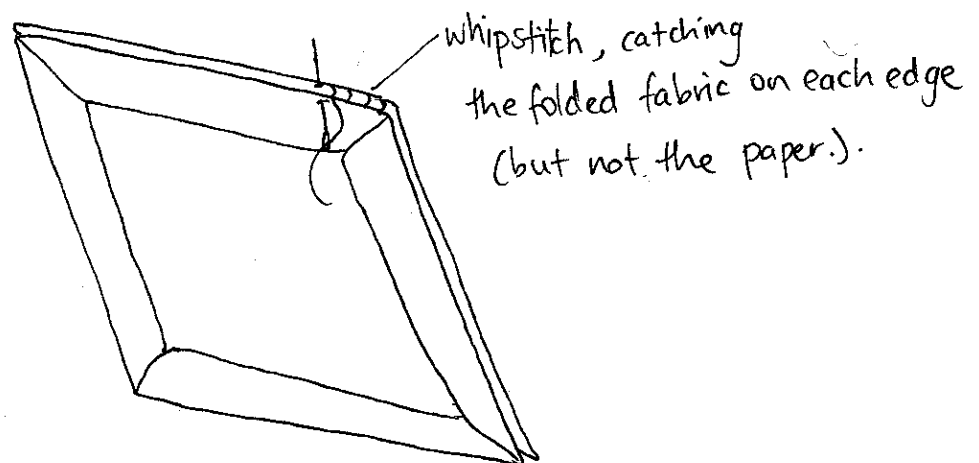
Step 3: Wrap paper in fabric

- Taking one piece of fabric, wrap the seam allowances around the edges of a piece of paper.
- Pin the seam allowance in place, through all layers, and then sew a running stitch around the shape to hold the seam allowance in place.
- Repeat this for all pieces of fabric.



Step 4: Sew together

- Take your fabric-covered paper pieces and hold them right sides together, with one straight edge matching.
- Sew a whipstitch along the folded edge.
- Sew all of your pieces together to form your project.



If you would like some easy projects to make using this technique, check out the resources list below.

Resources:

Tutorial: Guide to English Paper Piecing

<http://www.aqsblog.com/free-tutorial-epp-and-me-a-guide-to-english-paper-piecing>

Jane Austen's Quilt:

<https://janeausten.co.uk/blogs/uncategorized/jane-austens-quilt>

15 English Paper Piecing Patterns Perfect for Beginners:

<https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/english-paper-piecing-patterns-for-beginners-4628383>

