

Diamonds and Rails

Block size is 10 inches (10.5 with seam allowances)
Quilt size is 50 x 70 which puts it at my typical donation size



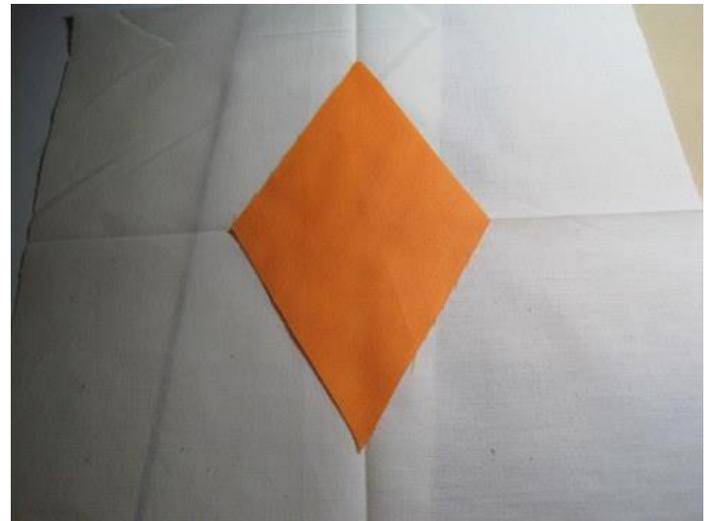
I knew I wanted to use my Accuquilt GO diamond and strip dies for the cutting so my version isn't going to be as "maverick" as the original quilt but I wanted some variation in the strip widths too.

My block construction for the diamonds is a cross between foundation piecing and paper piecing. You can certainly piece them without a foundation but I got the best results when I went with the foundation. You could also use paper vs muslin like I did but I wanted to start with an 11 inch foundation and don't have paper that size in the house.

The Rail blocks will NOT be foundation pieced and I've combined foundation pieced blocks with ones without foundations in the past and it is not a problem for me. You can't tell the difference once it's quilted.

Starting with a muslin foundation cut 11 inches square – I folded it in half twice and pressed it to find the center of my block and used those lines to place my diamond. Again, my diamonds were cut with the Accuquilt GO but you can use a template or special ruler. My diamond die cuts 4 inch diamonds (4"W x 7"H (10 cm x 18 cm) diamonds, 4" cut side edge).

Roughly half the blocks will start with a solid bright diamond and the other half will start with a black diamond. I'm not really concerned with which one I'll have 8 of and which I'll have 9.



This is where paper piecing experience will come in handy. I did some in the past but in general I'm not a big fan and after cutting a few pieces too short – I tend to err on the side of generous size pieces.

All of the strips in Diamond blocks are cut 1.5 or 2 inches. I'm mixing them up. You're going to alternate the black and the bright rounds so my first strip here is a black (LOVING the polka dot with the solids!) and it's 2 inches wide – you can use either, doesn't matter.

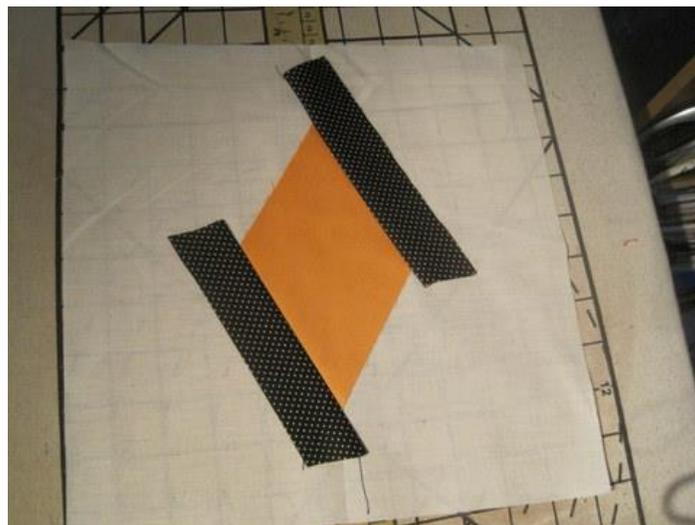
NOTE HOW FAR THE STRIP extends beyond the diamond – very important otherwise when you flip it over and go to add the next strip you'll have a gap with the foundation showing.



You can sew a strip on both sides of the diamond before trimming and pressing. It's important to sew just to the edge of the piece underneath or you'll be picking out stitches. After a few blocks I was better at stopping my seam in time.



As you can see here on the bottom right – I almost didn't allow enough length – that edge will have to continue along the same angle as the diamond and I almost left it short.



Don't be confused by my inability to take photos of just one block from start to finish — this is a different block but it's at the same stage. I've sewn the two remaining rounds and before I press, I need to trim the excess fabric back to my seam line. Fold the foundation back out of the way and trim with scissors.

In this first photo, note I stopped my seam at the edge of the fabric underneath.



Folding the foundation back to trim the excess



Seams are even



Continue adding rounds (and trimming the excess from the previous round before pressing) – alternating black with the brights — you can choose either size strip – Here my second one was a 1.5 inch strip



And starting the last framing round. Each of my blocks will have a center diamond, 3 framing rounds, and then corner triangle pieces. In this block I used a 2, 1.5, and 1.5 inch strips for the framing. See the photo of my blocks at the end and you'll see how I mixed those up in the blocks.



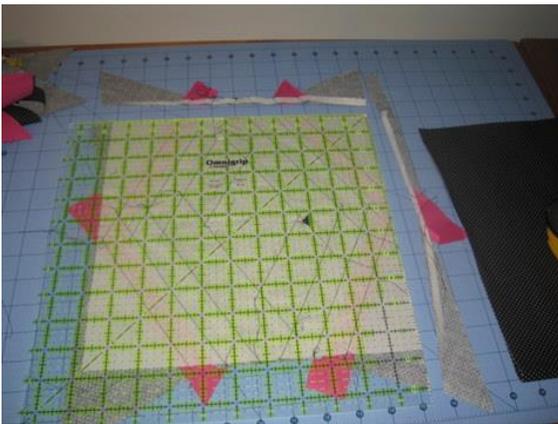
When I'm ready to add the corners – I take a quick measure of how tall and wide the space is and cut 2 rectangles that are a little larger. Cut them corner to corner and sew the 4 pieces to the block.



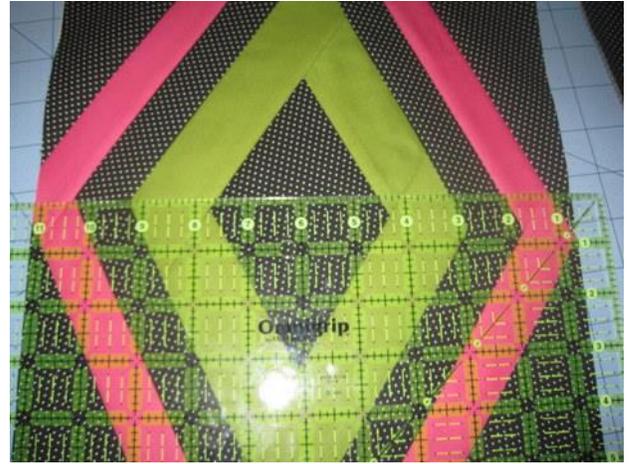
Press open and the block is ready to be trimmed. Don't you like seeing all my different block combinations??



I trim from the back – and other than knowing that I want to trim about a 1/4 inch from each of the 4 sides of my foundation (I started with an 11 inch foundation and want to end up with a 10.5 inch block), I don't worry about doing a lot of lining up or centering.



One reason I'm not worried about lining my block up exactly to trim is that due to the way the rounds are added to the diamond – the blocks are a bit wonky anyway...that's fine with me. I like some wonky in these kinds of quilts hence my use of different size strips.



See how the side strips on the outside of the block above don't hit the ruler in the exact same place?

To make the Rail blocks I'd intended to sew strip sets that would allow me to get two blocks each from the strips cut from my fat quarters but some of my pieces were too small – so I cut strips that were 1.5, 2, and 2.5 inches by 10.5 and pieced each block separately.

I didn't take photos but they're simple rail blocks – I laid out a variety of strips alternating a bright with a black and varying the widths. My goal was to have 11 inches since I tend to have a slight generous seam allowance and that would allow me to trim down to 10.5. I always used a wider strip on the end, not the 1.5 inch to allow for trimming.