

Please read this entire document before you begin. As with any set of instructions, page 4 may have information that may help you better understand something on page 2.

Creating Half-Squares

Using the template provided in this document helps you to make PERFECT half-squares. This is how I learned, and I am appalled at the number of people who have never used a template. I could NEVER do them so perfectly without the template.

To make 20 blocks, you need a total of 640 half-squares. That's 16 lights and 16 darks for each block; or a total of 320 lights and 320 darks. To make them, you need 80 copies of the template at the end of this document. (Hit File-Print and choose to print only page 10.) You can print on your printer, or print one copy and make copies on a copy machine, which might be a little cheaper for you. Be sure to print on regular-old copy paper—nothing heavier!

Print your 80 copies, then trim the paper to about ¼" from the edge of the printed area of the template. This makes it much easier to handle in your sewing machine. I have set the template up to use the least amount of ink and so you have to trim the least amount of edges.

Each copy makes 8 half-squares. To make one set of eight, layer the following on top of each other:

1. 6½" square print, right side up
2. 6½" square white, right side down
3. one copy of the template

Be sure that the edge of the fabric is lined up OUTSIDE the outer lines of the template on all 4 sides. Pin the 3 layers together, especially if you are uncomfortable. I used to pin them all the time, but now I never do.

Set your machine to a small stitch—about 16 to 18 stitches per inch. On my machine, I have it set to about 1¼, whatever that means. My manual doesn't say; I just test it and count the stitches.

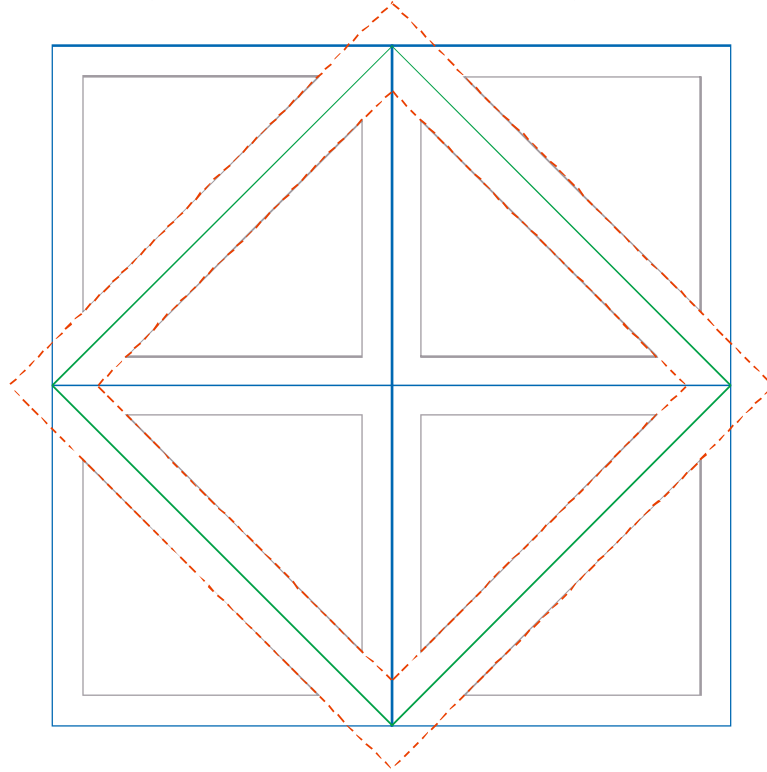
Place the 3 layers in your machine and sew on the dotted lines (shown in red on the next page), beginning at any corner.

When you have sewn the first "square" of the dotted line, pull your needle up out of the fabrics, and move everything so you can do the other "square". It does not matter if you begin with the inside square or the outside square. When you turn corners, lift your presser foot.

Sew all 80 sets.

Using a rotary cutter, cut the squares out (shown in blue on the next page). You can also use the rotary cutter to cut the triangle lines (shown in green on the next page), but I like to sit with a scissors and do this while watching TV. The green lines don't have to be cut so perfectly because that seam is already sewn and we are, in effect, simply cutting the seam allowance.

Sample only! Do NOT use this as your template!



Once you have all of the triangles cut out, gently tear the paper off of each. I usually fold the paper on the stitch line and run my fingernail across it, then tear one side off. The other side practically falls off. This is why you need small stitches when you sew with paper—so the stitches don't rip out when you tear the paper off. This is another task I like to do while watching TV. It can be time-consuming, but the results are worth it.

Once you have all the paper torn off, press the half-squares open. I pressed my seams toward the print, and this worked very well, as you can see here on the back of a finished square:



Constructing the Rows

Please be sure to read the next page, where I summarize this information.

The top half of this block is the same as the bottom, only upside down. Hence, we create 40 half-blocks instead of 20 blocks.

I generally break down my sewing tasks so that I can “mass produce”. For instance, when creating these blocks, I worked with 2 squares at a time. So go ahead and sew 40 light-print half-squares to 40 2½” white squares, so they end up like the first two squares at the top-left of the photo:



Then sew the other 40 2½” white squares so they end up like the last two squares at the top-right of the photo.

Press all of these open.

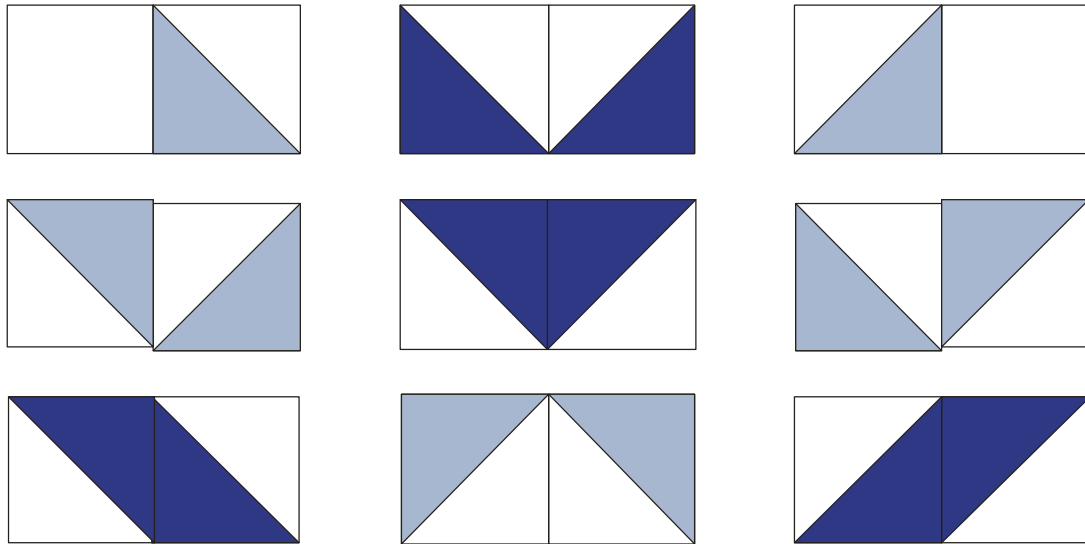
Now sew two dark half-squares together so they end up like the two in the middle of the first row of squares in the photo. You need one set for the top row and one for the bottom row, so go ahead and sew 40 sets of these.

Continue making sets of 2 squares until you have all of your squares and half-squares sewn together in sets of two. However, keep your 2-square sets so they can be built in horizontal rows or in vertical rows. If you make both horizontal and vertical sets, you will run into trouble! For instance, while we actually have 4 sets (that look like the set inside the red line below) in one block, only two of those sets are in horizontal rows. If you make 4 sets, you’re working with horizontal AND vertical rows, and this never works when constructing blocks. And it’s a mistake I make ALL the time!



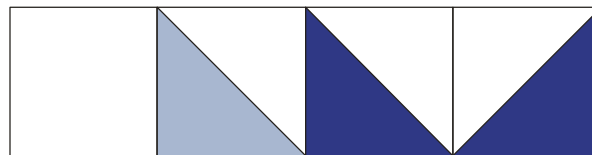
When you have finished making sets of 2, then build the rows by sewing 2 sets of 2 together to make a set of 4, and then sewing a 3rd set of 2 to the set of 4.

Step 1: Make sets of 2, 40 of each, as follows:

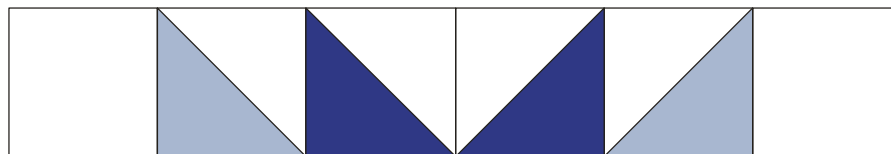


Step 2: Create rows, as follows (we only show the first row's construction here):

Sew these two sets together (40 times):



Then sew a 3rd set of two onto it (40 times):



Construct the other 2 rows in the same manner.

Press the seams all in the same direction. Iron Row 1 and 3's seams to the left, and row 2's to the right.

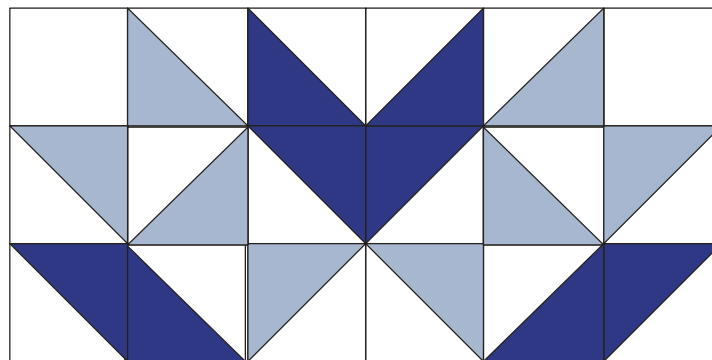
Constructing the Blocks

If you're like me, you just have to construct one block so you could see what they will look like. That's okay. Just adjust the quantities I show below.

If you have followed the instructions, this should be a breeze. Sew a Row 1 to a Row 2 (40 times). The seams should already be facing in opposite directions, which makes the two pieces almost "lock" into place. When sewing, be very careful to make your sewing line meet at the point of the triangle point seams, as shown in the completed block below. This helps to keep your triangle points nice and sharp.

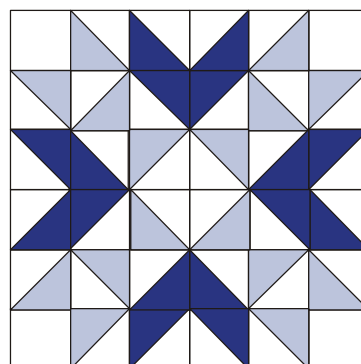


Sew a Row 3 to Rows 1 and 2 (40 times). You should now have 40 half-blocks.



Press the seams of 20 of the half-blocks downward. Press the other 20 upward.

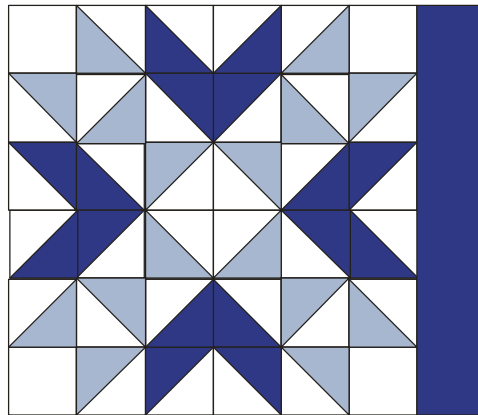
Sew 20 half-blocks to the other 20 half-blocks, pressing the seam in the same direction as all other seams in the block.



Sashing

This is easier than it looks. To each of your 20 blocks, sew one 12½" strip to the right-hand side. How do you determine the right-hand side? That would be the side that's easiest to sew onto! Turn your blocks over, wrong-side up, and with the pressed seams all facing down. Now, pick up the left side of one, and flip it over (to the right) so it's right-side up. That means that when you're sewing the sashing piece on, your seams are pressed downward so that they don't get bunched up while you sew the sashing on. I hope this makes sense!

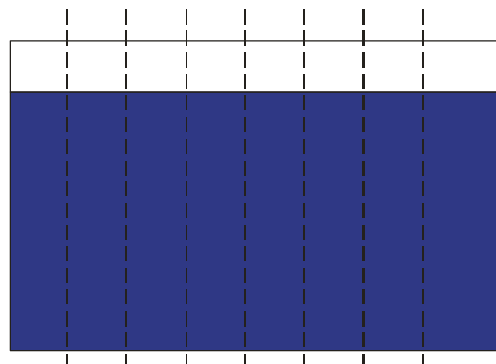
Press your seams toward the sashing. You should now have 20 blocks that look like this:



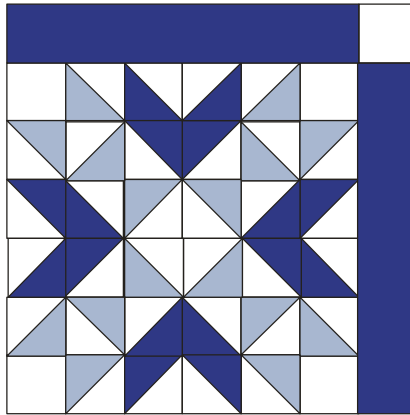
Get the 3 pieces of sashing fabric that measure 24" by 12½". Get the 3 24" by 2½" pieces of white fabric. Sew one strip of white to one piece of sashing along the 24" edge (my images are only approximately proportioned!) and press the seams toward the sashing.



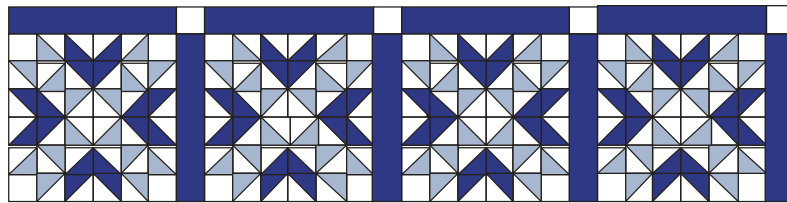
Cut these into strips 2½" wide to make what I call "cigarettes":



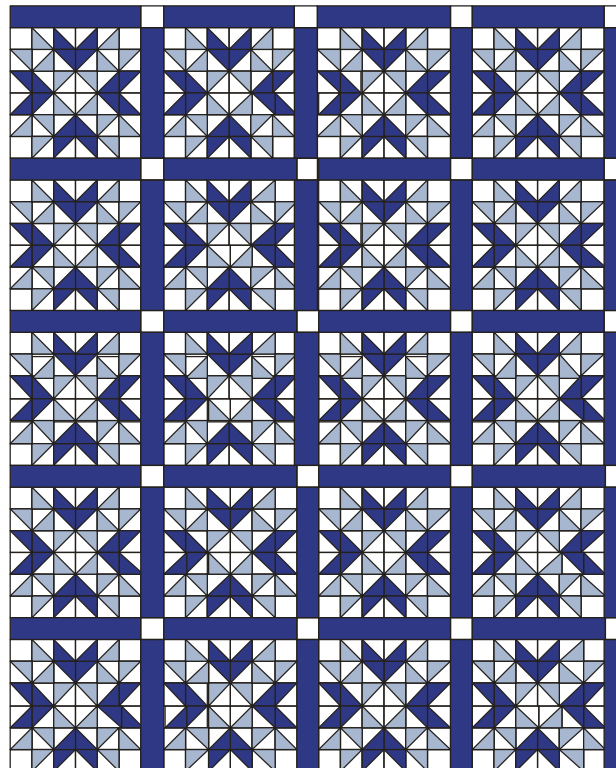
Sew one "cigarette" across the top of each of your blocks, and press the seams toward the sashing. Your blocks now look like this:



Sew sets of 2 blocks together, then sew those sets together to make 5 rows like shown, present seams toward sashing:



Now sew the 5 rows together, pressing seams toward sashing, and you now have a nearly completed quilt top:



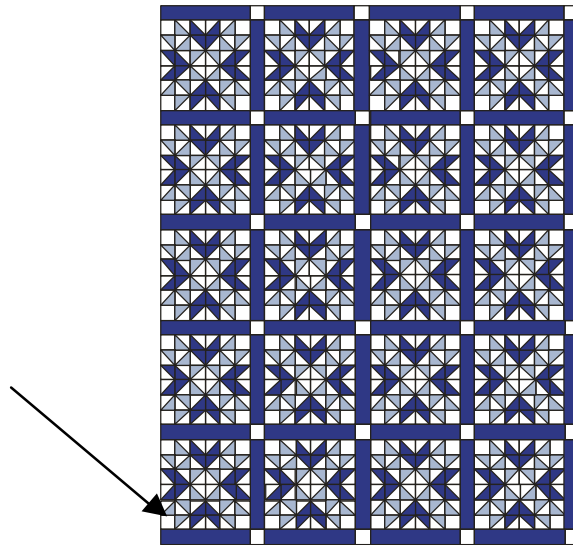
Take 5 of the remaining "cigarettes" and sew them together, end to end, and then sew a 2½" white square to the end of that. SET IT TO THE SIDE. It should look like this:



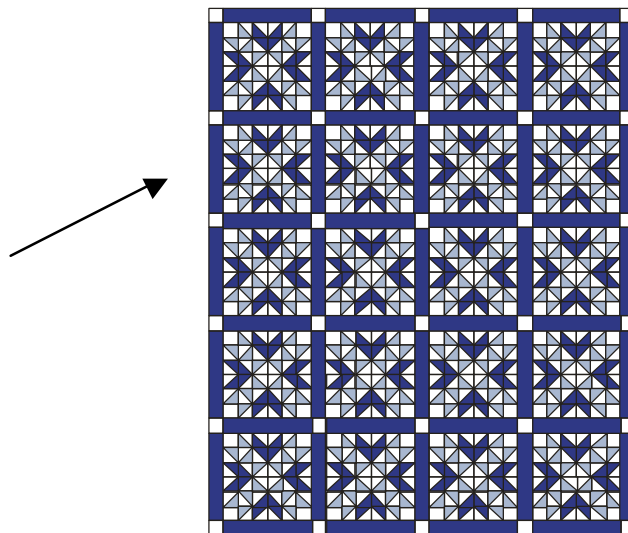
Now, sew 4 of the "cigarettes" together and press the seams toward the sashing, and it should look like this:



Sew this piece to the bottom of your quilt top:



Get the sashing that you set to the side, and sew it to the left-hand side of your quilt top, pressing seams toward the sashing:



Add any other borders you like to your quilt top. It's beautiful!!

