

Free-Form Hearts Quilt Block

By Kathy Yount



Notice in this picture that the points of the heart in the center of the block don't line up. This is not a mistake. This is a free-form heart, so you really don't want them to line up. Now that I've gotten that disclaimer out of the way, you're ready to begin.

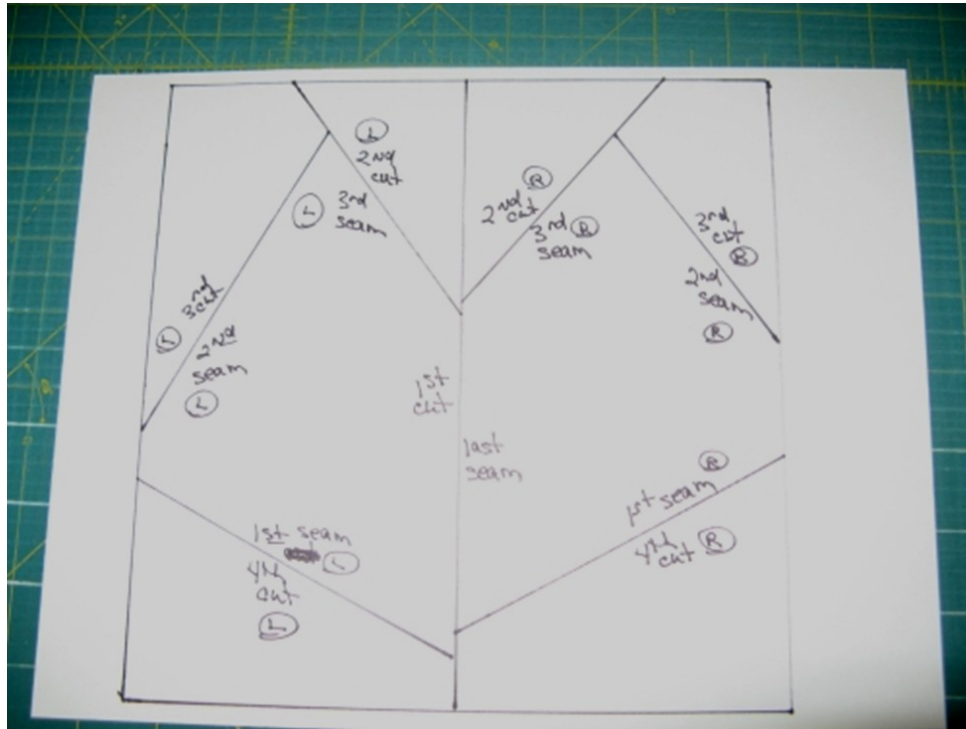
For this tutorial, we will only work with 2 pieces of fabric. There will be information at the end on how to work with a variety of fabrics for making multiple blocks.

First you need to select high-contrasting fabrics. The higher the contrast, the better the hearts will show up.

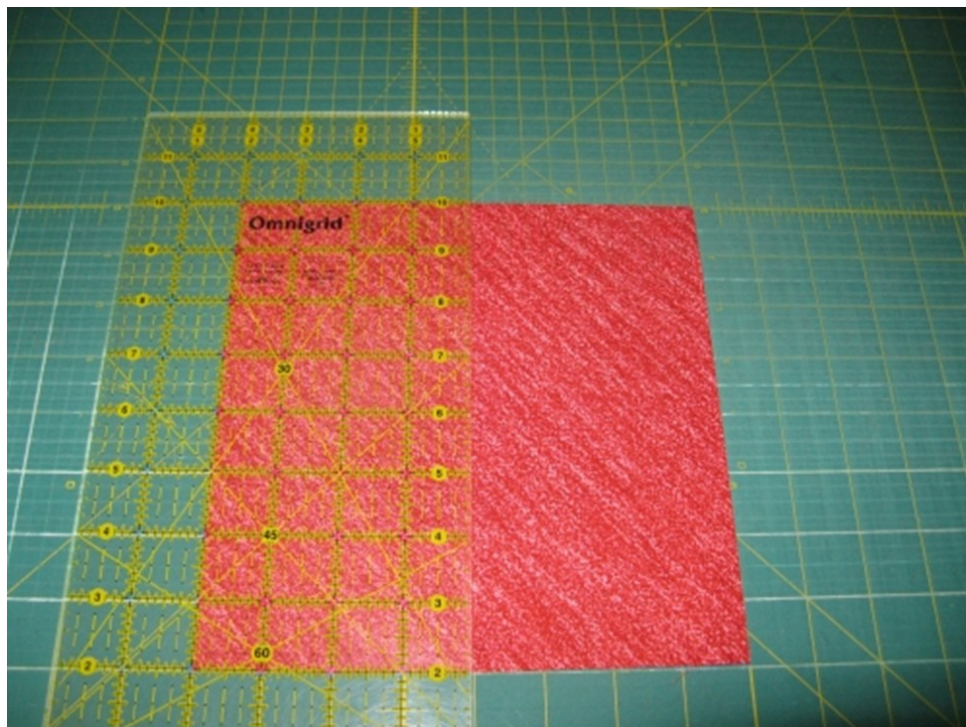
It is difficult to determine what size to cut your squares since you're not cutting individual pieces and adding the seam allowances. For this sample block, I cut 8" squares and was able to square them up to 6" unfinished. So, if I wanted 6" finished, I think I could cut 8.5" squares and get the desired finished size. My recommendation is to determine what size finished block you want and add 2.5" to your cut size. Since we are only making 2 test blocks in this tutorial, this should give you a better idea what size squares to cut your fabric for the real deal.

You should draw a cutting guide to help keep yourself on track. You can draw this on freezer paper and iron that to your top piece of fabric or you can simply cut free-hand. If you cut free-hand, it's still a good idea to draw a cutting guide so you know how to angle the cuts. It not only gives you a guide for cutting, but can be helpful later to show how to sew the pieces back together. Notice in my example, the order that you cut the pieces and sew them back together are identical on both sides. I labeled them R and L simply to indicate right and left sides.

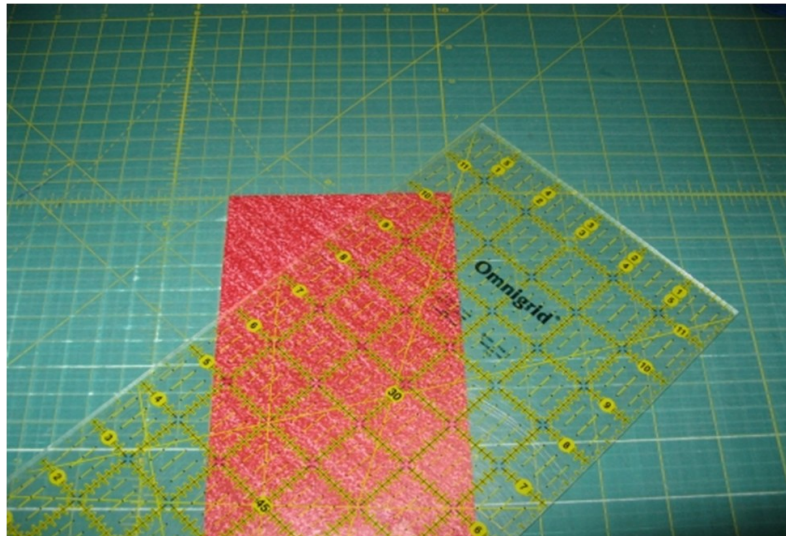
Notice how the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th cut lines do not go into any corners or start where the previous line ended. For example, if you start the 3rd cut line where the 2nd cut line ended, you will end up with heart shapes that are flat at the top. This could make for an interesting heart shape. But if you want points, make sure you stay far enough away from the edges and previous end-lines to square up your block at the end.



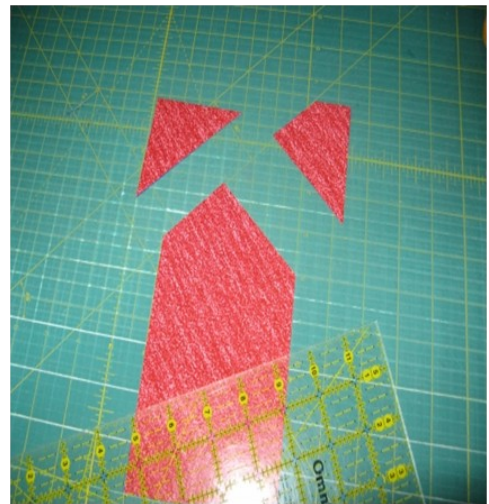
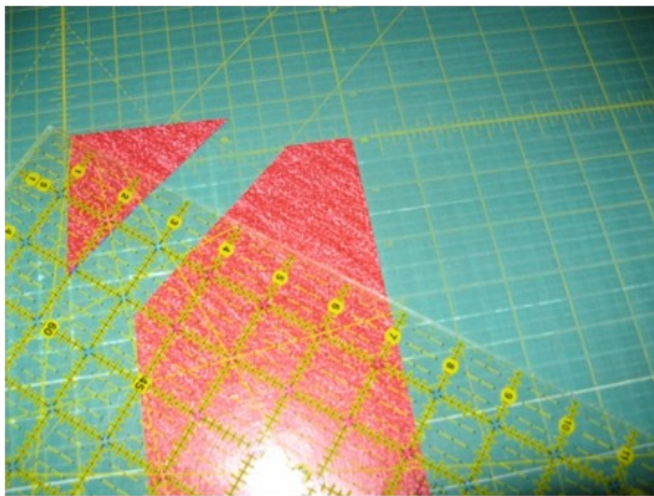
Take your fabric to your cutting table and stack them as straight as you can. Now that you have your fabrics stacked on your cutting mat, you're ready to make the first cut. For the first cut, I cut straight down the middle. You could angle your cut and really make the hearts wonky. But for now, let's just keep cut straight cut down the middle.



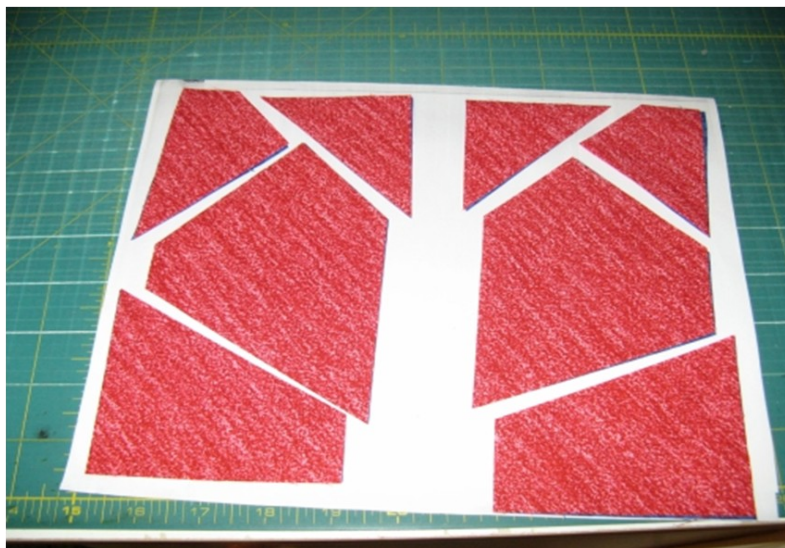
Now you are ready to make your second cut.



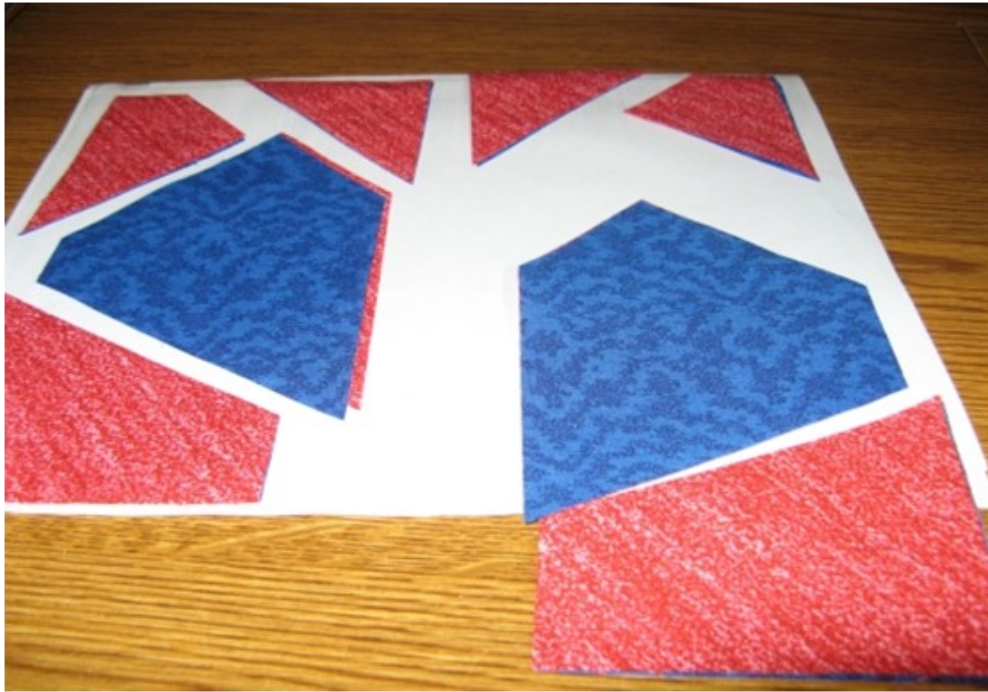
Now for the 3rd and 4th cuts. Again, do not cut directly into the corners and be sure to leave enough fabric at the bottom of the 4th cut for squaring up your block.



Repeat these cutting steps for the other side of the heart. Carefully place all of your pieces on a piece of paper or cardboard and transfer them to your sewing machine.



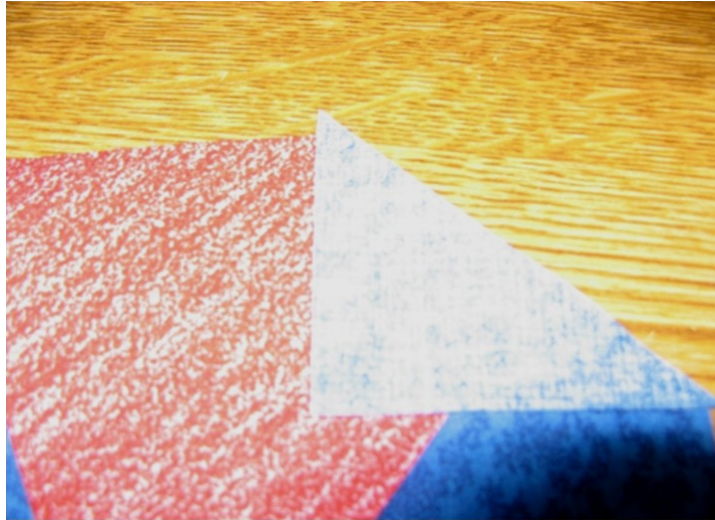
Now you're ready to shuffle the pieces. Move the middle section (the heart) from both sides to the bottom of the stack (be sure to do this for BOTH sides). You are now ready to sew your first seam. You will be sewing in the reverse order that you cut. Refer back to the cutting guide if necessary. Since the pieces don't have seam allowances, you want to sew them so any extra (the waste) is on the outside edges of the block. So, for this first seam, you want to keep that line on the left as straight as possible.



For the second seam, you want to keep the edge at the top as straight as possible.



For the third and final seam of this half of the heart, keep the edge on the left as straight as possible.

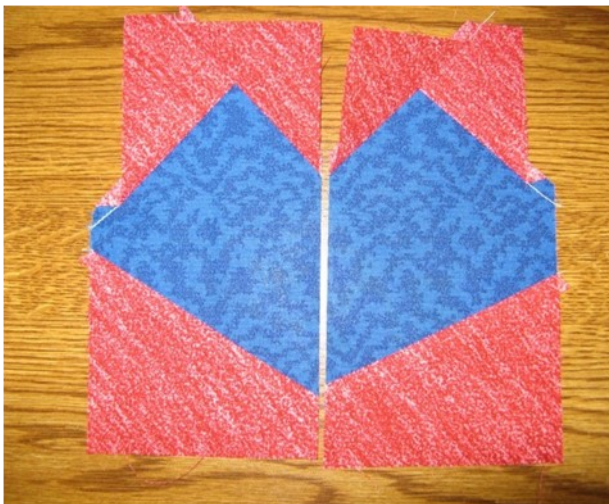


Repeat these steps to complete the other half of the heart block.

Now you're ready to sew the 2 halves together. But what do you do if your halves are really straight? Just trim it off. For this block, it's not a big deal since these are just straight lines of sewing and you're not trying to match any of the points on the hearts from the 2 sides.



Now you're ready to sew your 2 halves together.



Now you just need to square them up and you're done.



Since I only used 2 fabrics for this tutorial, I ended up with 2 hearts that are basically reverse images of each other. The more fabrics you use, the more variety you'll get. When you stack your fabrics, place them in an order that you'd like to see them sewn together. The heart of the fabric on top will be sewn together with the background of the fabric on the bottom. The background of the fabric on top will be sewn with the heart of the 2nd fabric. The 2nd fabric goes with 1 and 3. 3 goes with 2 and 4...etc.

Depending on how many blocks you want to make, you might need to stack in groups. If I'm using a freezer-paper template and all pieces will be cut the same, I can cut one stack and carefully place it on my cardboard. I can then cut the next stack and place it on the cardboard on top of the first stack, etc. However, if I'm cutting these free-hand, I need to cut each stack and sew them together before I cut the next stack since the pieces will not be identical from one stack to the next. I like to cut free-hand, so I typically only stack 4 pieces of fabric at a time so I can get a variety in the heart shapes. But if you want them to all look alike, you can stack as many as you feel comfortable cutting.

Now that you know how to make free-form hearts, just think of all the possibilities (free-form square-in-square or free-form triangles—the possibilities are endless).

I hoped you enjoyed this tutorial and even learned something along the way. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at key4unc at yahoo dot com or simply post to me on the Quilting Bee Forum.

Happy quilting,
Kathy