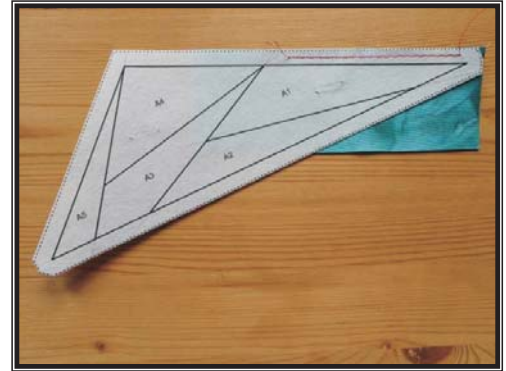# Foundation Piecing How-to #2
SEWING THE FOUNDATIONS

1 Place the first fabric patch with the ***wrong side against the blank side of the foundation.*** Hold it up to the light and look at it from the printed side of the foundation, ensuring that the fabric covers the area labeled with the foundation letter and the number "1," with at least ¼ inch to spare all the way around. Machine-baste within the seam allowance along the outer edges of patch 1, to anchor it.

Some people prefer to use a straight pin to hold the patch in place. You can even use a glue stick to hold the first patch in place, but this can present a problem later, when you tear the foundation away. You can't always get all of the paper off the fabric. Or, if you are using a freezer paper foundation, use a dry iron to lightly press the fabric patch to the foundation.
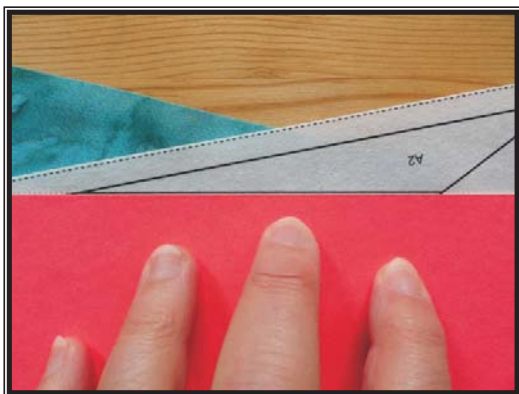
Place the fabric patch with the wrong side of the fabric against the wrong side of the foundation. Machine basting is done in red thread so that it's easier to see for this sample.

2 Place the foundation assembly on the table with the printed side up and the fabric on the bottom. Carefully fold the foundation back along the line between area 1 (where patch 1 will go) and area 2 (where patch 2 will go) – the stitching line. This will expose the edge of your first patch.

Then place a straight-edged piece of lightweight card stock (like a file card, postcard or file folder) or template plastic next to the line and fold the foundation back over it. The card helps you fold the foundation quickly and accurately.

Be careful not to cover the sewing line with the card. The line should be visible along the edge of the card. If you can't see the line, your seam allowance will be too deep, which could throw off the placement of your next patch.

Place a straight piece of card along the stitching line. You should just be able to see the stitching line at the end of the card.

Fold the foundation back over the card. This makes a fold line in exactly the right place.
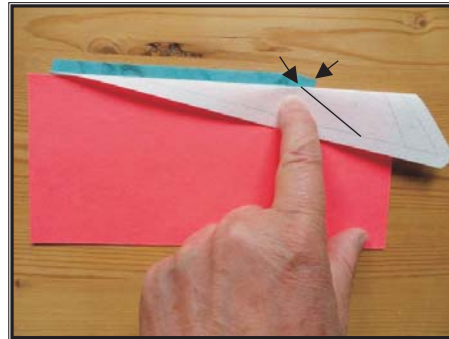
3 Use your rotary cutter and a ruler to trim the seam allowance of the first patch ¼ inch away from the stitching line.

If you use an Add-A-Quarter ™ ruler, you can butt the lip of the bottom of the ruler along the folded edge of the foundation, making it easy to cut a perfect ¼-inch seam allowance.

If you use a regular ruler, you might find it easier to pull the card out of the fold before trimming the seam allowance. The ruler will be flatter on the folded foundation alone than it will on the folded foundation plus the card.

The trimmed fabric patch must extend beyond every adjacent seamline, which you can just see through the folded-back foundation. This is a tricky spot; if the fabric patch does not extend beyond this seamline by at least ¼ inch, it will neither cover the shape nor provide an adequate seam allowance. This particularly tricky when there's an acute angle as shown below to the right.

Butt the lip of the Add-A-Quarter ruler along the folded edge of the foundation and trim the seam allowance.

The fabric patch must extend beyond any adjacent seamline (marked by the 2 arrows and the black line) by ¼ inch

4 Unfold the foundation and turn it over, so the fabric is on top. Align the second patch along the newly cut edge, with the *right sides of the fabric together.*

If you are unsure whether the second patch will cover area 2, insert a pin along each end of the stitching line between area 1 and 2. Flip the second fabric patch open, hold the assembly up to the light with the printed side of the foundation facing you. Look at the fabric through the foundation. Patch 2 should completely cover area 2 with at least ¼ inch to spare all the way around.

Place patch 2 on top of patch 1, right sides together, aligning the cut edges and making sure the patch will cover the spot indicated by the intersection of the black lines.

To check placement, put a pin at each end of the stitching line, flip the second patch open to see the fabric through the foundation

You do not have to be fussy!

The good news is that you do not have to be as fussy with the seam allowances in foundation piecing as you do in regular piecing.

If you are the daring type, just estimate where the end of the first patch is and line up the edge of the second fabric patch along it.

The photo to the far left shows where to look when you compare the fabric patch with the foundation. The finger is pointing just to the left of the intersection the second piece of fabric must cover by at least ¼ inch. If it's slightly off, it will be all right as long as the second patch extends beyond the stitching line on both ends.

5 Lay the foundation assembly down with the fabric on the bottom. Use a short stitch (15 to 20 stitches per inch, or about 1.5 on a European machine) to stitch *exactly on the line* between area 1 and area 2.

Begin sewing a few stitches before the solid stitching line and continue a few stitches beyond it. To help with this, the foundation patterns on this site include a coloured dotted line, called a *Perfect Point Guide,* before and after every solid stitching line*.* Stitching along this dotted line keeps your sewing line straight from start to finish and ensures that the fabric folds open in exactly the right place. If your stitches veer off even a little before or after the solid stitching line, the fabric fold may end up in the wrong place, distorting your pieced design – especially the points.

 If you are using a muslin foundation, start and stop exactly on the seam line with a lock stitch at both ends. Do not sew on the coloured dotted lines.
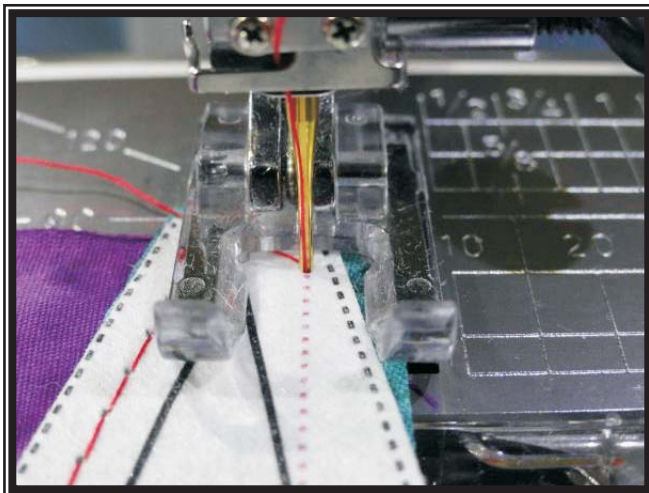
As the photos below show, a *Perfect Point Guide* can be longer than just a few stitches if the foundation contains an acute angle (an angle that's less than 90 degrees). The longer lead-in and lead-out will make it easier to sew the foundation to another unit in a later step.
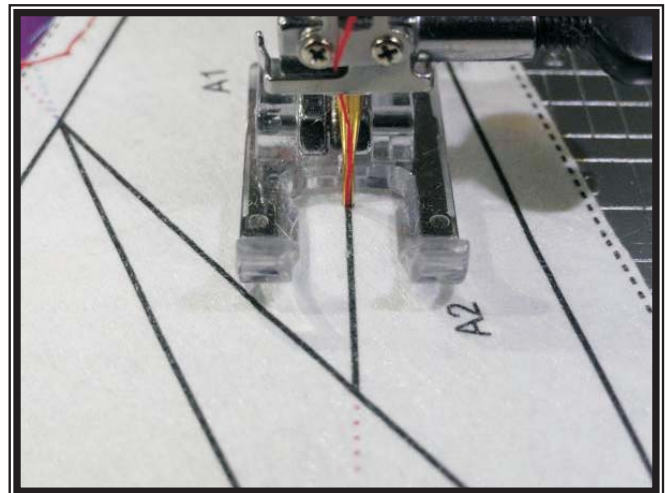

Time to be fussy

When you get to this part, you need to be fussy.

You must **aim your needle accurately** along the **center** of the stitching line.

This is the key to successful paper piecing. Practice helps and maybe a little chocolate too!

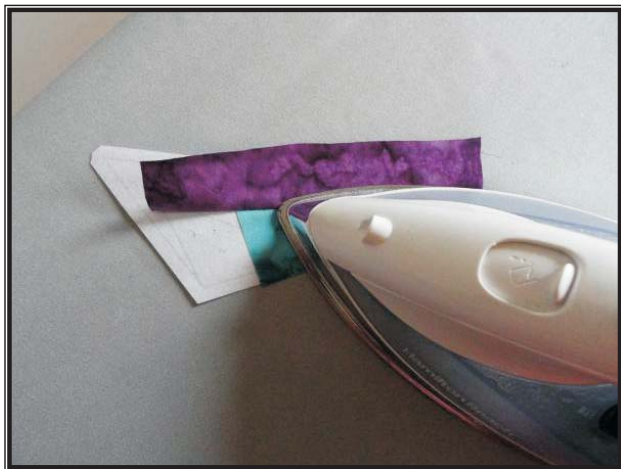Stitch carefully along the perfect point guide line and then onto the solid stitching line.

For precise results, aim your needle accurately down the center of the solid stitching line and the dotted perfect point guide. There is a dotted line ahead of the needle. This happens when a seam runs perpendicular to the next patch. Sew just to the end of this dotted line and no further.

6 Turn the foundation assembly over and finger-press the second patch open.

7 You have two choices at this point. You can lightly press the patch open with medium heat *or* use a pin to hold it tightly in place. Either method will keep the patch smooth and flat, with no creases or tucks in the seam.

If your foundation is a polyester paper, be careful not to touch it directly with the iron. It's safe to use steam if the foundation isn't freezer paper and you have pretested to be sure the ink from the foundation will not smear.

If your foundation is freezer paper, press the patch to the paper with a dry iron, ensuring that there are no creases or tucks in the seam. Do not use steam or high heat, which could shrink the freezer paper.

If your foundation is polyester, be careful not to touch it directly with the iron.

Caution: Avoid Ink Smears

Steam pressing yields the best results, but *test first.* If your iron is too hot, the ink could transfer from the foundation to your fabrics, your pressing surface, or your iron.

Press your first patch at your iron's lowest steam setting. Then iron a scrap of white fabric by placing it over the edge of your ironing board and dragging the iron over the edge, to see whether ink has been deposited on the soleplate. Use the same piece of fabric to wipe your ironing board, to see whether ink has transferred to the surface.

If anything has transferred, press your foundations with a dry iron. You can also finger-press by running your fingernail along the crease.

8 Turn the foundation assembly over again, so the printed side is on top. Again, using your card or template plastic, carefully fold the foundation back along the stitching line between area 2 and area 3. This will expose the edge of the second patch.

If you have sewn along the *Perfect Point Guide,* gently pull the foundation off those few stitches.

Fold the foundation back over the card along the stitching line between areas 2 and 3. Gently pull the foundation free of the stitches you just made so the foundation lies flat and the patch edges are exposed.
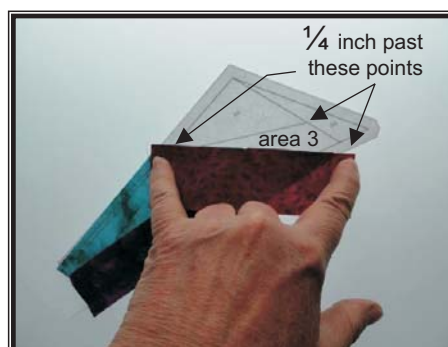
9 Once again, use your rotary cutter to trim the seam allowance of the second patch ¼ inch away from the stitching line.

Trimmed seam allowance

10 Unfold the foundation and turn it over, so the fabric is on top. Align your third patch along the newly cut edge, with the right sides of the fabrics together. Look at the places where the seam allowance for the new patch will go. Make sure your fabric patch will cover all seam allowances.

If you are unsure whether the third patch will cover area 3, insert a pin along each end of the stitching line between area 1/area 2 and area 3, flip the fabric open and hold it up to the light to look at it through the foundation. Patch 3 should completely cover area 3, with at least ¼ inch to spare all the way around.

¼ inch past these points

area 3

Make sure the patch will cover the intersecting seam allowance at each end of the stitching line.

11 Lay the foundation assembly down with the fabric on the bottom, and stitch exactly on the line between area 2 and area 3.

Again, unless you are using a muslin foundation, begin and end your stitching on the Perfect Point Guides. If you are using a muslin foundation, do not stitch on the Perfect Point Guides. Instead, begin and end exactly on the sold line, backstitching at both ends.

12 Turn the foundation assembly over, finger-press your third fabric patch open, and lightly press or pin it so there are no creases or tucks in the seam.

If your foundation is freezer paper, press the fabric to the freezer paper, being careful to smooth the fabric tightly so there are no creases or tucks in the seam.
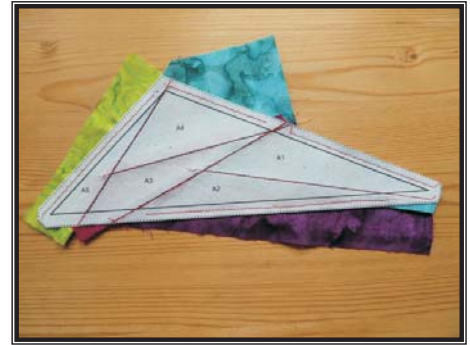
13 Turn the foundation assembly over again, so the printed side is on top. Carefully fold the foundation back along the stitching line between area 3 and area 4, inserting your card if you are using one. This will expose the edge of your third patch.

14 Use your ruler and rotary cutter to trim the seam allowance of the third patch ¼ inch away from the stitching line.

15 Repeat steps 10 through 14 until the foundation is complete.

16 Place the completed foundation assembly on the table with the printed side up. Machine-baste within the outer seam allowance, all around the foundation assembly.
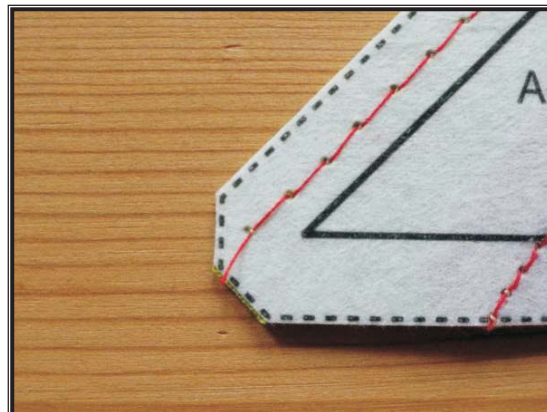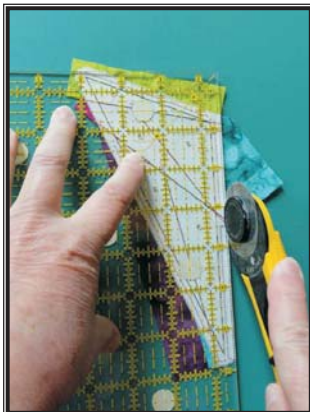
This will hold everything together and flat until you join the foundations to make your quilt block or quilt top. It will also stabilize any bias edges. Although it will take a little longer to remove the foundations from the outer seam allowances after your blocks are sewn together, it's worth taking the extra time at this point to avoid potential problems with slipping fabric later.

17 Carefully align the ¼-inch line on a regular quilting ruler along the **outer stitching line** around the foundation. (**Do not** use the Add-A-Quarter ruler for this step) Use your rotary cutter to trim the foundation along each outer edge.
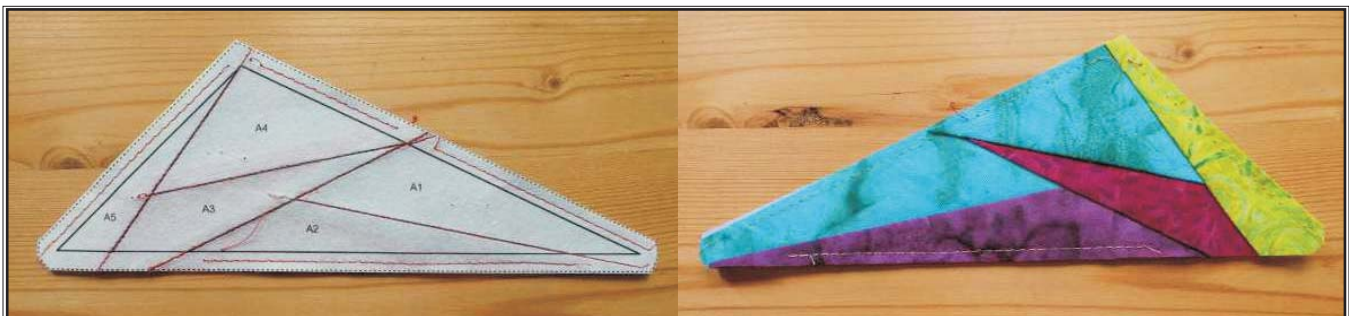
If the foundation has an engineered (trimmed) corner, take care that you follow the dotted line so the folds will be less bulky when you join to another foundation.

Use a regular rotary cutter, **not** the Add-A-Quarter ruler, to trim the completed foundation.

Detail of the engineered corner or point.

18 Use steam and medium heat to give the completed piece a quick press **on the fabric side.** Avoid pressing directly on the foundation, or you could end up with ink or melted polyester residue on your iron.

Finished foundation from the printed side

Finished foundation from the fabric side