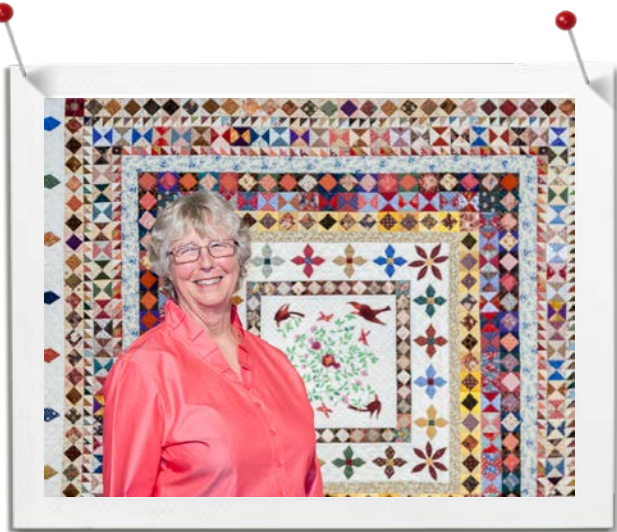


Quilting for beginners.

Tips and Tricks to get you started by Lessa Siegele



A love affair with Patchwork and Quilting.

Lessa began her Quilting path after taking her first class in the 70's and has been teaching quilting and craft related classes ever since.

Almost 50 years ago, Lessa made her first quilt, a hexagon quilt for her newborn son Michael. A year or two later she made a queen size Cathedral Window quilt by hand and when it was finished, she found it too heavy to sleep under!! "A Big Mistake".

Always remember to start small while learning.

A few years later while visiting her sister, Lessa was introduced to Eleanor Burns and her Log Cabin in a Day. This was a project sewn by machine rather than by hand and showcasing the latest quilting tools now available. These included; cutting mats, rotary cutters and Perspex rulers. She was hooked then and still is today.

Lessa has been an amazing mentor to so many Quilters over the years. She is well known for her expertise and precision in piecing and has been in hot demand as a teacher for over 30 years.

Lessa is well loved and admired by everyone in the quilting world. Her influence in the Australian quilt industry has been far reaching as her classes are always a great learning experience and she is a very patient and generous teacher.

Lessa has been a respected member of the Quilters Guild of South Australia since its inception in 1984 and has been presented with two very prestige's awards; The Order of Australia Medal by Queen Elizabeth II for her work promoting quilting and the Rajah Award for her services to Quilting in Australasia. How amazing is that!

As you can imagine, after making quilts for so long, there is no relative or friend still needing the gift of a quilt. Because of this, Lessa and 10 like minded quilting friends from the SA Quilters Guild formed the Clayton's Committee. They meet regularly and from their own stashes as well as lots of donated fabric, they cut Mystery Quilt Kits which they sell to raise money for Bedford in Adelaide. This started way back in 2008 and is still going strong. So far, they have raised more than \$300,000 from the sale of the kits.

For those of you who have not heard of **Bedford**, they are a trusted and sustainable business that changes the lives of people with disability by building their skills to participate in the community. The group don't stop there as they have also been making quilts for various hospitals in Adelaide since 2014.

Together they have made more than 1,000 quilts.

During Covid 19, you won't hear many quilters complaining about the extra time they have. They are just loving the extra time to spend on their passion with the added bonus of getting things completed sooner than expected.

If you are new to Patchwork and Quilting or would like to start, now is a good time while we have time so here are a few basic things to help you.

Tips and Tricks

Buy good tools

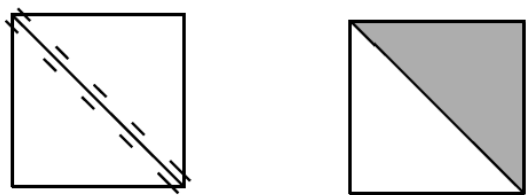
Here are a few must haves to get you started.

- **Rotary Cutter.** Quilting requires accurate cutting and the best way to achieve perfect cuts is with a good quality cutter. It's also important to know how to hold it when cutting and always keep it closed when not using it as its easy to cut yourself. If in doubt, use a self closing one as they are much safer. Remember to only use it to cut fabric and change the blade when it starts to get blunt. I keep an old cutter to use only for paper and other things. When putting a new blade in the cutter, be careful to follow the directions. While teaching I saw so many blades put in incorrectly and it can cause lots of problems.

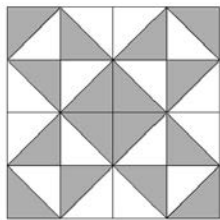
Note: Always keep a spare blade on you!

- **Cutting mat.** A self-healing cutting mat is essential as it will protect your cutting surface and it keeps your cutters sharp. Always make sure to store your mats flat otherwise they will go out of shape and cutting will be difficult. Under a bed is often a great place.
- **Quilting Ruler.** Most rulers have markings that are quilting-specific which will help you with making accurate cuts. You can start with one then add to your collection as you determine what kind of quilting you want to do.
- **Sewing machine.** Keep your machine in good order by making sure to clean and oil it on a regular basis. Always use a sharp needle, When I began sewing, I only changed the needle when it broke. This is not a good idea, but I know better now. You need to change the needle after approx. 7-8 hours of sewing.
- I like to use a sharp size 70 needle and would suggest either a Bernina Jeans, or Microtex needle as they both have a sharp point for precise piecing.
- **Thread.** I like to use a good quality 50 weight thread to ensure I get the best results and because you generally sew such a mixture of coloured fabrics in your quilts, I use a mid cream or grey except if sewing black fabric. In this case I would only use black thread. Buy a good quality thread to ensure the best result and always make sure you have extra bobbins so that you don't wind several colours on the one bobbin.
- **Sewing Feet.** Patchwork is designed to have a ¼" seam and most sewing machines these days have a special ¼" foot which is great. Patchwork feet are straight -stitch only and should be used only with centre needle position. A flat groove under the sole serves as a thread channel for smooth piecing. The patchwork feet feature three evenly spaced marks along each side. One marks the needle position, one is ¼" in from the needle and the other, ¼" behind the needle. These provide reference points for stopping and starting ¼" from an edge or corner. There are a few different Patchwork feet available, the standard Patchwork Foot#37, Patchwork Foot with spring loaded guide #57, Patchwork Foot with Separate guide #97. All these feet also come with the Duel feed option for machines that have this extra feature, 37D, 57D and 97D. For those piecing for the first time, her is a handy hint to get you started.
- **Handy Hints:** Sew a few seams on some strips of scrap fabric, press and check that you are using this foot correctly and getting an exact ¼" seam. Press the seam to one side.

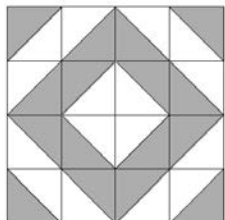
- **Pressing.** Press the seam away from the iron to get it as flat as possible. Remember to always cut off the threads at the beginning and ending of a seam.
- I like to use a stitch length 2 which is a little smaller than the set stitch length but sometimes it is necessary to pull, encourage, a seam to fit so this smaller stitch will hold better.
- **Wash your fabrics before you begin.** Unfortunately some colours do run as I found out when washing a queen size quilt with red tulips on a cream background. I now try to wash any new fabric I buy straight away before putting it in my stash.
- Many techniques have been developed to make accurate piecing easier. Half Square Triangles (HST) are a very popular unit in our quilts. It can easily be made by placing two squares right sides together, a diagonal line is drawn from corner to corner on the wrong side of the light fabric. Sew a 1/4" seam each side of the line, cut on the drawn line and then trim to the exact size required.



- Its amazing just how many different variations you can create.

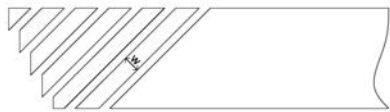


Version 1



Version 2

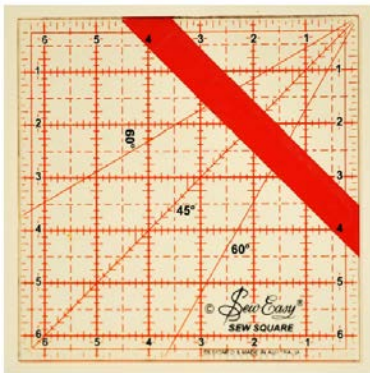
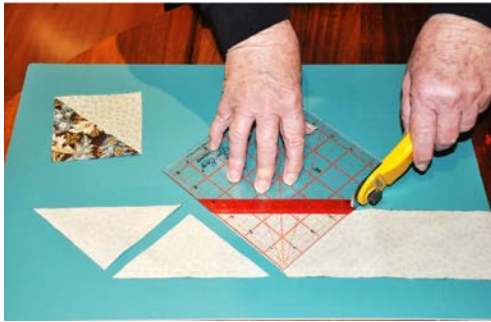
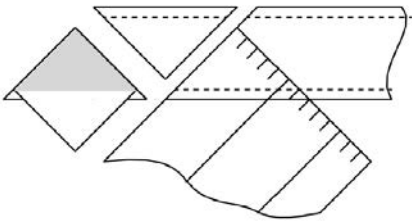
- Another method is Sandwich Piecing HST. This requires placing the background and contrast fabrics right sides together and cutting bias strips, sewing each side and cutting accurate units without the need to trim.
- Bias squares are made from two fabrics. Place the fabrics with right sides together and cut bias strips. See diagram below. If using just two fabrics for a large quilt cut a strip 12" wide by the width of the fabric for finished 3" HST. Cut 10" wide for 4" finished HST. The different sizes get the most out of the strip. For smaller scraps 12" squares work well. Cut across the centre and then strips on either side. The smaller strips at the corners can still be used they just yield less Half Square Triangles (HST).



See table below for the sizestrip to cut for finished bias square.

Finished square	cut strip width	place tape at
1½"	2"	2"
2"	2¼"	2½"
2½"	2 3/8"	3"
3"	3"	3½"
3½"	3¼"	4"
4"	3¾"	4½"
4½"	4"	5"

- Sandwich piece these strips together. That means sewing a 1/4" seam on both sides. Press strips after sewing.
- If it is a 3" finished bias square that is needed place a piece of masking tape on your ruler in a diagonal position at 3½". Place the ruler on the sewn fabric with the masking tape lined up on the row of stitching and cut across the strip on both edges of the ruler. Turn the ruler around and again line up the masking tape with the stitching line and cut on both sides of the ruler. Press seam to the darker fabric. This will give you a 3½" square which when sewn into the block will be a 3" finished square.



A couple of Clayton's patterns are included to make a quilt using HST, 4" finished squares

There are several different ways these HST can be sewn together. These patterns include just a few, there are many others.

Each pattern requires a total of 144 finished HST. For our kits we cut 5" squares of many different fabrics but if you have larger pieces of fabric you may like to use the sandwich piecing method cutting 10" squares or a 10" strip of contrast and background following instructions for a finished 4" square. Or you could use a mixture of both methods so long as you finish up with 144 Half Square Triangles (HST) squares.

If you have any enquires, please email Lessa, otherwise grab yourself all the tools you need to get started and have fun.

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