



PaperPiecedQuilting.com



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Greetings, once again. First, let me apologize for not putting out a Newsletter in June. It was a bad month for me. I had a massive system crash which resulted in me losing all of my data from my hard drives. Fortunately, I had everything backed up and was able to recapture all of my data. However, this took a lot of time and energy as I had to reload all of my program files in order to be able to once again access my data files. Everything is working again and now I can get back down to business.

June has started out as a very hot month here in the Pacific Northwest. It seems as though we went from a mild winter right into a hot summer. Now we are looking at temps in the 90's and 100's as we enter July. I guess the good news is that with such hot weather outside we will spend more time inside sewing.

Besides spending a lot of unwanted time resolving my computer issues, I have been able to get a lot of new products on my web store. I am now offering a wide selection of Foundation Paper Piecing patterns. The patterns are from various designers and subject matters. I am also now offering a nice selection of Fabric Packs specially aimed at the Foundation Paper piecer. Plus there are books, manuals and other supplies just for us paper piecers.

I am also carrying Bottom Line Thread by Superior Threads. This 60 wt. /2 ply Poly thread is excellent for Foundation Paper Piecing as its light weight helps cut down on extra bulk in seams. To go along with this light weight thread as a companion, I also carry Superior Threads' new Titanium 60/8 sewing machine needles. They last 5 to 6 times longer than a regular needle. Remember now, I am a fanatic on changing sewing machine needles on a regular basis. Keeping a sharp needle in our machines at all times reduces the stress on our machines, which we all paid a healthy price to purchase.

In this issue I will be introducing you to another favorite designer of mine; Eileen Sullivan. I will also be talking about how to reduce extra bulk in seams.

I hope you all are keeping busy with the many projects you are doing. I invite you to share with me, and as a result I will share with our other Newsletter readers, a project you are, or have worked on. Send a picture or two so I may also show others.

Happy Piecing!

Jim

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Email Us at: PaperPiecedQuilting@gmail.com

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Eileen Sullivan is the owner of [The Designer's Workshop](http://TheDesigner'sWorkshop.com). One of the most fantastic places to see truly beautiful Foundation Paper Piecing patterns. Eileen has been quilting for over 30 years, and designing quilts using the paper piecing technique since 1988. Her quilts have been exhibited throughout the U.S. and abroad, and awarded honors in most major competitions. She teaches and lectures nationally in addition to owning "The Designer's Workshop."

My very first Foundation Paper Piecing pattern was a quilt designed by Eileen;

Birds of Paradise.



You can see all her patterns on her website or order them at my web store too. They are amazing Foundation Paper Piecing patterns and are fun to piece.

Reducing Extra Bulk in your Seam Allowance:

As you advance in your paper piecing, especially when you tackle more advanced patterns, you discover that extra bulk in your seams make a difference; especially when many seams come together. As a result, we look for ways to reduce any extra bulk in these seams. There are a few ways to help with this situation and below are a few of the ways I deal with these situations:

Thread & Needle:

Believe it or not, reducing the thread size to a thinner weight thread will help. In my paper piecing, I always use a 60 weight thread. My favorite 60 weight thread to use is **Bottom Line by Superior Threads**. Since you are using a smaller seam length (usually a 1.5 stitch length or smaller) you are using more thread per inch than normal. This adds additional bulk. To compensate use a thinner weight thread like a 60 weight. Since you are using a thinner weight thread you should also be using a finer needle.

At this point, I won't go into the relationship between thread weight and needle size, but do realize there is a relationship and that relationship is important. Coming up in our September Newsletter we will discuss this.

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Since I use a 60 weight thread I use a **60/8 needle**. Again, I prefer Superior Threads' new Titanium 60/8 needle. This size needle will conveniently handle the 60 weight thread but do realize that most sewing machines' automatic threader will not work with this small needle: needle eye too small. Self-threading is suggested. My web store carries Superior Threads' new Titanium 60/8 needles. See: [Needles](#).

Seam Size:

My rule of thumb that I follow with my seam sizes in my paper piecing is to trim all the seams, within a section/block to 1/8". Then I trim all seams, between sections, to 1/4". What do I mean? All seams within a block, or a section piece, if your pattern has 2 or more sections making up a block, I trim to 1/8". Then when I sew any sections back together or blocks together, those seams I trim to 1/4". The reasoning is that, the 1/8" seams are covered by your paper (if you are still using paper) or whatever medium you are using to sew your fabrics onto. The 1/4" seams are not covered by paper. (I strongly suggest looking at June Taylor's Perfect Piecing Sheets in lieu of using paper: June Taylor's Perfect Piecing Sheets). [June Taylor's Perfect Piecing Sheets](#).

To conveniently cut both 1/8" & 1/4" seam allowances I use a tool with both seam allowances on one Guide. See: [Guides](#).

I have found that it is better not to trim seams smaller than 1/4", talking about the seams on the outside of block/quilt. They will lay flatter than a smaller trimmed seam and give you less of a problem.

Open Seams Out Flat:

Depending on your pattern, and preference, you can spread your seams open. I use this technique if the pattern calls for it and it seems to help. (Remember now, I am talking about seams between sections or blocks, not within sections or the blocks). As you go through your paper piecing journey you will get a feel for when to open and when not to open. If you open your seams then you should do something to back your blocks to help with quilting. See **Backing Your Blocks** below.

Trimming Seams:

Trimming your seams, between sections or blocks, can help with reducing bulk.

You can grade your seams to reduce bulk, but I have found that this technique is too time consuming with paper piecing since generally you are dealing with lots of small seams.

One potential problem area with extra bulk is when seams come together into a point. When this occurs, I trim the seams that come together at the point, at a 45° angle. To do this, before pressing the seam down, hold the seam perpendicular to the pattern ____][____. Now trim the end of the seam, the end where all the seams come together, at a 45° angle away from the center point. ____\ . Now press the seams open, flat. Your seams should look similar to an arrow pointing towards the center. Just removing this small amount of fabric will help greatly in reducing any additional bulk at the points fabrics come together.

Remove Foundation Material (Paper) from Seams:

Another way of reducing extra bulk in your seams is to remove any Foundation Material (Paper) from all of the pattern seams, both sides of the seam. You want to do this as you go along with your piecing and particularly before you sew an opposing seam on your block/quilt.

I am now designing all my paper piecing patterns without seam allowances on the pattern pieces. Additionally, I now cut off any seam allowances already on a pattern that I want to do. We really don't need a seam allowance on the pattern pieces, if you think about it. When you piece a block/quilt you extend the fabric past the pattern ends anyway and then you just trim your 1/4" seam allowance. Then there is no material to be picked out of all those seams, saving not only your valuable time but also saving foundation material; since you can squeeze more pattern pieces on a page now.

Backing Your Blocks:

To make sure all your seams lay as flat as possible and don't shift around when quilting, I back all my blocks before joining them into a quilt top or block. I use a light weight fusible interfacing (fusible only on one side). Cut the fusible a bit larger than your block/quilt. Place the interfacing, fusible side, onto the wrong side of the block/quilt. Now fuse according to the manufacture's recommendations. Trim your block/quilt to the finished size. If making a quilt top you can now join all your interfaced blocks.

By backing your blocks/quilt, you have stabilized all of the seams, especially if you have opened any of them up. This gives an additional stabilizer if you are quilting in the ditch. It also helps stabilize any borders you have attached to your pieced blocks/quilt.

Depending on the weight of the stabilizer you chose, you won't be able to detect its use, especially after you get the batting and backing on.

Final Words:

Well, I hope that you have enjoyed this issue of our Newsletter. I do appreciate your understanding of last month's problems and hopefully, we are off now to bigger and better Newsletters in the future.

If you would like to see any particular subject matter explored or covered, please email me and I will see that it is included in one of our future issues.

As always, I wish you Happy Piecing!

Coming Up In Our Next Issue:

An introduction to a new Designer:

New Paper Piecing Products:

How to turn a pieced pattern into a paper piecing pattern:

Fun and easy paper piecing patterns to do:

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