

Foundation Piecing Success by Helle-May Cheney

Tools needed:

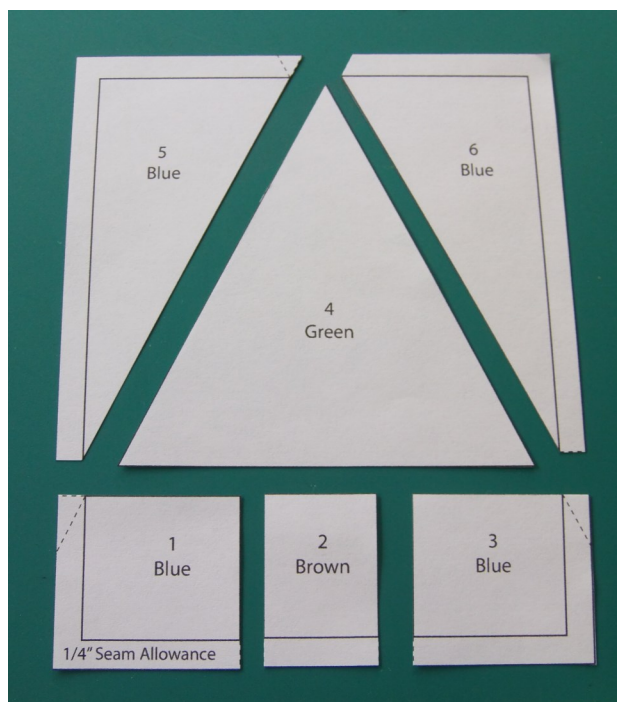
- **Straight edge:** This can be a postcard, very thin ruler, etc. I like to use a green plastic drafting ruler. They can be found in any office supply store or you may even have one lying around the house - check your kids' desks! They are made of very thin and sturdy plastic and come in many sizes. I've been using the same 6" one for years!
- **Add-A-Quarter® ruler:** Can be purchased at your local quilt shop or on-line. They come in 6" and 12" sizes. I have both, but I use the 6" size most often.
- **Cutting mat & Rotary cutter:** I use my regular 45mm rotary cutter and large mat. However, if I am doing a lot of small blocks, I often place a small mat and 28mm cutter right next to my sewing machine.
- **Iron:** Many quilters simply finger press or use a wooden iron. That's fine, but I prefer to use a hot dry iron to get a crisper finish.
- **Optional: Double sided tape:** Scotch® makes a removable tape that does not leave a residue. I find it easier to use a small piece of tape rather than pinning through paper to keep the templates in place while cutting.



STEP 1: Prepare pattern, templates, sewing machine.

- Make the required amount of copies of the foundation-pattern for the number of blocks you are making. Make one extra copy to create cutting templates. Measure the block to make sure it has not been distorted by the copier/printer.
- Cut the template copy along the solid seam lines. Include the block seam allowance for pieces adjacent to the outside edge of the block.
- Shorten the stitch length on your sewing machine to approx. 18 stitches per inch.
- Use a larger needle size, such as an 80/12 or 90/14.

TIP: Shorter stitches and a larger needle will perforate the paper more, making it easier to remove.



Step 2: Cut out fabric pieces.

- Place the template, print side facing you, on the **back** of the appropriate fabric. Cut the fabric out, leaving approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ " of fabric around the template. It does not have to be exact! **(Photos 1 and 2)**

TIP: You can use a pin to keep the template from moving or place a small piece of double sided tape to the back of the template. The tape is especially useful if you will be cutting many pieces from the same template since you can simply lift up and re-position in a new area.

TIP: By cutting the fabric pieces out with at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " beyond the shape outline you will have ample wiggle/adjustment room when lining up the piece on the pattern to ensure that it covers the required section. More is better for beginners! Once you get comfortable with the technique, you will be able to cut with less waste!

TIP: If you are piecing several copies of the same block, cut out the required number of fabric pieces for the template and keep them together with the template.

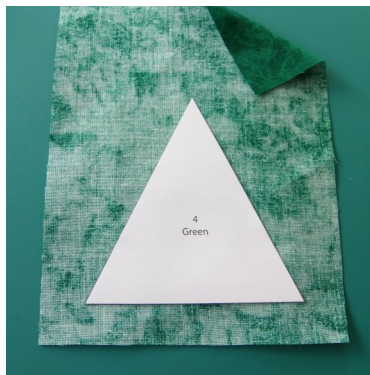


Photo 1



Photo 2

TIP: Interior pieces (e.g. piece 4 shown above) do not have to line up with the grain of the fabric. However, it is best to line up large exterior pieces on the straight of grain for added stability when sewing to other blocks. (e.g. pieces 5 & 6) **(Photo 3)**

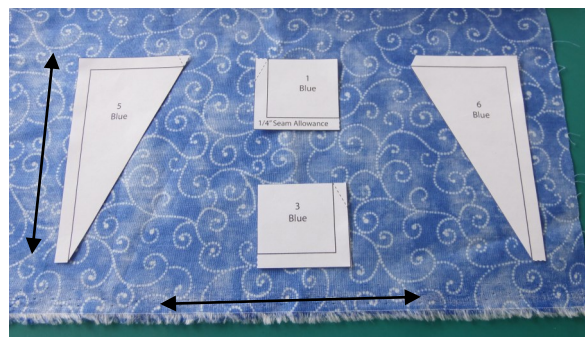


Photo 3

Step 3: Line up and sew the first 2 pieces.

- Place a **Piece 1** fabric on the back (non-printed side) of the foundation pattern behind pattern **Area 1** so that the right side of the fabric faces up. **(Photo 1)**
- Hold the pattern and fabric up to the light and look from the printed side of the paper to see that the fabric extends beyond the entire outline for **Area 1**, **including the outside seam allowances!** Position the piece so that approx. $\frac{1}{4}$ " of the fabric extends past the line between **Area 1** and **Area 2**. **(Photo 2)** Note: The photographs were taken using a light box but a window or any table lamp work just as well!
- Working from the back of the pattern, with right sides facing, place fabric **Piece 2** on top of **Piece 1**, aligning the edge of **Piece 2** with the edge of **Piece 1** that extends past the line between **Areas 1 and 2**. **(Photo 3)**

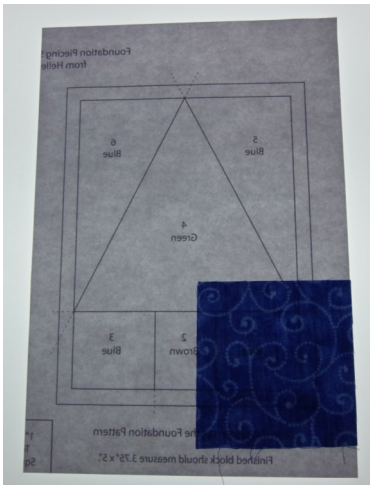


Photo 1: Looking at back of the pattern with **Piece 1** in place.

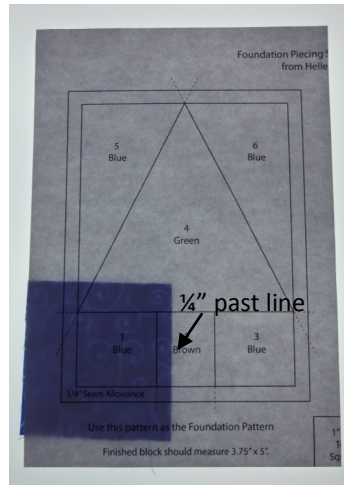


Photo 2: Looking from the front through the light.

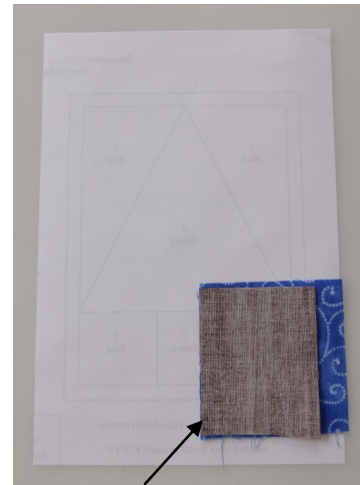


Photo 3: Pieces 1 & 2 aligned on the back.

- You can place a pin through the fabric and the paper to hold the fabric in place or just hold with your fingertips and turn everything over so the printed side of the paper is now facing you. Hold it up to the light and make sure nothing moved out of place! Sew on the line between **Area 1** and **Area 2**, starting approx. $\frac{1}{4}$ " before the drawn line and continuing the seam through and just past the block seam allowance. **(Photo 4)**
- Flip **Piece 2** over so that it is right side up and press using a **DRY** iron. **(Photo 5)**

TIP: I have pre-drawn the extended sewing lines on the pattern through the seam allowance to make it easier for this lesson. Draw these lines in for yourself on other patterns prior to copying. This is especially helpful when the line is at an angle.

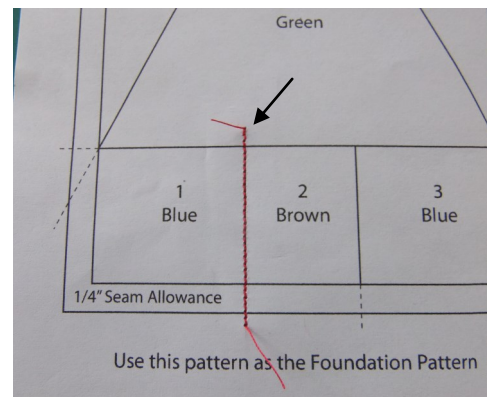


Photo 4: I used red thread for illustrative purposes. You should use a neutral thread that will blend with the fabrics.



Photo 5

Step 4: Sew the seam between Pieces 2 and 3.

- With the printed side of the paper pattern facing up, align your straight edge along the line between **Area 2** and **Area 3**. **(Photo 1)**
- Fold the paper back over the straight edge, exposing the fabric on the back. **(Photo 2)**
- Align the Add-A-Quarter® ruler along the folded edge of the paper so that the lip on the back of the Add-A-Quarter® ruler catches/hugs the folded edge. **(Photo 3)**
- Using your rotary cutter, trim the fabric extending past the ruler.

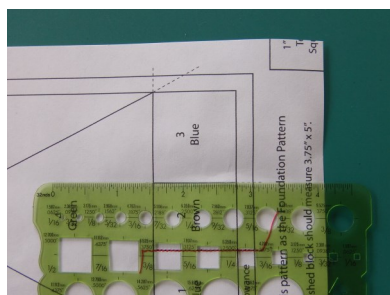


Photo 1



Photo 2

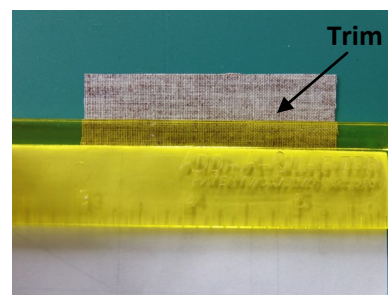


Photo 3

- Flip the pattern over to the back and with right sides together, align fabric **Piece 3** along the fabric edge you just cut. **(Photos 4 & 5)**
- Hold fabric **Piece 3** in place with your fingers and fold over approximating a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam so that fabric **Piece 3** is now facing right side up. Hold the pattern and fabric up to the light to check that the fabric **Piece 3** extends at least $\frac{1}{4}$ " past the outline of **Area 3** (including the block seam allowance) on the paper pattern. If not, reposition the fabric until it covers the area. Flip fabric back so that right sides of fabric are facing. **(Photo 6)**
- Hold fabric **Piece 3** in place and flip everything over so the paper pattern is print side up and sew on the line between **Area 2** and **3**, starting $\frac{1}{4}$ " before the line and ending just past the seam allowance. **(Photo 7)**

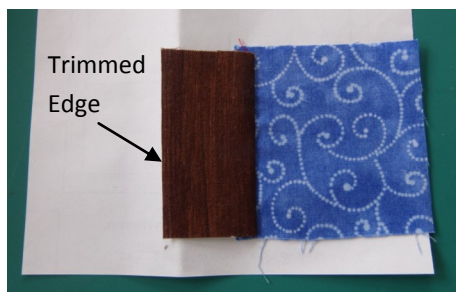


Photo 4

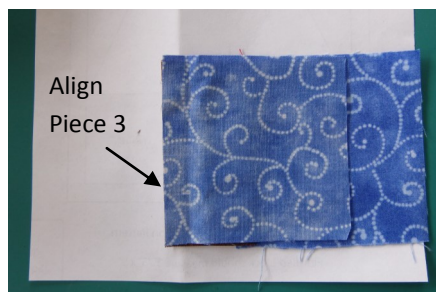


Photo 5

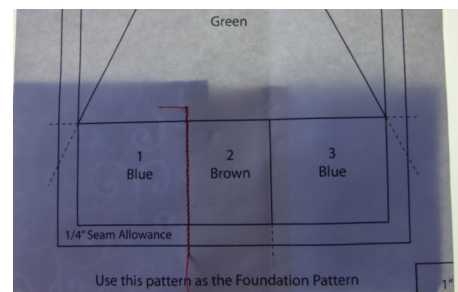


Photo 6 - Shadow shows that Piece 3 covers Area 3 including the block seam allowance.

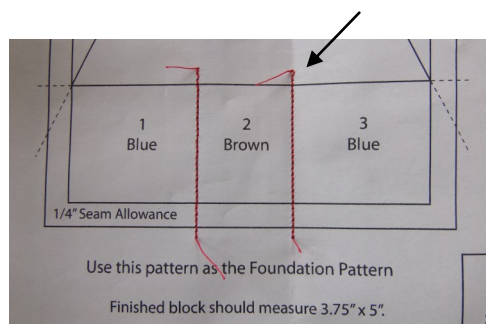


Photo 7

- Flip fabric **Piece 3** over so that it is right side up and press using a **DRY** iron. **(Photo 8)**



Photo 8

STEP 5: Sew the remaining pieces

NOTE: All of the remaining pieces are applied using the same steps as adding **Piece 3**.

- With the printed side of the paper pattern facing up, align your straight edge along the line between **Area 4** and the combined **Areas 1, 2 and 3**. (**Photo 1**)
- Fold the paper back over the straight edge, exposing the fabric. (**Photo 2**)

NOTE: The paper should easily separate from the few stitches that you made at the beginning of the seams between **Pieces 1 & 2** and **Pieces 2 & 3**. If not, and the paper tears a little that's OK!

- Align the Add-A-Quarter® ruler along the folded edge of the paper so that the lip of the ruler catches/hugs the folded edge. Using your rotary cutter, trim the fabric extending past the ruler. (**Photos 3 and 4**)

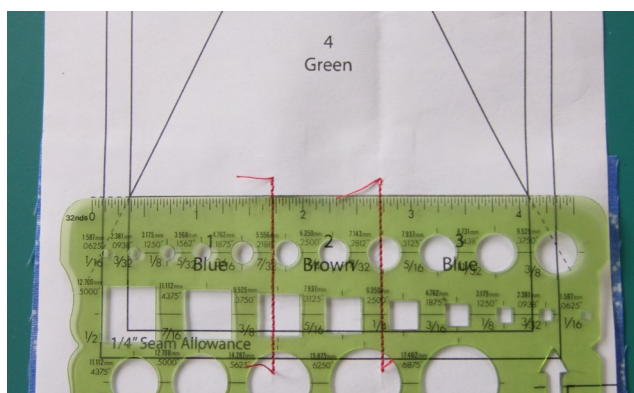


Photo 1



Photo 2

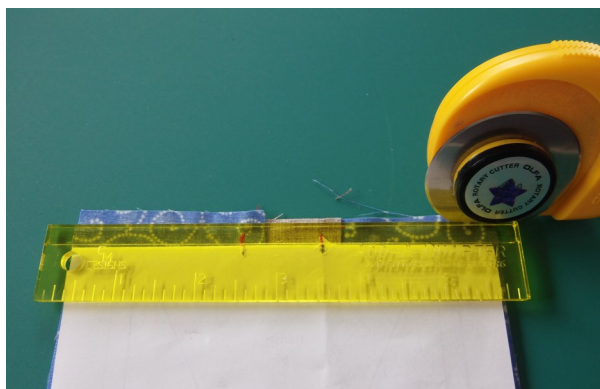


Photo 3

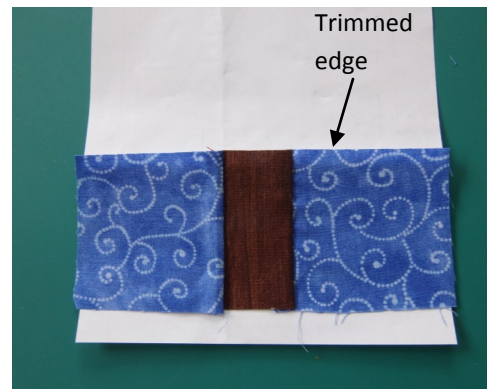


Photo 4

STEP 5: Sew the remaining pieces (Cont.)

- Flip the pattern over and with right sides together align fabric **Piece 4** along the edge you just cut. **(Photo 1)**
- Hold fabric **Piece 4** in place with your fingers and fold over approximating a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam so that fabric **Piece 4** is now facing right side up. Hold the pattern up to the light to check that the fabric extends at least $\frac{1}{4}$ " past the outline of **Area 4** on the paper pattern. **(Photo 2)**
- Flip **Piece 4** back over (right sides facing), turn pattern to printed side and sew on the line between **Area 4** and combined **Areas 1, 2, and 3**, starting just before the block seam allowance and ending just past the block seam allowance. **(Photo 3)**
- Flip **Piece 4** over so that it is right side up and press using a **DRY** iron. **(Photo 4)**



Photo 1

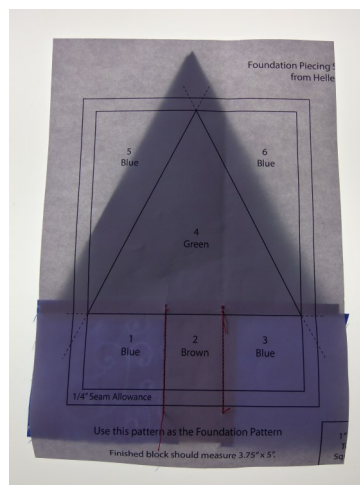


Photo 2

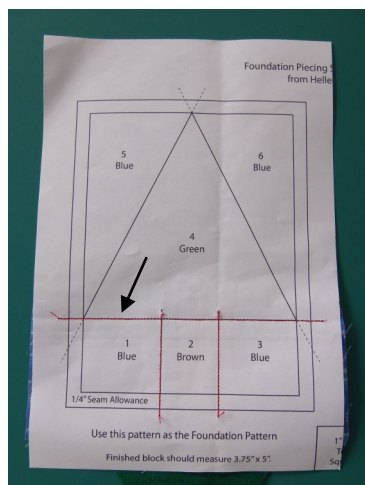


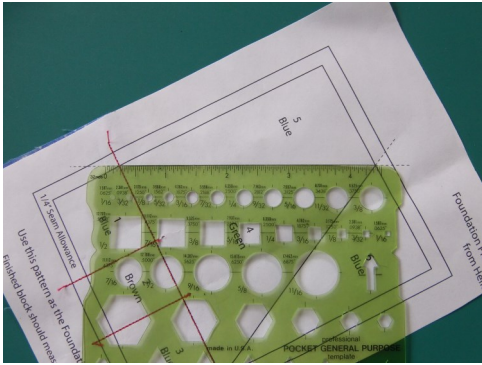
Photo 3



Photo 4

STEP 5: Sew the remaining pieces (cont.)

- Repeat the process again with the remaining pieces as follows:



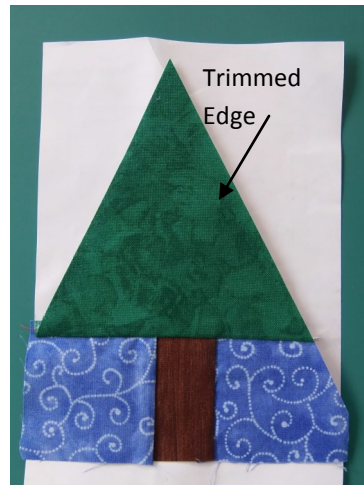
Place the straight edge on the line between **Areas 4 and 5**.



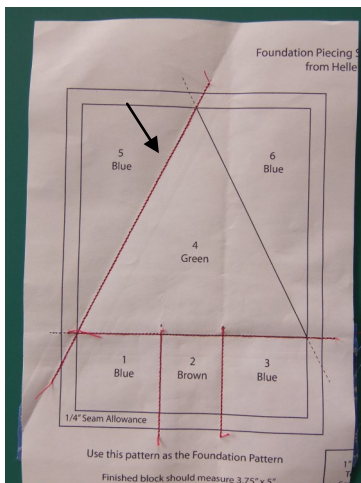
Fold the pattern over the straight edge.



Align the Add-A-Quarter® ruler against the edge and trim the excess fabric.



Align **Piece 5** on along the trimmed edge. Check that it covers **Area 5** on the pattern plus $\frac{1}{4}$ ".



Sew on the line between **Areas 4 and 5**, extending beyond the block seam allowance on either end.



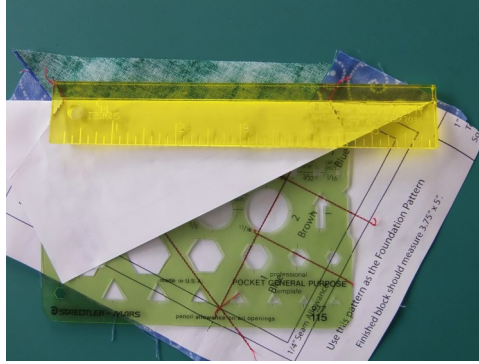
Flip **Piece 5** over so that it is right side up and press using a **DRY** iron.



STEP 5: Sew the remaining pieces (cont.)



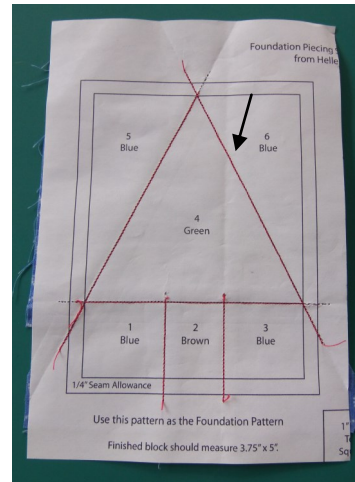
Align the straight edge along the line between **Areas 4 and 6**. Fold pattern over edge.



Align the Add-A-Quarter® ruler against the edge and trim the excess fabric.



Align **Piece 6** with the trimmed edge. Check that it covers **Area 6** plus $\frac{1}{4}$ ".



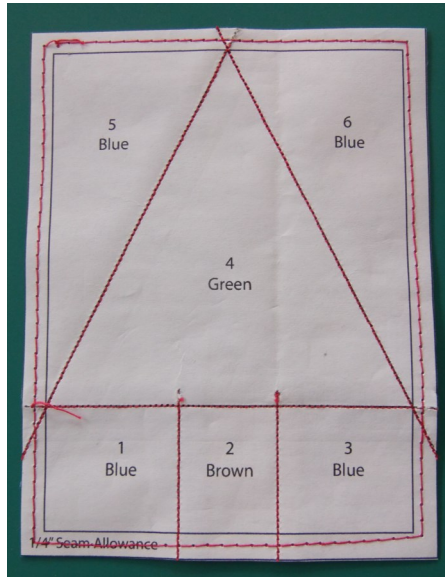
Sew on the line between **Areas 4 and 6**, extending beyond the block seam allowance on either end.



Flip **Piece 6** over so that it is right side up and press using a **DRY** iron.

Step 6: Baste and Trim

- Once all of the pieces have been sewn together, lengthen the stitch on your machine to a long basting stitch (4.5 - 5.0 stitches per inch).
- On the printed side of the paper pattern, baste the paper and fabric together by sewing all around the block within the outer seam allowance. This will keep the fabric from shifting when sewing blocks together.
- Align a rotary cutting ruler with the outside line of the seam allowance and trim the paper and fabric even.
- Admire your work! Foundation piecing makes it easy to create precise points and angles that would be difficult to sew otherwise!



IMPORTANT TIPS to ensure Foundation Piecing Success!

- Be sure to sew the pieces to the pattern following the numbered sequence!
- Make sure the fabric piece always extends at least a ¼" past the **entire** outline of the pattern area when positioning the piece on the pattern.
- Make sure that the fabric pieces touching the edge of the block extend past the block seam allowance to give you room to trim the block accurately!
- Do not remove the paper foundation until after the block is sewn to other blocks or fabric pieces. This will ensure the stability of the block, especially if there are pieces not cut on the straight of grain.
- When sewing 2 blocks together, sew just to the right (one thread width) of the finished block outline. This allows room for the pressing fold.
- To remove the paper foundation, remove any basting stitches. Fold/crease the paper along seam lines to weaken the paper, hold the seam and tear the paper away gently, starting in the middle of the seam. Some quilters also like to run a moistened Q-tip along the seam lines to weaken the paper. Use tweezers to carefully remove paper from tight spots.