

TOMME'S QUILT-AS-YOU-GO CHARM QUILTS

Charm squares - those lovely little gems of fabric from 2-1/2" to 6" square. We love to collect and trade them. But then what are we going to do with them? These instructions will provide you with a way to turn any block that finishes up to 6" square into a lovely quilt-as-you-go quilt. **Please read through Step 1 - Preparing the Base - before you begin.**

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL PATTERNS

Step 1 - Preparing the Base

The general technique for my quilt-as-you-go charm quilts is to attach the backing fabric to the batting fabric first, and then add pieced rows of blocks from the center outward to each end. To begin, you must attach the backing fabric to the batting. There are several alternatives for this step:

1. My favorite batting for these quilts is a fusible batting, which makes assembling the quilt a breeze. I prefer Hobbs 80/20 Heirloom Fusible, but there are others on the market. The batting can be either fused or pre-quilted to the backing.

Fusing: The best method is to use either a non-stick silicone mat, or an ironing board cover made from the silver, heat-reflective ironing fabric. I keep a separate cover just for this purpose. Fuse with the batting side down, backing fabric on the top. Use a hot iron, steam, and a relatively light touch for 2-3 seconds in each area. This is a temporary fuse, so if you get a wrinkle or the backing is crooked, you can peel it off and fuse it again. The batting side will stick a little to the ironing board cover. Peel it off carefully, and then be sure to remove (or cover) the fusing surface before you iron anything else on your ironing board!

Note that if you choose to fuse the batting to the backing, and your blocks finish larger than 4" square, the quilt will require a bit of additional quilting after the piecing is complete.

Pre-quilting batting to backing: This method is just like it sounds. Layer your backing fabric and the batting, and then quilt on your home machine or a longarm. When selecting a quilting pattern, use something relatively open that will look good with a straight-line grid quilted over the top of it. Keep in mind the requirements of your batting. The Hobbs product I use allows quilting up to 4" apart, so I use a quilting design that, when paired with the straight-line grid from quilting as I go, will not leave spaces larger than 4".

2. Standard, non-fusible batting also can be used for these quilts, although it's a little bit more labor-intensive. The batting can be pre-quilted to the backing, as described above, or another great alternative is to use a spray adhesive to layer the backing and batting. Be sure to do this in a well-ventilated area, wearing a mask, and following the manufacturer's directions.

After attaching the backing to the batting, lay out the piece with the batting side up. Measure the total length, and then find the midpoint. Mark the center on each side, and at the very center of the quilt. Do the same thing to find the vertical center, so you can mark the very center of the piece. Then use a yardstick or other long ruler, and a chalk marker, dark Sharpie, or other marker to draw a horizontal line across the center of the quilt.

Next, take the unfinished size of your blocks (5", in the pattern given here), and divide by 2 (so we will use 2-1/2" for this pattern). Put that line of your rotary cutting ruler right on the marked center line (so here, we will put the 2-1/2" line of the ruler on the marked center line), and draw another line just below the first marked line. Repeat on the other side of the marked center line, so you end

up with three parallel lines - one right through the center of the piece, and one on each side that is separated from the center line by 1/2 the finished size of your blocks.

Set the backing sandwich aside, and proceed to Step 2.

Step 2 - Piece the Blocks and Rows

Below is a pattern for a Stretched Star quilt using 5" charm squares. The blocks finish 4-1/2" square. However, you can use any block pattern you like for this quilt-as-you-go method. Begin by piecing all of your blocks, and then join your blocks into rows as described in the pattern below. **Don't press the seams in the rows yet.** Now, the magic begins!

Step 3 - Quilt-As-You-Go!

The Stretched Star Quilt is set 9 blocks across in 13 rows, so for these instructions, we will use those numbers. Lay out your first 7 rows, and decide on the order in which you want them. Press the seams on adjoining rows in opposite directions, so they will "nest" together nicely when joined.

Positioning the first row of the quilt (at the center) is the most important step in having the quilt come out straight. Lay the backing sandwich on your ironing board, batting side UP. Have your three marked parallel lines in the center of the ironing board. If your ironing board isn't long enough for the entire width of the quilt, then start by having the center of the quilt on the ironing board.

Retrieve up the row that will be at the center of the quilt, and take it to the ironing board. Find the center point of that row (which, here, will be the center of the 5th block in the row). Lay the row horizontally, **face up** on the batting, lining up the row between the two outer marked lines,, and matching the center of the row to the marked center of the quilt. Set your iron to Cotton/Linen (hot), with steam, and fuse the center row to the batting.

Note: If your iron is wider than the height of your row (here, 5"), then it will be helpful to place a piece of parchment paper, or a silicone pressing surface, over one edge of the row as you fuse, to prevent the fusible substance from sticking to your iron. This is only necessary for the first row that you fuse.

If your entire row doesn't fit on your ironing board, start fusing at the center, and work out to one side. Then return to the center, and work out to the other side. (For non-fusible batting, pin the row to the batting securely along both long sides of the row.)

Retrieve the next row. Place it **right sides together** with the center row. Use pins to match the seams. Take the quilt to your sewing machine, and stitch the rows together down the pinned side using a standard 1/4" seam. Return the quilt to the ironing board, and press the next row upward, away from the center row, fusing it to the batting. Stop your iron just short of the row's edge so you don't get fusible material stuck to your iron. Repeat for the remaining 5 rows. (Again, for non-fusible batting, use pins to hold the rows in place.)

Now retrieve your other 6 rows. Note the direction of the seams on the center row, and press the seams on the next row the opposite way. Continue to press the remaining 5 rows, alternating the direction of the seams. Then follow the steps above to add the rows, this time fusing from the center downward after each row is sewn on.

When all rows have been attached, take the quilt back to your sewing machine, and stitch-in-the-ditch down each of the 8 vertical seams that join the blocks in the rows.

If you pre-quilted your backing to your batting, you're finished! If you only fused or glued your batting to your backing, and your blocks finish larger than 4" (or whatever the maximum quilting distance is for the batting you're using), then you will need to add sufficient additional quilting to meet the batting's requirements.

Trim the outer edges to square up the quilt, and bind as desired. Then wash in lukewarm water to dissolve the fusible material. **Drying the quilt:** Hobbs, and other batting manufacturers, instruct us to hand-agitate quilts, lay them flat until almost dry, and then put in a dryer on a Delicate cycle to finish drying and fluff the quilt. I never do that; I machine wash and dry my quilts on a Delicate cycle. I remove the quilt from the dryer while it's still just slightly damp, and then smooth it out on a bed to finish drying. The choice is yours.

Tip: This method also works great to make quick, easy baby quilts and donation quilts using Jelly Rolls, or your own cut strips in a variety of widths from 1-1/2" to 4-1/2". You only need to mark the center of the backing sandwich; you don't need the two parallel lines. Line up the first strip along the center line, and then line up each subsequent strip with the previous one, working from the center upward, and then the center downward. No need for additional quilting after the strips are all sewn together!

STRETCHED-STAR QUILT - 40-1/2" x 58-1/2"

This quilt uses 117 charm square blocks in a 9 x 13 setting.

Materials:

117 Charm Squares (5" x 5")

1-1/4 yds for the stars (high-contrast with the charm squares - I used an off-white, but you could use any fabric that will show up well with your charm squares)

2-1/4 yd. fabric for backing and binding (choose fabric that is a full 44" wide)

1 Crib-size fusible batting, 45" x 60" (non-fusible also may be used; see general instructions)

Cutting Instructions:

Charm squares: Square up all charm squares to 5" x 5". (All charm squares are not created equal. We cut a little differently, and so do the manufacturers. If you're using purchased charm squares with pinked edges, they're often slightly larger than 5" square.)

Star fabric: Remove selvages, and then cut the fabric into 2-1/2" strips. Sub-cut the strips into 234 squares 2-1/2" x 2-1/2".

Backing & Binding fabric: Cut a piece that is width-of-fabric by 64" long. Retain the remaining 17" for binding.

Piecing Instructions:

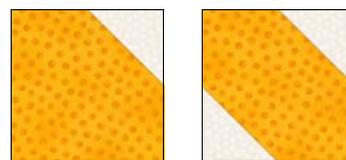
Blocks: All 117 blocks are identical. Chain piecing will speed up the process. Select a charm square, and place a 2-1/2" star fabric square in one corner, right sides together. Stitch a diagonal line from corner to corner, intersecting both sides of the charm square. Iron the lower triangle up toward the corner. Repeat for the opposite corner. (You may trim off the underneath triangles, if desired. Sometimes I do; sometimes I don't.)

Rows: Before assembling rows, sort your blocks. If they are scrappy, sort roughly by color. If you are using purchased charm squares, you could sort by color or by fabric/print. Then divide each stack in half. You will use half of each stack for each half of the quilt, ensuring a nice distribution of color and fabric across the quilt. Set half of the blocks aside, and work with the other half.

For a totally random look, place the blocks in a bag, shake it up, and reach in for each block, using whatever comes out. Or you may lay out the blocks for a more planned look. Either way, your next step is to join the blocks together to make 7 rows of 9 blocks. **Do not press the seams yet.**



Next, retrieve the other half of the blocks, and repeat to make 6 more rows of 9 blocks. **Do not press these seams yet, either.** Set aside this set of 6 rows for now.



Lay out your first 7 rows, and decide on the order in which you want them. Press the seams on adjoining rows in opposite directions, so they will “nest” together nicely when joined.

Now, refer to the “Quilt-As-You-Go” section above to assemble the quilt and add the borders. When finished, the contrasting star fabrics create Stretched Stars across the face of the quilt.

