

Basic instructions for FOUNDATION PAPER PIECING by AitchBee

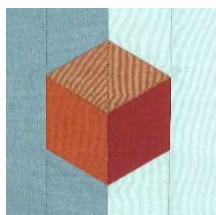
Foundation Paper Piecing (FPP) is a great way of reproducing complicated or pictorial blocks accurately as well as making blocks which might be very difficult or impossible by other techniques.

There are several methods of FPP, each with slight variations, it is worth trying different people's instructions to find the one that suits you best. The instructions I have given here can be applied to almost any FPP project, although most of the FPP patterns on my website include information on a method I have developed myself with additional tips and tricks

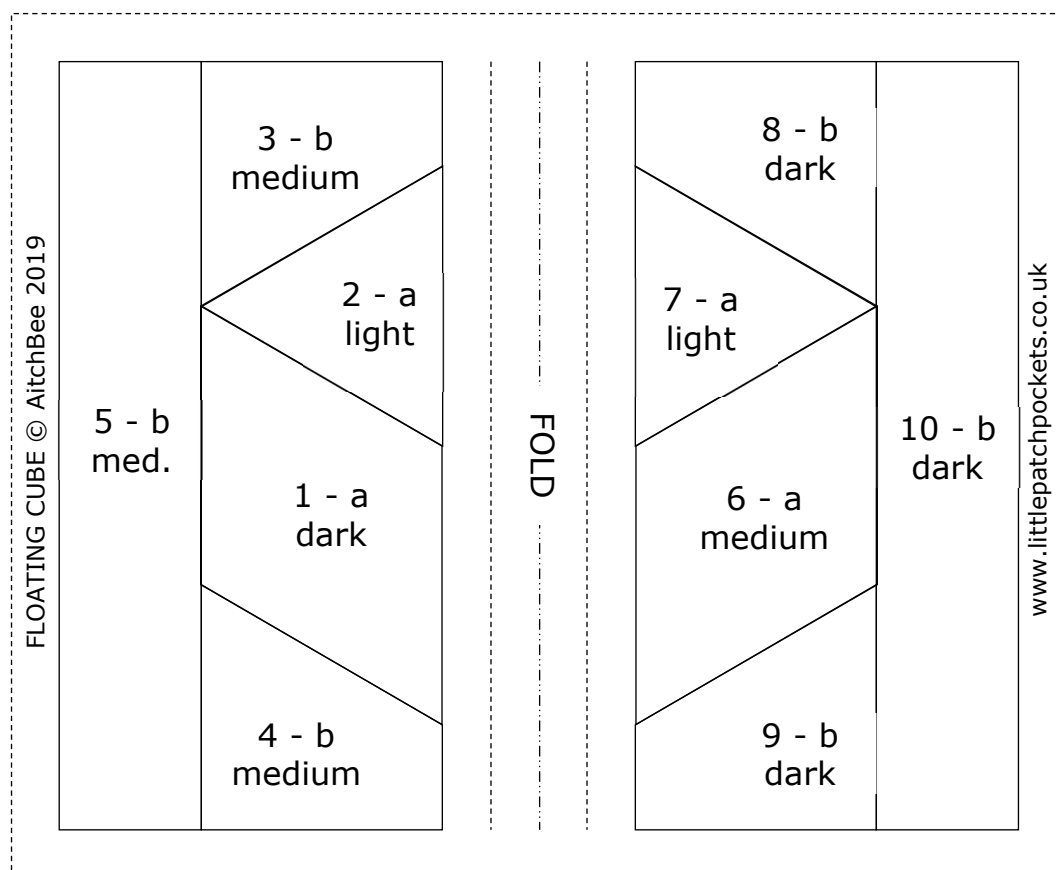
All FPP designs start with a line drawing of the block on a foundation; either hand-drawn or printed onto fabric or paper. This line drawing is always a mirror image of the finished block (it appears back to front) For speed and accuracy I print my designs onto cheap photocopier paper – the cheaper the better since it is easy to see through and tears away cleanly at the end of the project. My designs include an outer dotted line which gives an (approximate) ¼ inch seam allowance at the edge of the block

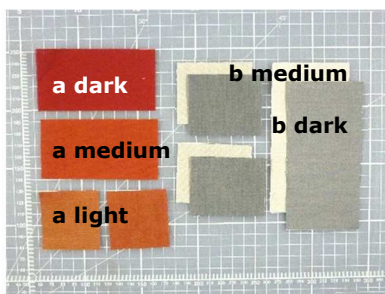
However experienced you are, remember the basic rules of foundation piecing:

- The printed image is the reverse of the stitched one ie. it appears back-to-front
- Fabric goes on BLANK side of the foundation paper
- Only the first piece of fabric is placed right side up
- All other pieces of fabric are placed face down ie. Right Sides Together (RST)
- Set your stitch length very short (at least half the normal size) when sewing
- Always work in numerical order – noting which fabric is to be used in each section
- Stitch directly ON the line with a short stitch adding a few stitches to each end of the marked line
- Trim excess fabric and thread ends as you work
- Avoid steam pressing FPP blocks – it will make the paper soggy and unworkable!

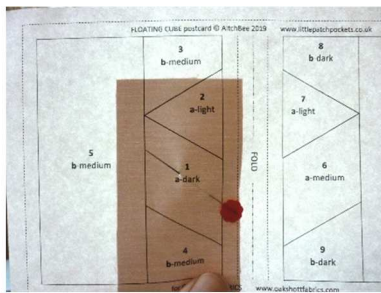


All FPP patterns (or templates as they are also known) include numbered sections as shown on the example below. The fabric is added to the foundation in numerical order, and each number is accompanied by an indication of what fabric to use. Sometimes a specific colour will be shown, but I like you to choose your own colours so I use a letter and a shade (ie dark/medium/light). So in this example the 'a' fabric is for the central cube (three shades) and the 'b' fabric is the background (two shades)

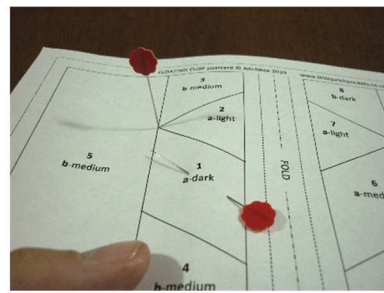




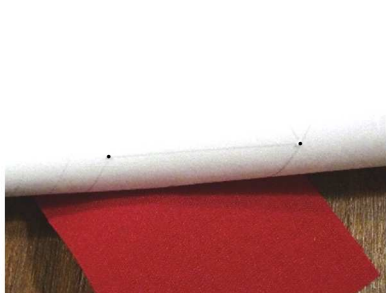
1. Assemble all your fabrics: in this example I have chosen three shades of red for my cube ('a' on the pattern) and two neutrals for the background ('b' on the pattern)



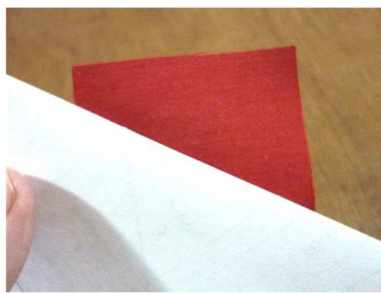
2. Locate **section 1** and check which fabric it needs. Cut an oversized piece and place it face outwards on the **BLANK** side of the paper – hold it up to the light to check all the **section 1** is covered with approx. ¼ inch extra all round. Pin fabric and paper together from the printed side.



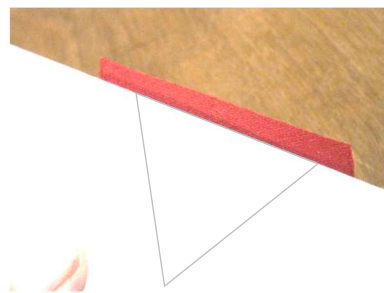
3. Mark each end of the printed line between **sections 1** and **2** with a pin hole – this will be your stitching line



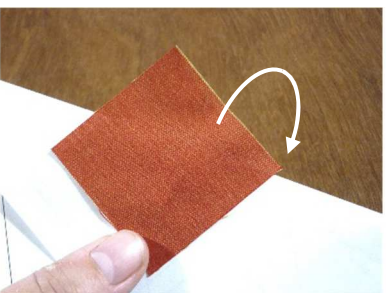
4. You can now see where the stitching line will be on the blank side of the paper



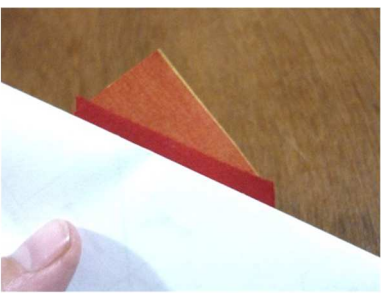
5. Fold the paper on a line between the marked holes



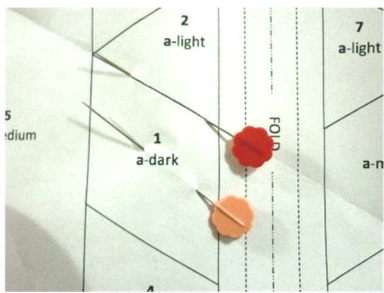
6. Trim the overhanging fabric ¼ inch parallel to the fold – you should be able to see the outline of **section 2** through the paper (shown here in grey)



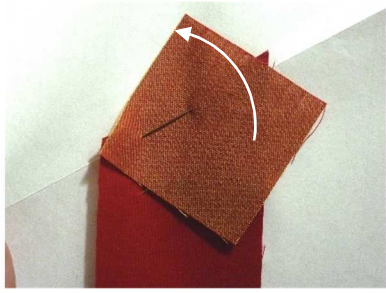
7. Check what fabric is needed for **section 2** and cut an oversized piece (at least ¼ inch bigger all round). Position it over the outline right side towards you



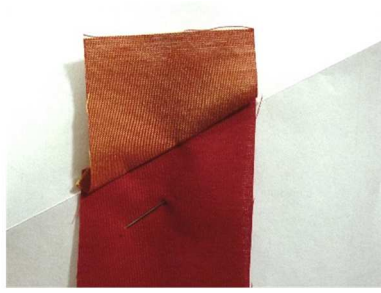
8. Move this second piece of fabric to the back; Right Sides Together (RST) with the pinned piece. Next we will check the position of this piece before stitching it in place



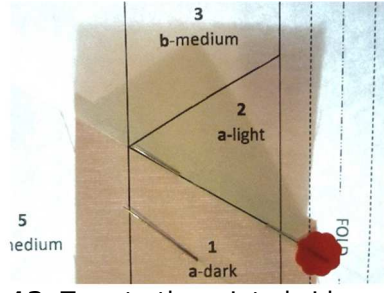
9. Keeping a good grip on all the pieces, carefully unfold the paper and place a second pin, through all layers, on the stitching line between **sections 1** and **2**



10. Turn to the blank side of the paper where you should see that the second pin is in line with the fold in the paper

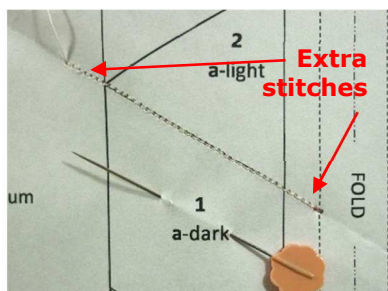


11. Finger press the second piece of fabric over the pin – also in line with the fold in the paper



12. Turn to the printed side and hold the paper up to the light to check all of section 2 is covered with ¼ overhang.

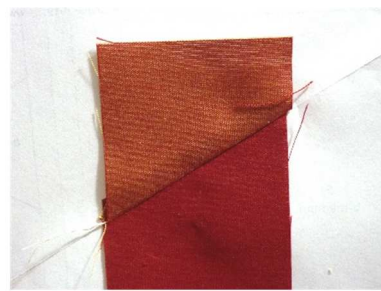
13. Reposition and re-check if necessary. Once it is in the correct place, unfold the fabric so it is flat again and re-position the first pin through all layers and remove the second pin altogether



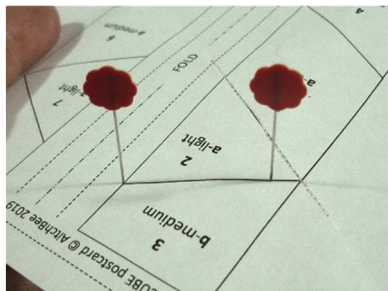
14. With your stitch length set approx. half its usual length, sew directly on the line between **sections 1** and **2** adding 5 or 6 stitches at each end of the line



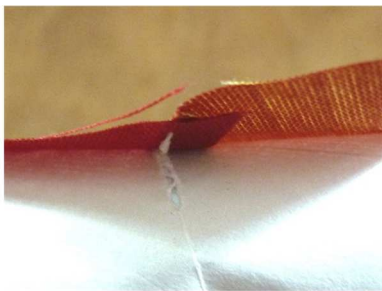
15. Unpin and trim away the excess fabric leaving a 1/4 inch seam allowance. Make sure you are trimming on the correct side of the seam before cutting!



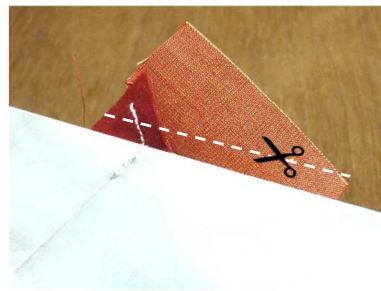
16. Finger press the fabric in position making sure the fold is right against the stitched seam otherwise your finished piece will not be accurate.



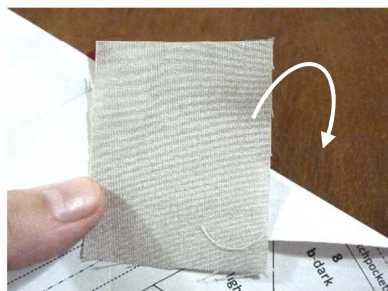
17. Mark each end of the stitching line between **section 2** and **section 3** with a pin hole, as before – get as close to the end as you can



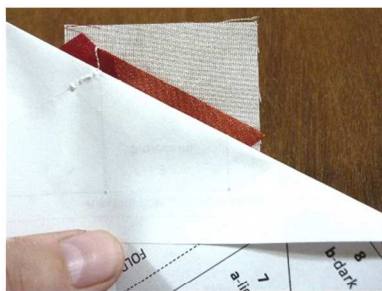
18. Where the stitching from the first seam crosses the next seamline, ease the stitches out of the paper and fold the paper along the marked line



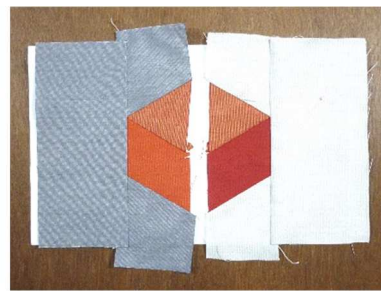
19. Trim the fabric from the first and second patches 1/4 inch away from the folded edge of the paper.



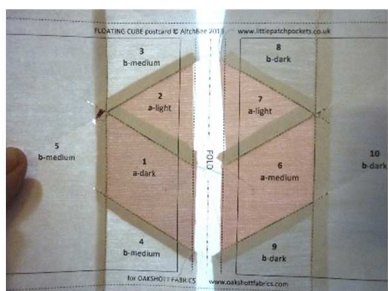
20. Check which fabric you need for **section 3** and cut an oversized piece – at least 1/4 inch larger all round. Position the piece, right side towards you, over the outline of **section 3** which you can see through the paper



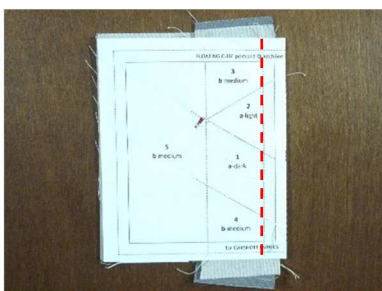
21. Keeping the orientation of the fabric piece, move it to the back so it is RST with the first two patches. Unfold the paper, keeping the third patch in place, and pin through fabric & paper on the seam line to check it's position as shown previously in **steps 9 to 13**. When you are happy with the position of the piece stitch in place as before



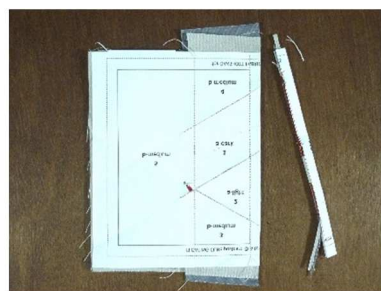
22. Continue adding fabric pieces to the paper foundation in numerical order as before. You will find in this example that you end up with two parts and a gap in the middle.



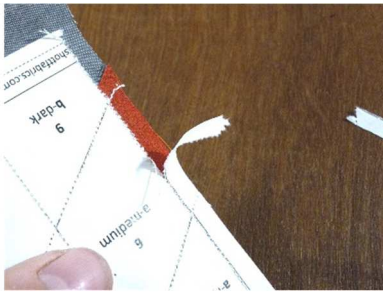
22. Hold the paper up to the light and check all the fabric pieces are approx. 1/4 inch clear of the central line marked **FOLD**. Trim back the fabric if necessary. Press the block



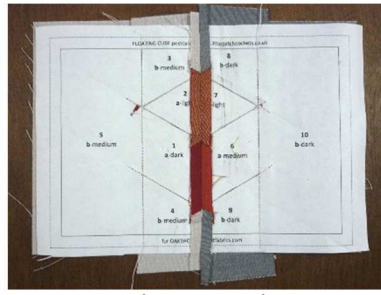
23. Fold the paper carefully on the **FOLD** line so the fabric is RST and stitch from edge to edge on the solid line 1/2 inch away from the fold



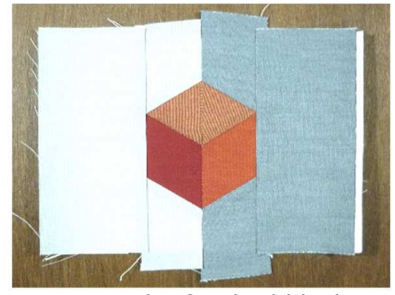
24. Trim paper and fabric to the dotted line 1/4 inch from the fold.



25. Tear the paper away from the $\frac{1}{4}$ inch seam allowance on both sides of the block and press the seam open.



26. Press this central seam open



27. Press the finished block – do not use steam. Trim the block as shown in individual instructions.

Additional notes

If you are making multiple FPP blocks, leave the papers in until you have joined the blocks together and keep your stitch length set short since this perforates the paper and makes it easier to tear out.

When you tear away the paper, make sure you get all the little bits out that get trapped under the seams – a pair of tweezers is useful for this

Practice Piece

Use the sample FPP template below to practice your foundation piecing

