

# Curved Piecing

by Helene Knott

There are several block patterns that require curved piecing. One such block is Drunkard's Path. The following are two methods to piece a 4" (finished) quarter circle block.

The amount of fabric you need will be determined by your pattern and the size and number of the blocks you will be making. For this tutorial, a 5" x 18" strip each of Fabric A and Fabric B will allow you to make several blocks.

## Curved Piecing - Plastic Templates

1. Print the curved piecing templates found on page 4. Trace Template A and Template B onto a piece of template plastic, using a ruler to trace the straight lines to make them as accurate as possible. Transfer the seam lines, the pinning marks, and the grain lines as shown in Fig. 1. Cut the templates carefully along the solid outer lines.

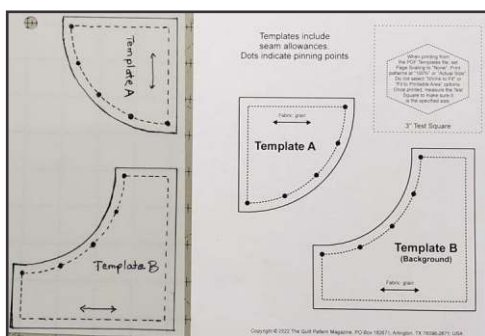


Fig. 1

2. Use Template A and a quilter's pencil or pen to trace around the template on the wrong side of Fabric A. Make sure to align the grain line on template with the grain of the fabric. Repeat with Template B on the wrong side of Fabric B. Mark the pinning points along the curved edge with small, straight hatch marks extending into the seam allowance as shown in Fig. 2.

3. Cut fabric pieces along the solid lines, making sure the hatch marks are visible in the curved seam allowance.



Drunkard's Path  
quadrant block finishes 4" square

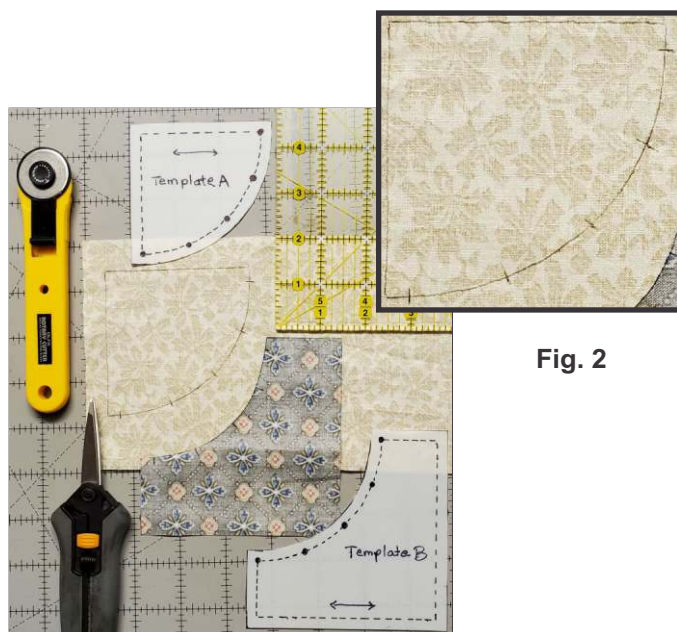


Fig. 2

### Curved Piecing - Plastic Templates (continued)

4. It is easier to match and pin registration points from the convex curved edge of Fabric A. Place Fabric B piece right side up on a flat surface and place Fabric A piece right side down on top. Match and pin the center pinning point #1 as shown in Figure 3.



Fig. 3

5. Maneuver the outer pinning points, #2 and #3, on Fabric B to align with the corresponding points on Fabric A. Pin carefully at those points as shown in Fig. 4.



Fig. 4

6. Carefully ease the curved edges between the pinned points to align and nest together; pin the mid-points, #4 and #5. Ease and pin again between those points as shown in Fig. 5. The curved seam is ready to sew.



Fig. 5

### Curved Piecing - Freezer Paper Templates

1. Print the curved piecing templates found on page 4. Trace just the dashed stitching lines from Template A and Template B onto a piece of freezer paper, adding the pinning marks and grain lines as shown in Fig. 7. Use a ruler to trace the straight lines to make them as accurate as possible. Cut the templates carefully along the seam lines.

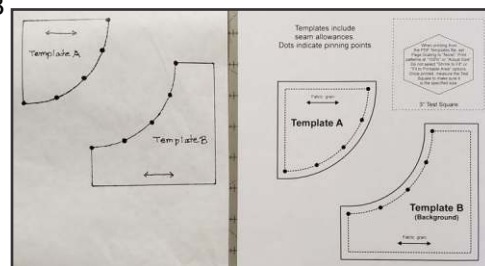


Fig. 7

2. Iron each freezer paper template to the wrong side of Fabric A and Fabric B. Align the grain line on each template with the grain of the fabric, and leave at least 1/2" of fabric around each template to add seam allowances when cutting pieces.

3. Use the edge of the freezer paper to mark the sewing line with a quilter's pencil or pen, adding the pinning marks on the curve. Trace a cutting line 1/4" out from the curved edge using a small ruler and placing small reference marks to connect when cutting the curve as shown in Fig. 8.



Fig. 8

4. Cut the curved edge of the fabric pieces with scissors. Cut the straight edges with a rotary cutter and a ruler to add the seam allowances. Carefully remove the freezer paper.

**Tip:** You can extend the straight seam allowances to 1/2" if you wish to have a little wiggle room to trim and square the block precisely after sewing as shown in Fig.9.

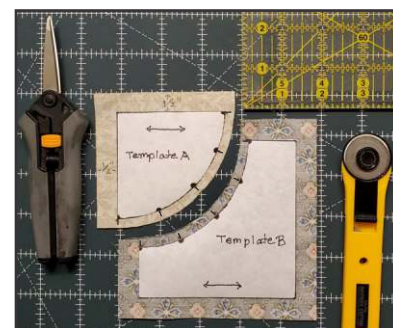


Fig. 9

5. Follow steps 4-6 on the Plastic Template instructions to pin and prepare fabric pieces for sewing.

## Sewing the Block

The curved seam is easier to pin from the Fabric A side, but the seam will be easier and more precise to sew from the Fabric B side. Sewing with Fabric B on top will allow you to see the ruffles that developed on Fabric B during the pinning process and nudge them out of the way of the presser foot and needle. This will yield a smoother seam and less chance of catching ruffles in the stitching.

1. Place the edge of the pinned curve under the presser foot, carefully positioning it to preserve a precise 1/4" seam allowance as shown in Fig. 10. Backstitch to tack the seam. NOTE: On the pieces marked using the freezer paper template, you will be stitching on the marked line.



Fig. 10

2. Sew slowly, easing the curve under the presser foot to maintain a 1/4" seam allowance. Pause as needed to move the ruffles out of the path of the needle if they begin to migrate under the presser foot. Remove the pins as you approach them; **do not sew over the pins!** Be careful not to stretch the seam as you sew. Backstitch the end of the seam.

3. Press the seam allowances towards Fabric B to prevent bulk. On a curve of this degree and size, there is no need to clip the seam allowances, the bias grain along the curve will ease to absorb the bulk.

4. If you added generous seam allowances to the straight edges when cutting, you can now trim and square the block to the correct size (4-1/2" for this sample block).

## Additional Curved Piecing Tips

The following tips may be useful for other curved seam situations.

- For some acute curves or curves cut into straight grain fabrics, it may be necessary to clip seam allowances to facilitate smooth pressing.
- If your pattern requires many curved pieced block units, it may be more efficient to pre-cut squares of appropriately sized fabric rather than mark and cut individual pieces from yardage. Please note that this will probably increase the yardage needed for the pattern.
- There are numerous special rulers available for cutting and making curved blocks. Follow the manufacturer's directions carefully if using them as their instructions may vary from one brand to another.

# Drunkard's Path - Templates

Templates include seam allowances.  
Dots indicate pinning points

When printing from the PDF Templates file, set Page Scaling to "None". Print patterns at "100%" or "Actual Size". Do not select "Shrink to Fit" or "Fit to Printable Area" options. Once printed, measure the Test Square to make sure it is the specified size.

3" Test Square

