Mod Mosaic Quilt Blocks by Elizabeth Hartman

Mod Mosaic blocks can be made in any size and are perfect for “floating” in a sea of negative space on a modern quilt.

Because Mod Mosaic is more of a technique than a pattern, this tutorial doesn’t include specific yardages or even specific block sizes. Finished blocks can be cut down to whatever size you want, but I recommend having a little fun and not worrying exactly what size your blocks will turn out. Embrace the improvisational nature of this technique by making blocks first and then planning a composition around them!

What You’ll Need

Start with a variety of square and rectangular fabric scraps in a variety of sizes to use for your **tiles**. For best results, select (or cut) pieces where the shortest sides measure at least 2” and the longest sides are no bigger than 8”. Your tiles should include both blocky square-ish pieces and longer strips.

You’ll also need 1” strips of a neutral solid fabric (white, gray, linen, etc.) to use for **sashing**. You can cut 1” x width of fabric strips from yardage or cut scraps into 1” strips in a variety of lengths.

When selecting the color of your sashing fabric, consider the color of your tiles. If most of them have brightly-colored backgrounds (like my samples) white is a great choice. If your tile fabrics are more subdued or have mainly white grounds, you may want to choose a darker fabric like gray or brown to provide more contrast.

Making the Blocks *Note: All seams are sewn with a quarter inch seam allowance and pressed open.*

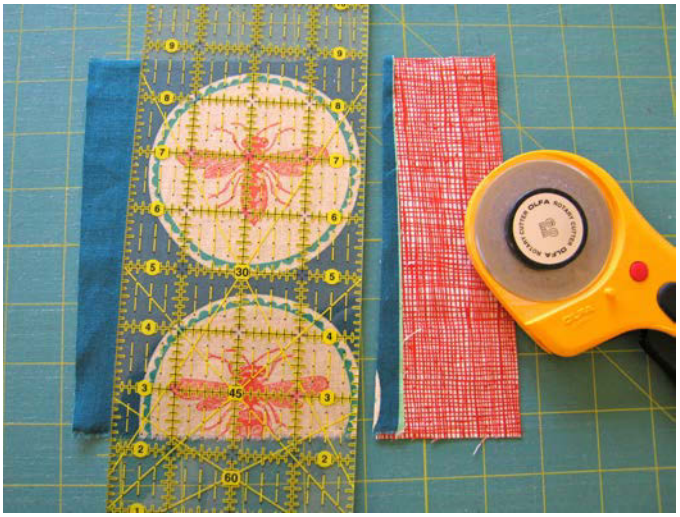
1. Arrange 12 – 20 tiles (more or less if you want especially large or small blocks) on your work surface in a rectangular formation, nestling the tiles together so there are no “holes” in your composition and leaving roughly 1/2" between the tiles.

2. Once you’re satisfied with your composition, separate the tiles into several groups of about 2 – 5 tiles each, with each group creating its own square or rectangular shape.

I’ve labeled my groups A, B, C, D, and E.

3. Starting with one group (I started with A) consider in what order the tiles should be sewn together. In this case, the two tiles in the middle will need to be sewn together before the longer tiles on the top and bottom can be added.

4. Place the first two tiles that will be sewn together on your cutting mat, overlapping the edges that will be sewn together by roughly 1/2" and making sure that the non-overlapped edges are parallel.



5. Use a ruler and rotary cutter to make a slightly wonky cut through the overlapping portion of the two tiles.

Don't be alarmed if this doesn't seem very wonky. If you do it again and again throughout the block, the effect will be magnified.

6. Carefully pick away the scraps created by the cut you just made, leaving two tiles with a wonky angle that matches perfectly!

7. Sew the tiles together, placing a slightly longer piece of sashing between them.

8. Place the next tile on your cutting mat. Place the already joined tiles on top of it, overlapping the edges that will be joined by roughly 1/2", just like you did in Step 2.

9. As you did in Step 5, use a ruler and rotary cutter to make a slightly wonky cut through the overlapping edges of the tiles.

10. Remove the scraps and sew the tiles together, once again placing a slightly longer piece of sashing between them.

11. Repeat this same basic process until all tiles from the group have been added.

The finished block component probably won't be perfectly rectangular, and that's fine.

12. Repeat Steps 3 – 11 with each group of tiles, creating several block components.

The process of joining the block components will be similar to the process of joining the tiles in each block component. As you did in Step 3, start by determining in what order the pieces should be joined.

13. For my block, I started by sewing components D and E together to complete the bottom half of the block.

14. For the top half of the block, I joined components B and C, which will then be sewn to component A.

15. When joining two larger components like these, start by placing the block components on your cutting mat side by side and squaring off (at a slightly wonky angle) one of the edges that will be joined.

16. Without moving either block component, use a ruler to match the straight edge you just cut and cut a matching straight edge along the corresponding edge of the other block component.

This will leave matching parallel cuts, similar to those shown in Step 6.

17. Sew the block components together along the straight edges you just cut, placing a slightly longer piece of sashing between them.

18. Repeat the same basic process from Steps 15 – 16 to continue squaring off and joining the larger block components.

For my block, I now need to sew the top (A, B, and C) to the bottom (D and E).

19. Once all of the block components are sewn together, you should have a roughly rectangular block. Place the block on your cutting mat, lining up the edges with the grid on the mat.

20. Use a large ruler and rotary cutter to square up the block, following the gridlines on the mat to ensure that the block ends up being perfectly rectangular.

Note: If you plan to “float” your block(s) on a contrasting background, you may wish to sew additional sashing around the outside of the block.