

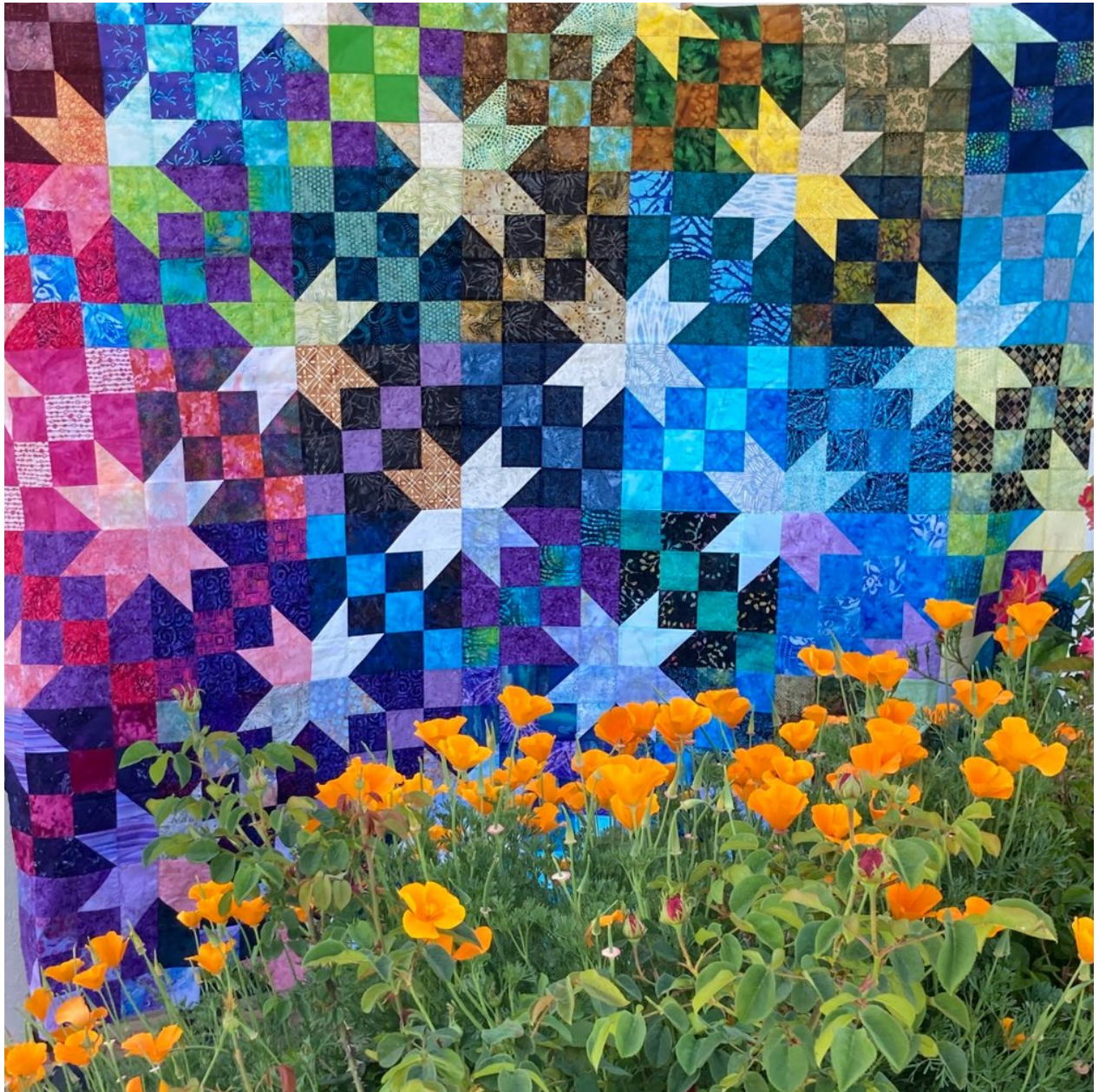
Star Chain a.k.a. Road to Oklahoma

 karenbolan.com/blog/20230706

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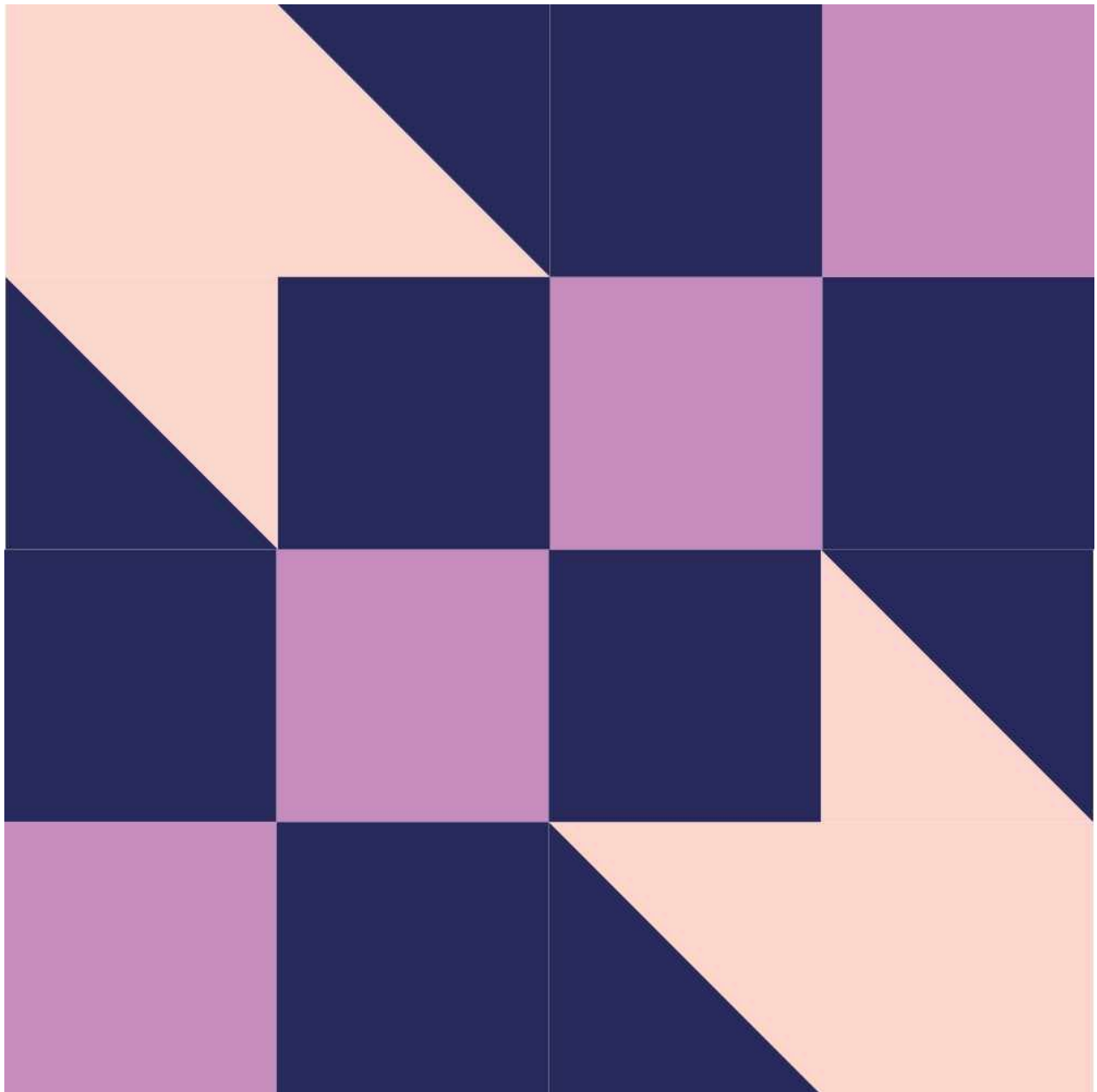


After assembling the quilt top, I learned the traditional name of the quilt block: Road to Oklahoma. It's a great quilt block for scraps, because the secondary design appears strong—even across many different fabric textures and colors—if the blocks are made with consistent light-medium-dark relationships. Do you want to make your own? Read on for a quick tutorial.



How to make the Road to Oklahoma Quilt Block

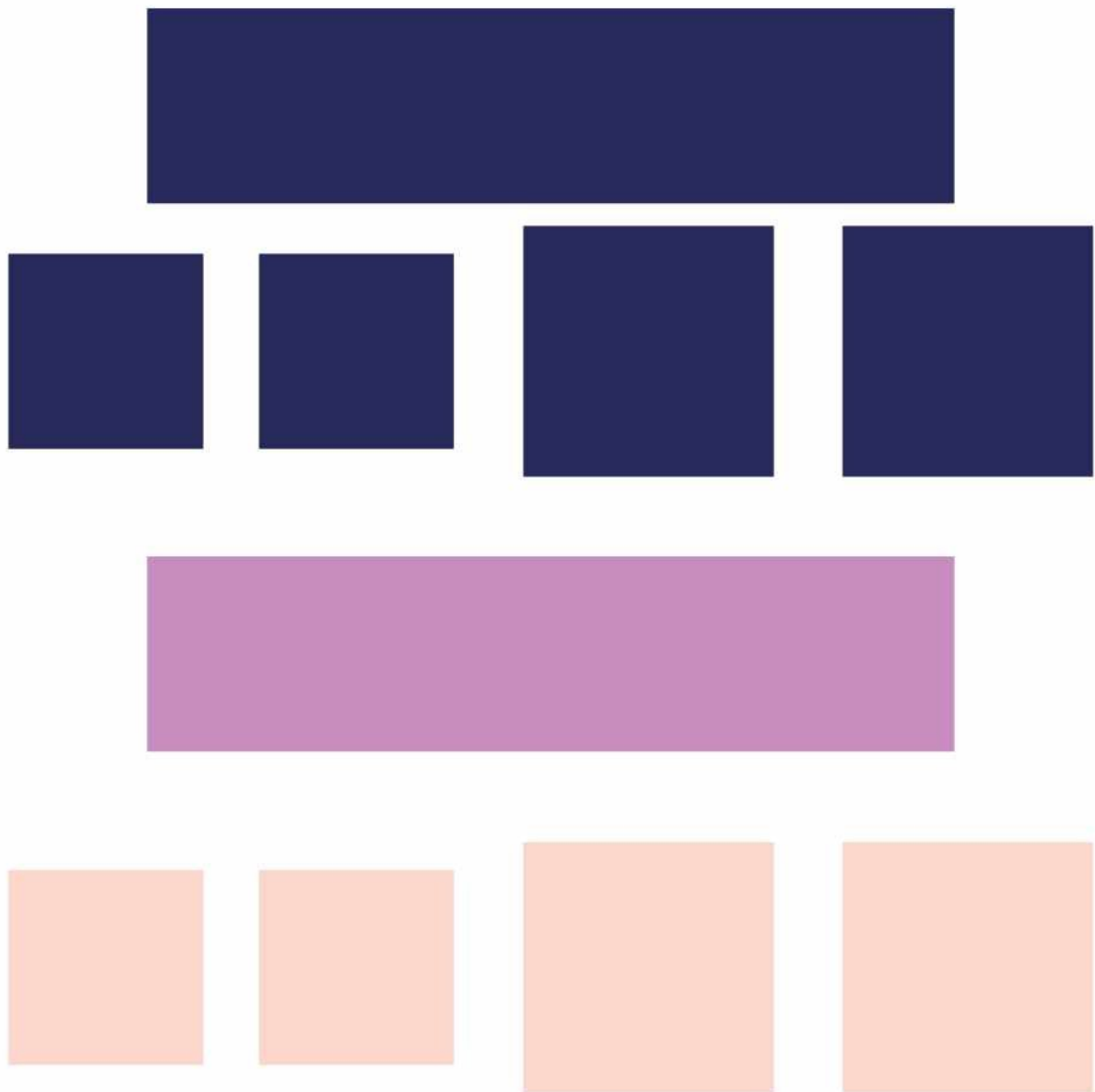
The Road to Oklahoma quilt block is a great opportunity to practice three fundamental patchwork skills: choosing light, medium, and dark fabrics; making strip-pieced four-patch units; and making half-square triangles.



Step 1: Choose fabrics

Choose three different fabrics for each block. Distinct value differences are important to create the final effect.

Value is the lightness or darkness of the fabric. You can determine relative value by squinting at your fabric selection or by using a black and white filter on your phone camera.



For this block, you need:

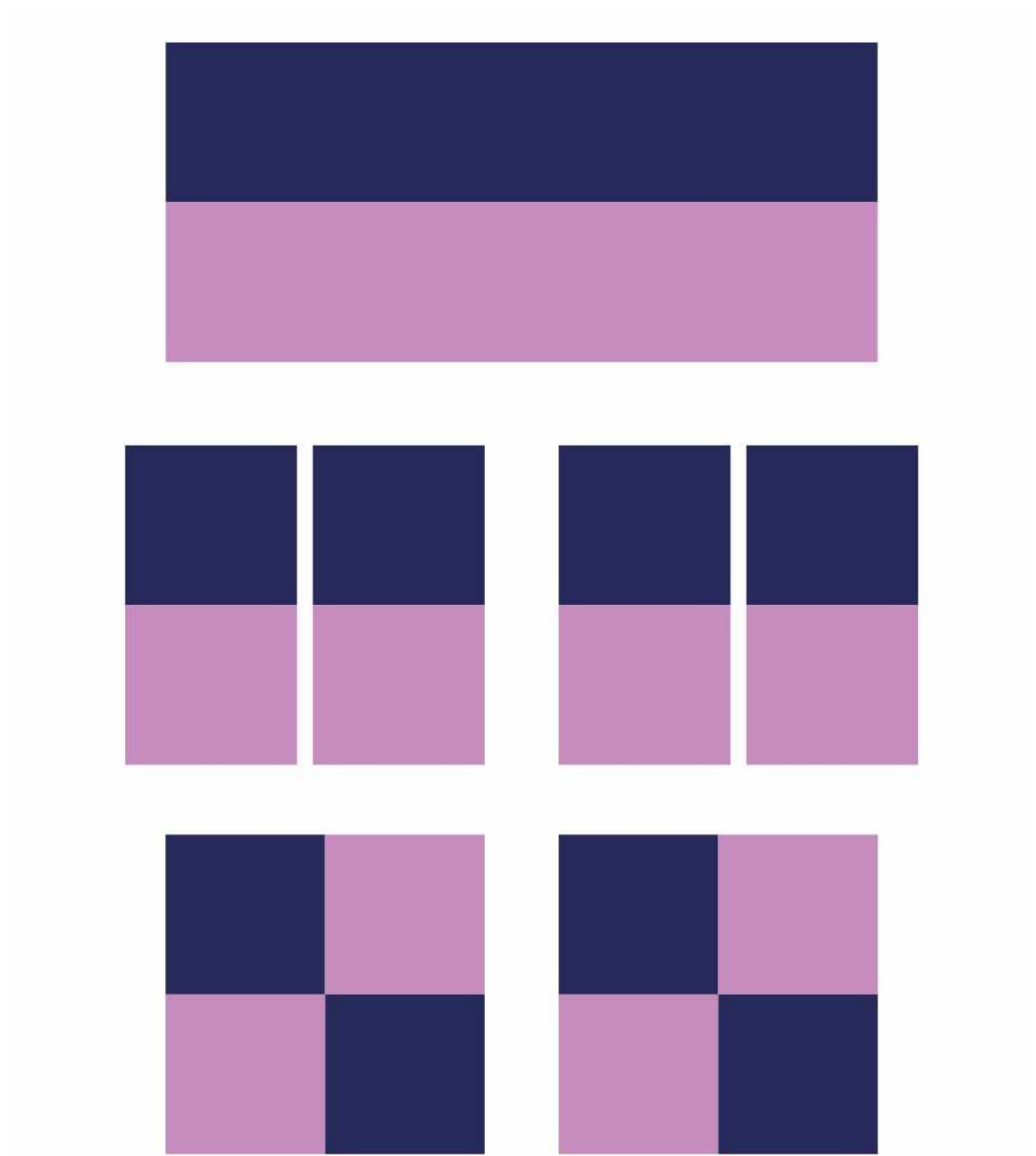
1. Fabric 1 (darkest value):
 1. One strip, $3\frac{1}{2}$ " by $14\frac{1}{2}$ "
 2. Two squares, $3\frac{1}{2}$ " by $3\frac{1}{2}$ "
 3. Two squares, $4\frac{1}{2}$ " by $4\frac{1}{2}$ "
2. Fabric 2 (medium value):
 1. One strip, $3\frac{1}{2}$ " by $14\frac{1}{2}$ "
3. Fabric 3 (lightest value):
 1. Two squares, $3\frac{1}{2}$ " by $3\frac{1}{2}$ "
 2. Two squares, $4\frac{1}{2}$ " by $4\frac{1}{2}$ "

Step 2: Make 4-patch units

The block uses two 4-patch units. For efficiency, use strip piecing to assemble them.

A 4-patch is a traditional patchwork unit found in many quilts, and is simply a square made of four equally-sized squares of fabric sewn together.

Strip piecing is a method of sewing strips of fabric together, then cutting across the strip set, then sewing the cross-cut pieces back together differently.



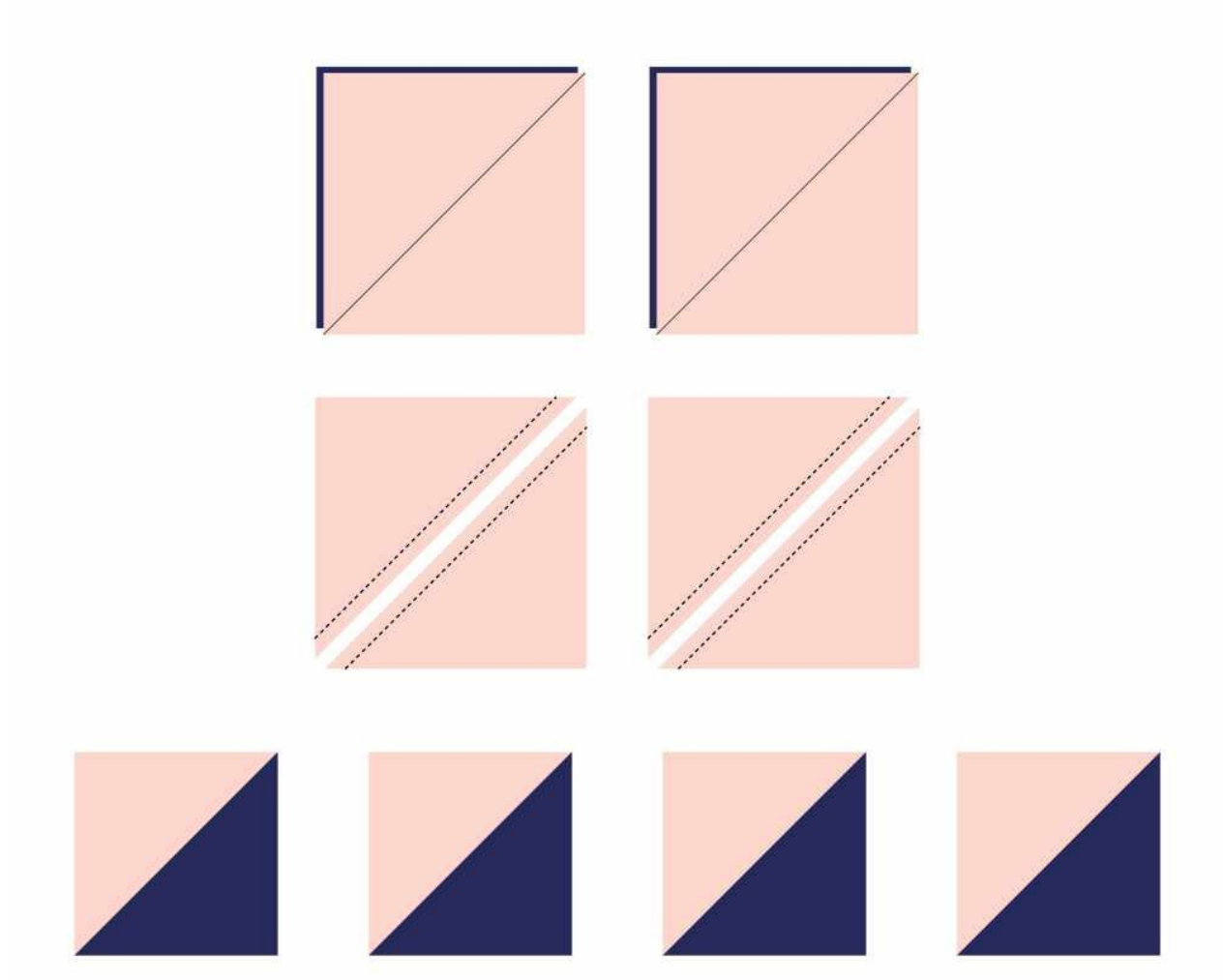
To make two 4-patch units:

1. Use a quarter-inch seam allowance throughout this block. Sew strips of the dark and medium fabric together along the $14\frac{1}{2}$ " side. Press your seam to the dark fabric. The strip should now measure $6\frac{1}{2}$ " by $14\frac{1}{2}$ ".
2. Cut across the $6\frac{1}{2}$ " width to make four pieces, each measuring $6\frac{1}{2}$ " by $3\frac{1}{2}$ ".
3. Place two pieces right sides together, with the medium and dark fabrics alternating. Your seams will nest. Sew along the $6\frac{1}{2}$ " side. Press your seam open (or "spin" your seams for bonus points).
4. Repeat with the other two pieces. Your 4-patches should measure $6\frac{1}{2}$ " by $6\frac{1}{2}$ ".

Step 3: Make half-square-triangles

The block uses four half-square triangles (often abbreviated as “HSTs”).

A Half-square-triangle (HST) is a traditional patchwork element found in many quilts, and is simply a square made of two equally-sized triangles of fabric sewn together with a seam diagonally across the square.

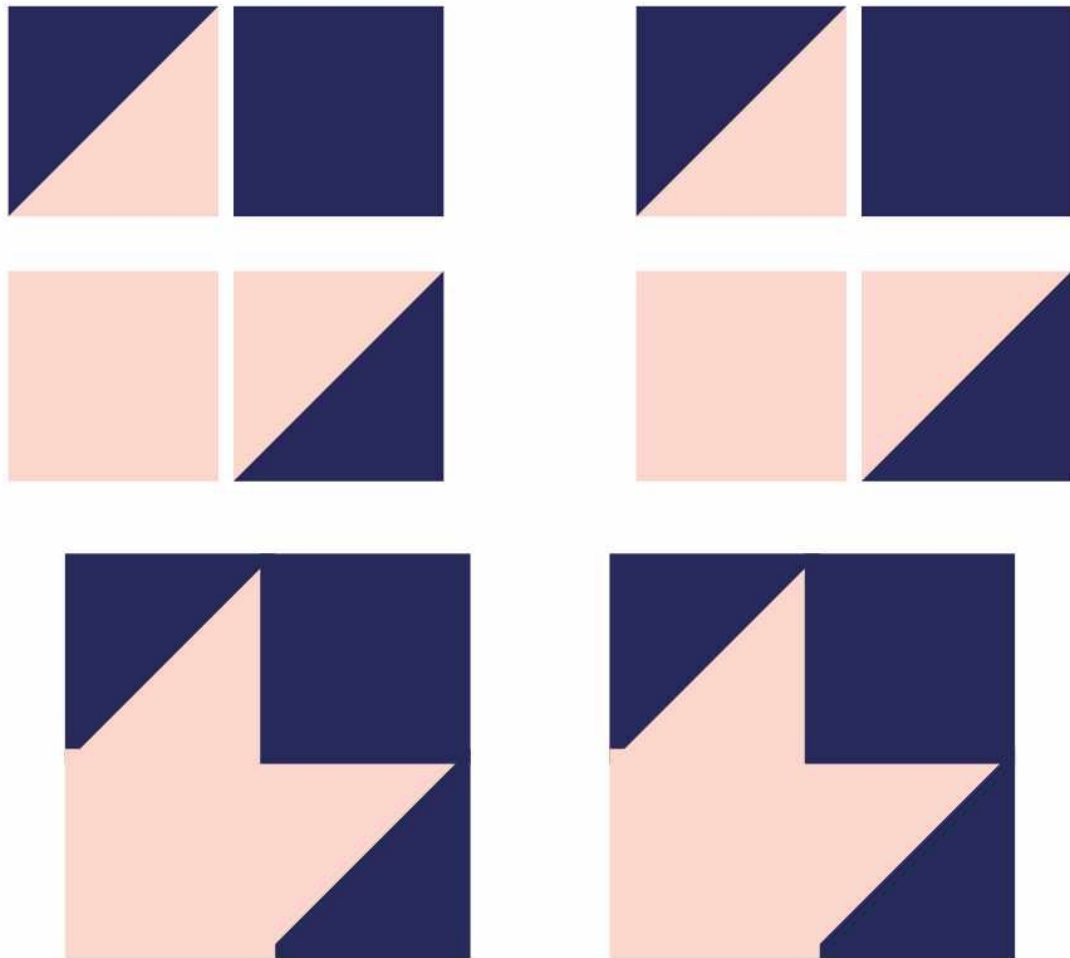


To make four half-square-triangle elements:

1. Draw a diagonal line across each of the $4\frac{1}{2}$ " squares of your lightest fabric. Place those squares on top of the $4\frac{1}{2}$ " squares of dark fabric, with "right sides" of the fabric together.
2. Sew $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from each side of the diagonal line.
3. Cut along the drawn diagonal line to make four pieces. Press your seams to the dark fabric.
4. Trim your pieces down to $3\frac{1}{2}$ " by $3\frac{1}{2}$ ", making sure the diagonal seam is going right into the corner.

Step 4: Assemble the HST elements into HST units

Combining traditional patchwork elements (like HSTs) into units, then into full quilt blocks, can be a streamlined way to make quilt blocks. Here, the HST units consist of two HSTs and two squares of fabric each, assembled in a 4-patch configuration.

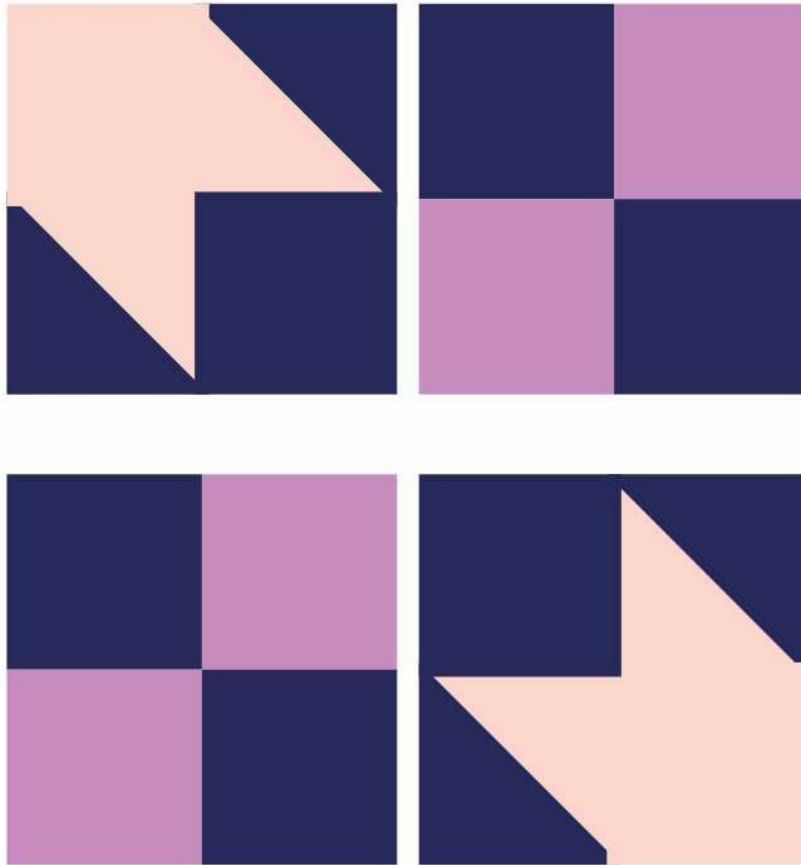


To assemble two HST units:

1. Use the image or bulleted text below to position your half-square triangles with your 3½" squares, and sew two identical blocks.
 - Position one HST with the light edges at the bottom and right, and sew to the left edge of the dark square.
 - Position one HST with the light edges at the top and left, and sew to the the right edge of the light square.
 - Position the first unit above the second unit, noting that the light square is in contact with light edges of both HSTs, and sew them together.
 - Repeat to make two units of each configuration.
2. Press seams open. Each block should measure 6½" by 6½". Notice that the triangle diagonals are now ¼" away from the edges of your blocks. This is good!

Step 5: Assemble the Road to Oklahoma quilt block

The final step is to assemble the four units you just made into a quilt block. This final quilt block is a 16-patch (with 16 equally-sized square elements on a grid forming a square quilt block). The unfinished block dimensions are 12½" by 12½" to measure 12" by 12" once the quilt blocks are all sewn together.



To assemble the block:

1. Position the units for your blocks. The light fabrics will be in diagonally-opposite corners and the medium fabrics will form a diagonal line between the other corners.
2. Pair each four-patch block with a half-square triangle block and sew together with a quarter-inch seam, with right sides together. Press seams open.
3. Sew the two pieces together, and press the seam open. Your block should now measure 12½" by 12½".

A final note about accuracy (a troubleshooting guide):

Making this block is a fantastic way to develop basic patchwork quilting skills. For this block, use a quarter-inch seam allowance for all seams. If you measure after each seam and find your piece is not the size indicated, use this guide:

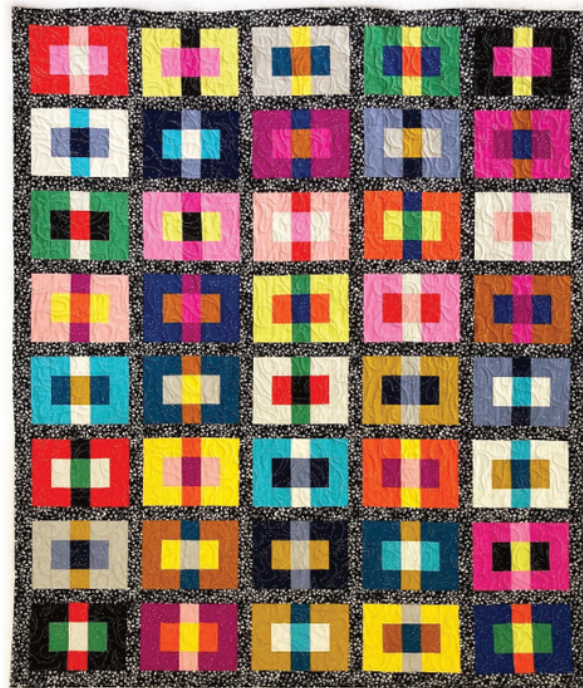
1. **If your piece is smaller than it should be**, your seam allowance was too big. Use your seam ripper to remove the seam and try again. Adjust your needle position slightly to the right or eyeball a smaller seam allowance and note a spot on your machine bed or presser foot to watch.
2. **If your piece is bigger than it should be**, your seam allowance was too small. Use your seam ripper to remove the seam and try again. Adjust your needle position slightly to the left or eyeball a bigger seam allowance and note a spot on your machine bed or presser foot to watch.

Looking for more?

Did you know I teach and lecture for quilt guilds? If you are interested in seeing more from me, ask your guild program chair to reach out and book a class.

If you liked my tutorial, you can find my published quilt patterns in my shop. I treat all my patterns as teaching tools, so each one covers some of the skills needed to get the best results (and the most pleasant sewing experience)! One pattern that is particularly fun for the scrappy quilt lovers like you is Mixed Box. It's a Jelly Roll pattern, but you can make it with scrappier 2-1/2-inch strips too.

Mixed Box



Quilt Pattern by Karen Bolan

Wall
36" × 35½"

Throw
59" × 69½"

Version 1.2

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Thanks for tuning in for this scrappy celebration! Don't forget to check out the other scrappy projects in this year's Summer Scrap Elimination hosted by [Swan Sheridan](#). If multiple scrappy projects to drool over wasn't enough, read through [her Week 1 post](#) to find details about how to win a prize for making a project from this series!

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