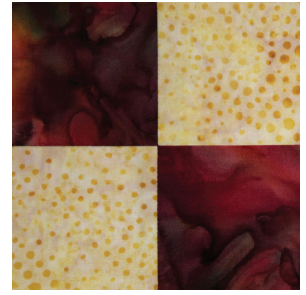


# DOUBLE STRIP-PIECED FOUR PATCH

## Technique: Strip-Pieced Blocks

*Note: It may take a few minutes to read the instructions, but once you get started the sewing goes pretty fast.*



This technique was developed in 2003. I was thinking how triangle-squares could be made 2 at a time while sewing diagonally through the center of the block. I was in the process of developing my Seam Guide and discovered I could piece 4-patch blocks the same way by sewing vertically instead of diagonally and having guides on my sewing machine so I wouldn't have to mark the lines. This technique can be used when you are using only 2 fabrics or with multiple fabrics. It can also be used with the 5" charm packs that are popular now, by adjusting the Guide Bars for a very scant  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam so the blocks can be squared to the same size. You can also sew down the sides instead of the middle, but then you have to be careful when cutting the blocks in two and they won't be as accurate.

For these sample blocks, they will finish at  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " x  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ". That's the size needed for my Sweet Sampler pattern. For a different block size: Cut strips 1" wider than finished block. For example: For a 4" x 4" finished block cut the strips 5" wide.

To figure how many strips you need, divide the length of the strip by the strip width. That will give you the number of blocks each strip will make. For example: For a 4" x 4" finished block using 40" wide fabric,  $40 \div 5 = 8$ . Each fabric strip will make 8 blocks. But you need 2 different fabric strips to make the blocks, so that will give you 16 blocks.

Sometimes your fabric strips may be a little short and you will end up with a  $\frac{1}{2}$  width. These can still be counted as you're working with double widths of fabric. In this case you would end up with 15 blocks. When using these quick-piecing techniques it's always better to finish with a few extra blocks than to end up with 1 or 2 short.

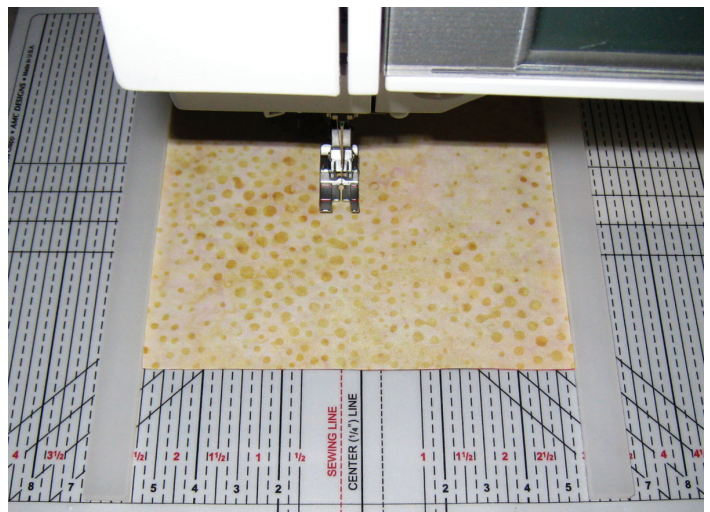
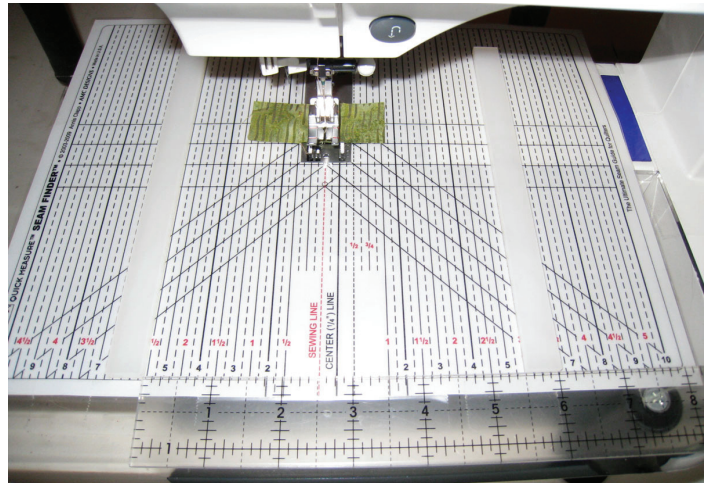
When using 2 fabrics, the easiest way to cut the strips is to layer the 2 fabrics right sides together first. That way after they are cut they will be layered and ready to sew. If you are using multiple fabrics this may not always be possible. I sometimes cut my fabrics down the middle lengthwise or into fat quarters to give me more manageable pieces that are easier to cut using a 24" x 36" or smaller cutting mat. Keep in mind when doing this that if the full length strip will make an uneven number of finished blocks and you cut the strip in half you may lose one of your blocks, or end up with more  $\frac{1}{2}$  width blocks. Also, when using lots of different fabrics, remove the selvage edges and cut them all the same length before cutting the strips.

If you are using directional prints, pay attention to the direction you layer your fabrics. Fold one fabric back horizontally to see which direction the designs go. With this technique you will get right and left hand blocks so you may prefer to use a different technique if you have directional prints that need to go in the same direction on all blocks.

That's enough information for now, so let's get started.

*Tip: When using these strip-piecing techniques, always start with a full bobbin. You wouldn't want to have to remove the Guide Bars to replace the bobbin before you're finished.*

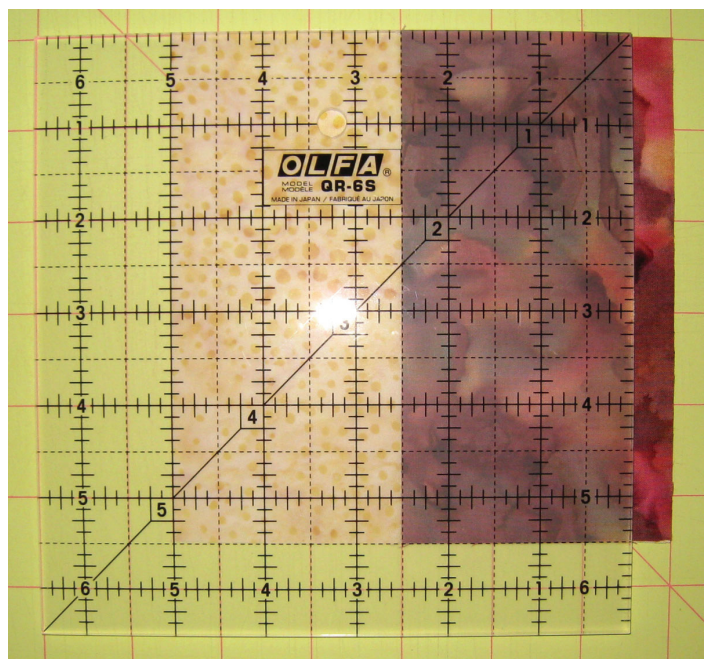
First you need to attach the Seam Finder™ to your sewing machine. The Cabinet Size works best for finished blocks larger than 4½", but for this sample block you could also use the Portable size. Then you need to place the adhesive Guide Bars at the 5½" lines on the Seam Guide, or if you are doing a different block size, on the lines for the width of the fabric strip. These are the black numbers on the Seam Guide. For example: For a 4" finished block with 5" fabric strips you will place the Guide Bars at the 5" lines so there is exactly 5" between them. I usually cover the line on the right side of the needle and let the line show along with about one line width of white area on the left side of the needle to get a scant ¼" seam which allows for the fold in the fabric when pressing. The positioning of the Guide Bars will also depend on how accurate the fabric strips were cut. The left Guide Bar determines the seam allowance so it needs to be positioned accurately. The right Guide Bar holds the fabric strip in position so it doesn't shift. So if your fabric strips aren't perfect or you find that you're a fraction of an inch short on your last strip, it will still work as long as your left Guide Bar is positioned correctly and you've layered your fabric before cutting the strips. You will just end up with a narrower seam allowance.



For these sample blocks the fabric strips will be cut 5½" wide. Place the Guide Bars at the 5½" lines on the Seam Guide. This is halfway between the black 5 and 6 numbers. The right Guide Bar should be positioned ¼" to the right of the 5" line and the left Guide Bar should be positioned ¼" to the left of the 5" line. The inside edge of both should be 2¾" from the Center (¼") Line. I usually measure from the Center Line both directions to make sure I have them placed correctly. There should be exactly 5½" between the Guide Bars.

Always make a test block first before sewing multiple blocks. Cut two 5½" squares of fabric. Place between the Guide Bars and sew from end to end.

Press open and measure. If it measures exactly 5" then the Guide Bars are positioned correctly. If it measures less than 5" reposition the Guide Bars to the left. If it measures more than 5" reposition the Guide Bars to the right. If necessary, unpress the fold, rotate the block 180° and sew down the other side, press, and remeasure. Once the measurement is correct you will be able to quickly make your blocks.





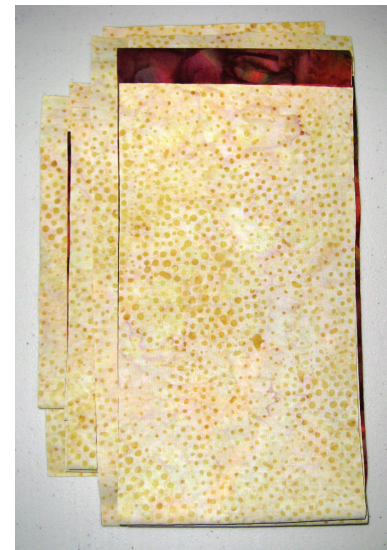
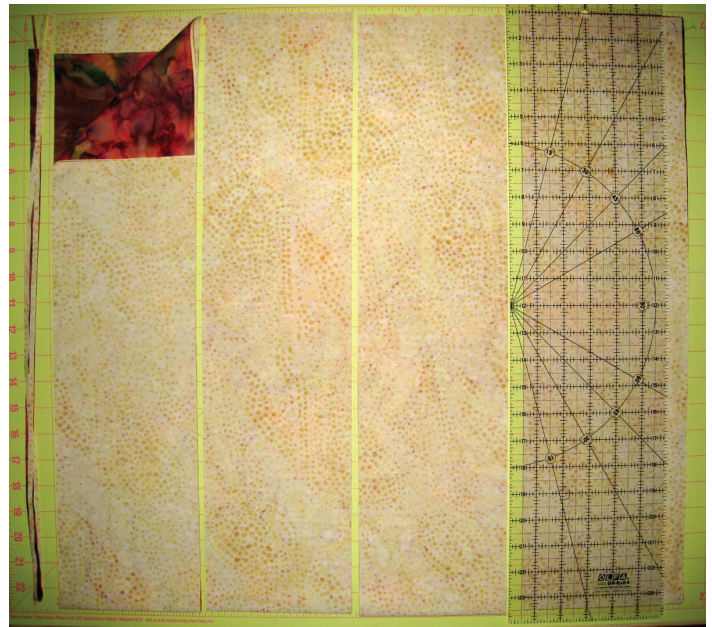
For these sample blocks I will be making 52 Four Patch blocks from 2 fabrics. The unfinished size will be 5" x 5". My lighter fabric is 44" wide so each strip will make 8 blocks ( $44 \div 5.5 = 8$ ). But my darker fabric is 42" wide and I only expect to get  $7\frac{1}{2}$  blocks from these. So I will need at least 7 widths of fabric ( $7\frac{1}{2} \times 7 = 52\frac{1}{2}$ ). Since I need an equal amount of light and dark fabric strips I will cut 4 strips of each which will give me extra blocks and allow for selvage edges, squaring the blocks, miscuts, or flaws in the fabric.

**CUTTING** (Cut strips on crosswise grain.)

Layer 2 fabrics right sides together and cut 4 strips  $5\frac{1}{2}$ " x 44". I cut my fabrics 23" long (an inch longer than needed for the 4 strips) then layered them right sides together. Then I folded the layered strips in half to fit the cutting mat.

Fanfold the layered strips after cutting so they don't shift. You can also place a few pins in them. Since I layered the fabrics before cutting I chose not to pin.

**STEP 1:** Place the layered strips between the Guide Bars and chain sew until all strips are sewn on one side. Make sure the layers don't shift and the fabric stays against the left Guide Bar, especially when it reaches the needle. You don't have to watch the needle or the presser foot, just the left edges of the fabric. If you see any of the underneath fabric on either side be sure to line up the strips before they get to the Guide Bars. For this technique to work the top and bottom fabrics have to be equal in width with raw edges matching exactly. I usually support the long strips in my lap and let the feed dogs pull them through by lightly placing some of my fingers and both thumbs on the fabric as it goes between the Guide Bars. My pinky fingers are usually in the air. If your sewing machine doesn't have dual feed, you may want to use a walking foot to sew the long strips so they will feed evenly. Also you may find it easier if your sewing machine is set in a cabinet, or you are using an extension table. Use a thread saver (a small strip of scrap fabric) at the beginning and ending of your sewing.





**STEP 2:** Rotate the fabric strips and sew again in the opposite direction. You can either cut them apart first or grab the whole bundle from behind the presser foot, put them in your lap and start sewing from where you ended. The rows of stitches should be a scant  $\frac{1}{2}$ " apart. This step should go a little faster since you don't have to worry about the fabric strips shifting.

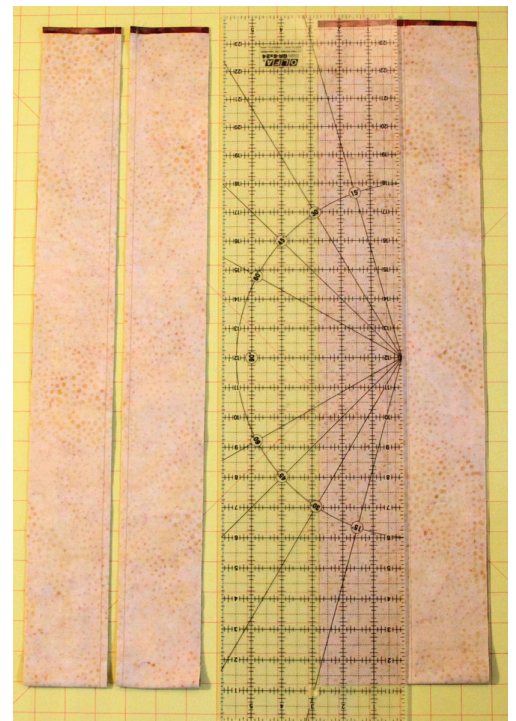
**First side sewn.**



**Second side sewn.**

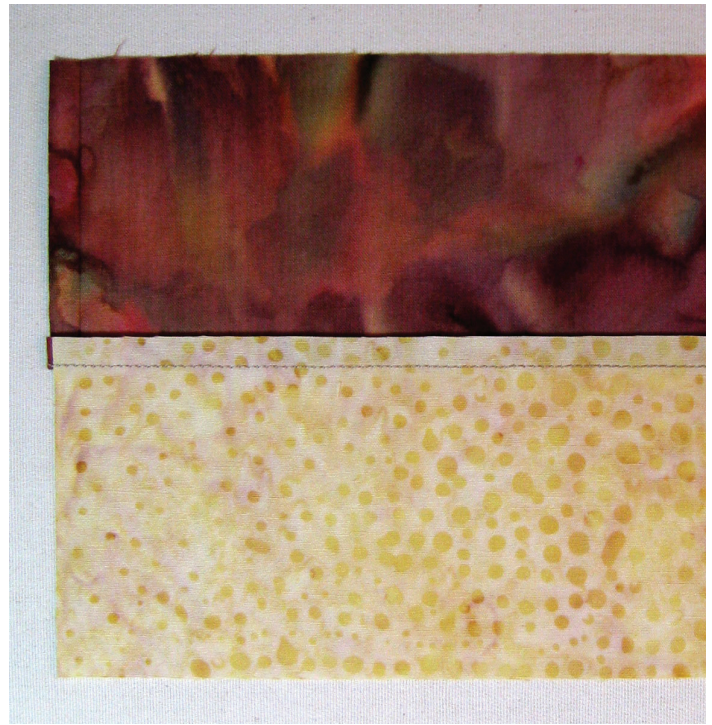
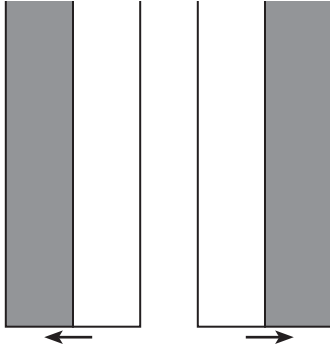


**STEP 3:** Press all seam lines to set seams then cut the strips in half down the center between the stitching lines. For this block size you will end with  $2\frac{3}{4}$ " wide strips. I usually fold the longer strips in half lengthwise matching raw edges and cut through 4 layers for faster cutting.

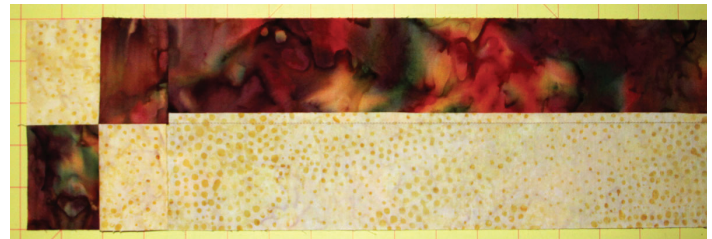




**STEP 4:** Press all seams to the darker fabric. This is easier if the darker fabric is on top. Just fold it over and press on the right side. The photo shows the seam on the wrong side facing the darker fabric. I generally use steam when pressing. Make sure there are no folds in the seams and that you don't distort the strip sets by ironing instead of pressing. Accurate pressing is very important when using this technique.

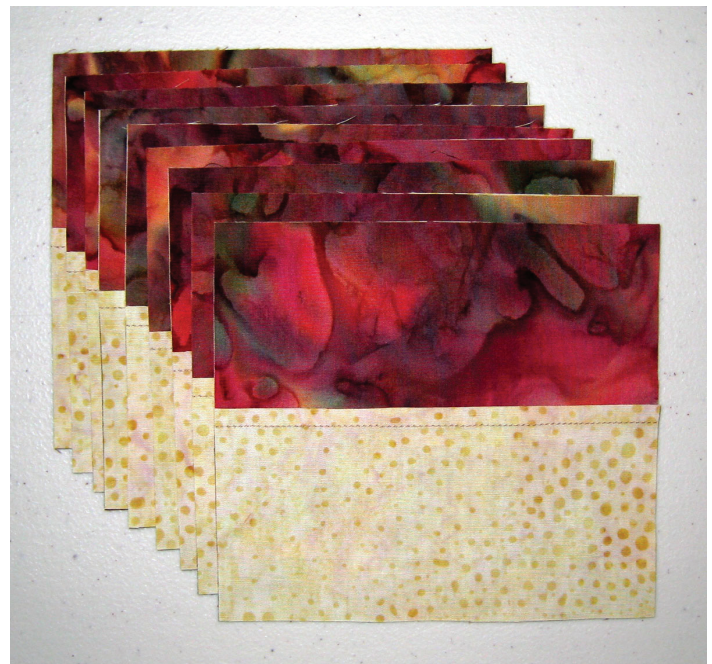
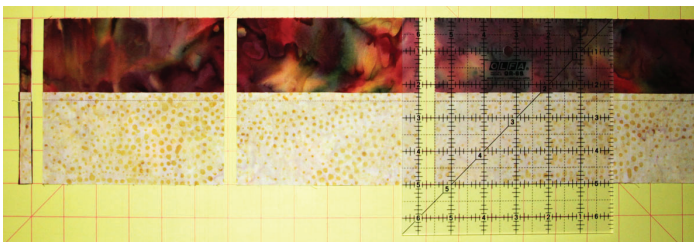


**STEP 5:** Layer the strip sets with like colors opposite each other, seams aligned, and long raw edges matching, and the seam from the top layer facing away from you. If you start sewing with the seam facing away from you, it will be easier to keep the seams aligned without pinning. You will have 4 layered strip sets.



**Top layer folded back showing alignment.**

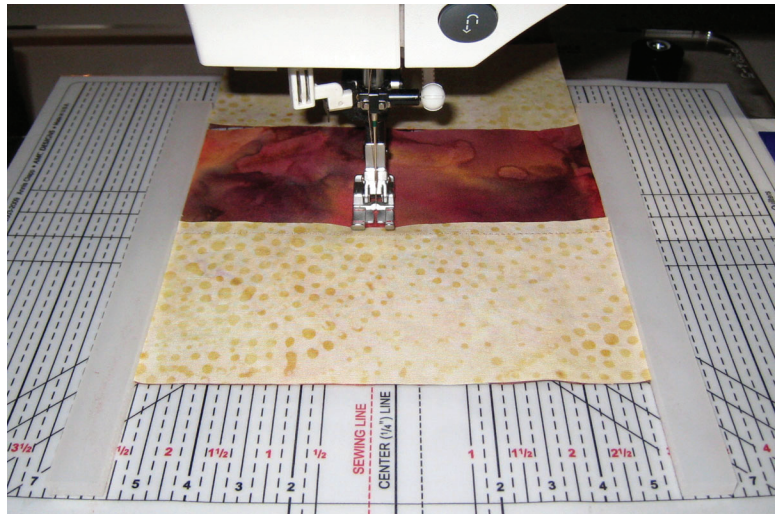
**STEP 6:** Cut each layered strip set into 7 units  $5\frac{1}{2}$ " wide (the same width as the beginning strip), and if there is enough fabric an additional unit  $2\frac{3}{4}$ " wide. Stack these as you cut them, staggering slightly so they will be easy to pick up without shifting the fabric, and place on a small cutting mat or any small flat surface that can be carried from the cutting mat to the sewing machine.



**Ready to sew.**

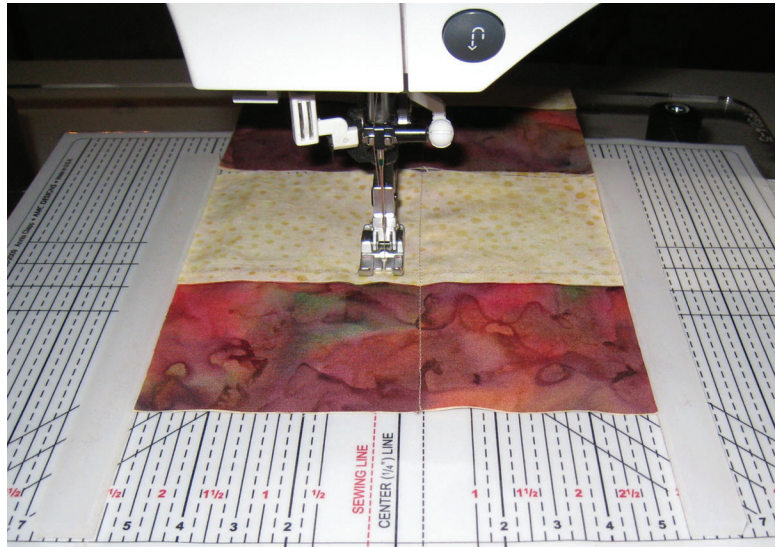
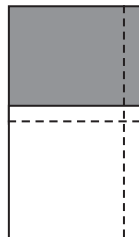


**STEP 7:** Your Guide Bars should still be in the same position. You will be sewing these strip sets together the same way you sewed the longer strips. Start sewing with the open end of the seam allowance facing the needle. Carefully pick up the layered strip sets and place between the Guide Bars, making sure all raw edges match and the left side stays even with the left Guide Bar as you sew. Chain sew until they are all sewn. I usually feel the center seam before it gets to the needle to make sure the seams stay aligned. You can usually tell if they're overlapping or separated. If you're not using dual feed you may need to pin to keep the layers from shifting.

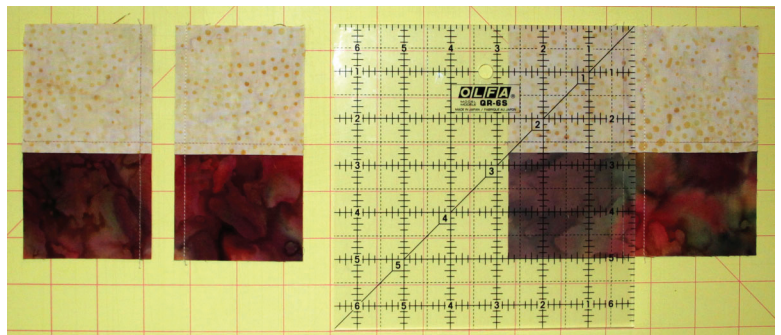


**STEP 8:** Rotate the strip sets and sew again in the opposite direction. You can either cut them apart first or grab the whole bundle from behind the presser foot, put them in your lap and start sewing from where you ended. The open end of the seam will be facing toward you. The rows of stitches should be a scant  $1/2$ " apart.

If you have any half width ( $2\frac{3}{4}$ " strip sets, place them against the left Guide Bar and sew with a scant  $1/4$ " seam.

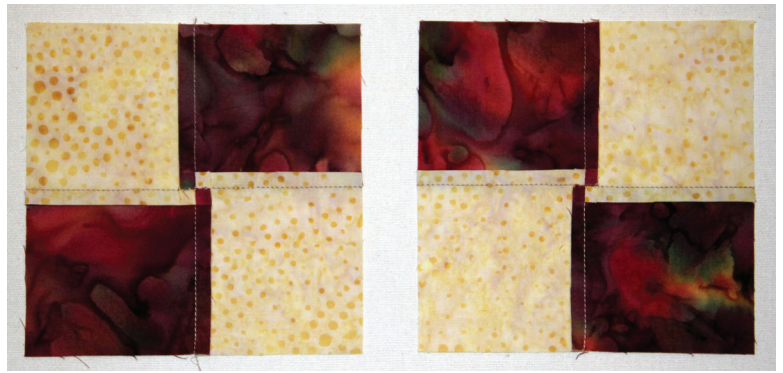
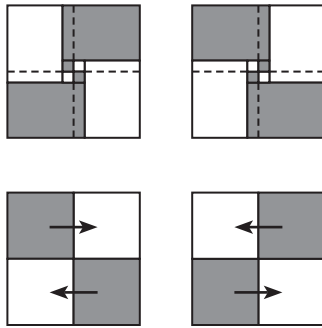


**STEP 9:** Press seam lines to sets seams. Cut the strip sets down the center between the stitching lines. For this block size they will be  $2\frac{3}{4}$ " wide. Keep the left hand and right hand units in separate stacks.





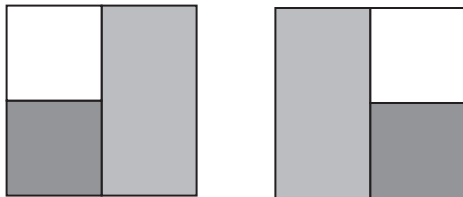
**STEP 10:** Open the seam at the center by giving it a slight twist to pull out the stitches. Then press the seams to the lighter fabric and open at center. Half of the blocks will have the seam pressed clockwise and the other half counterclockwise. If you will be using these blocks for the Sweet Sampler pattern, keep them separated and use on opposite sides of the quilt. If you need the seams to go in the same direction on all of the blocks, simply cut them into single width ( $2\frac{3}{4}$ " units in Step 6 before sewing).



For 2-patch blocks, after finishing Step 4, cut the blocks 5" (or  $\frac{1}{2}$ " larger than the finished block size).



For 3-patch blocks, layer the strip sets from Steps 1-4 with a strip of fabric the same width as the strip set and follow Steps 6-9. Press toward the rectangle. You will only need half the strip sets to make the same number of blocks. You will have right and left hand blocks.



## SAMPLE BLOCKS

