



**Block of the
Month Club**

AUGUST 2023

quiltmuseum.org/botm



Mountain Frolic by Kitty Wilkin

Guest Designer



Kitty Wilkin is a quilter, designer, teacher, and photographer who aims to create beautiful things every day. Between designing quilt patterns, sewing with gorgeous fabrics, tying life together with quilt-making in meaningful ways, capturing the wonder of the world in photographs, and adventuring with her partner and three young kids in rural Maine, Kitty's busy making the world a more beautiful place.

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Mountain Frolic



Exploration/ Exploring/ Explore

When I think about exploration, my mind immediately runs (and skips and jumps and frolics) to mother nature, thinking about how much I love to explore the fields, forests, mountains, and oceans that abound here in Maine. With a playful mindset and a curious adventurous spirit, I've been exploring improvisational piecing more and more lately, and wanted to bring some of those skills to you through the making of this block. No two forests are the same, no two mountain ranges are identical, so what better way than improv to piece together this quilt block celebrating the exploration of the natural world? Come frolic with fabric, if you will.

I used primarily solids for the piecing of my block, but feel free to play with prints, too, if that's more your jam. You'll get a crisper aesthetic with smaller prints and tone-on-tone fabrics, so keep that in mind when you're choosing your fabrics. I highly encourage the use of scraps where possible, especially when piecing the forest!

During the creation of this block, we'll use freezer paper as a visual planning guide. Freezer paper is widely available at grocery stores, and I often buy the largest size. If you don't have freezer paper, you can also use regular paper of any kind and tape it together to get the size you need. I definitely recommend giving freezer paper a try, though, since the fact that it can be temporarily fused to the right side of your quilt block during construction is a HUGE help when it comes to organization, planning, and lining everything up so that it all fits within the finished block dimensions.

Let's get started!

Materials

Fabric

This block is pieced in three distinct sections: the hills at the bottom, the forest in the center, and the mountains, ocean, and sunset along the top. For planning visualization purposes, fabric needs are separated into each section.

Note that because this block is pieced improvisationally, your required fabric dimensions may vary slightly, depending on your base sketch. These are general fabric needs based on the guide sketch shared in this tutorial.

Hills

Light green for the bottom hill, approximately 12" x 14"
Yellow or gold for the trail through the hill approximately 7" x 12"

Forest

Fat quarter equivalent of an assortment of green scraps in a variety of values, cut in strips approximately 1 ½" wide and ranging from 3" - 5 ½" long (approximately 45 strips if cut to these dimensions)

Mountains, Ocean, and Sunset

Sunset/sky gradient of three colors, 2" x 14" strip of each
A blue ocean/mountain background color, 4" x 20" strip
Two shades of purple (or other mountainy colors) for the mountains:
Lighter purple, cut (2) 3 ½" x 20" strips
Darker purple, cut 8" x 20"

Materials

Rotary cutter and large quilting ruler

Large cutting mat

Freezer paper

Paper scissors

Pencil for marking freezer paper “map”

Sewing machine with neutral thread (I love Aurifil 50wt 2600-Dove)

Pins

Seam ripper (always a good idea to have this handy!)



Photo 1

Once your fabrics are selected and your materials gathered (Photo 1), we'll dive into making the Freezer Paper Map for our block.

Directions

Making the Freezer Paper Map

1. First, trace a 13" x 25" rectangle onto the rough side of a piece of freezer paper. Use a large quilting ruler and cutting mat, a pencil, and then a rotary cutter (one designated for cutting paper!) to cut out the shape.

Position your freezer paper map vertically (the tall way).

2. Using a pencil, mark a small mark 12" down from the top left corner, 7" down from the top right corner, 10" up from the bottom left corner, and 3" up from the bottom right corner, as shown in the diagram.

3. Draw an arc connecting each pair of points, as shown (Photo 2). These will be the guide lines to designate the boundaries between the hills, forest, and mountains, so arc them to mimic hills viewed from a distance.

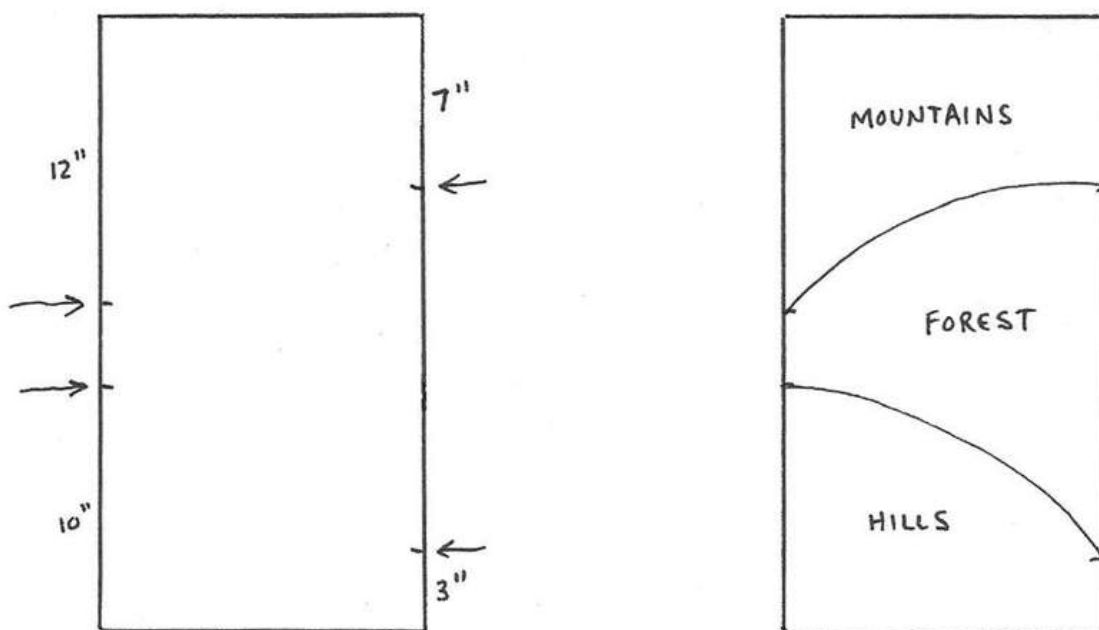


Photo 2

Directions

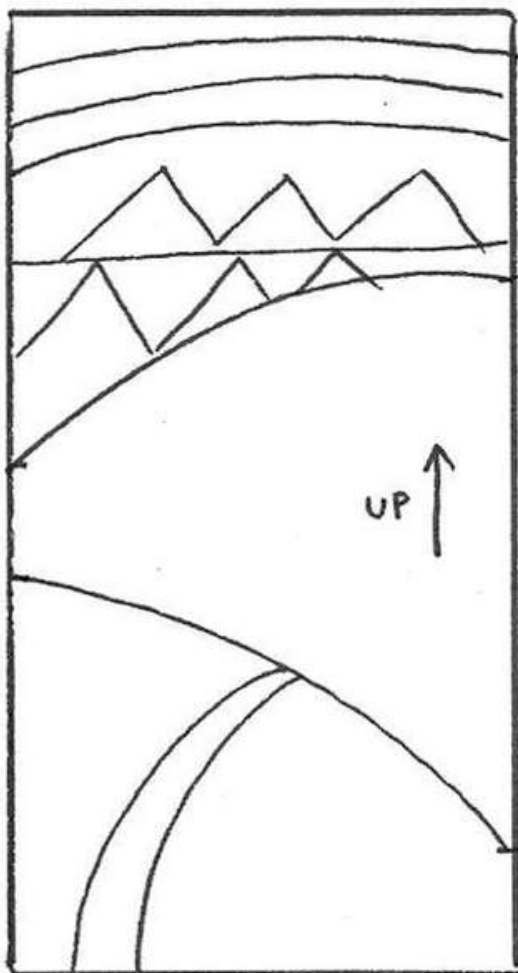


Photo 3

4. The bottom third section will be your hills. Draw a trail arcing through that bottom section as shown, making it narrower toward the top and getting wider toward the bottom.

5. The middle third section will be your forest. Draw an arrow pointing upward with the word “up” as shown, to help remind you of orientation when the pieces are cut apart.

6. The top third section will be your mountains, ocean, and sunset. Draw a loose and general sketch of two rows of mountains, an ocean, and then a fading sunset to help guide your piecing (Photo 3).

A simple zig zag of triangle shapes is all you need—even if you are not a confident drawer, you can do this! It does not need to be perfect by any stretch; it’s just a guide for our improv piecing.

Directions

7. Once all of your guidance sketches are complete, use paper scissors to cut each third apart along those curved lines (Photo 4).

You will have three separate sections of this Freezer Paper Map and will use them as a general guide throughout the piecing process.

It's important to note that these "maps" are not ever to be used to cut anything to scale—the final sizing will happen at the end, so keep your fabric components big until the final trim!



Photo 4

Directions

Piecing the Hills

Begin with the bottom third portion of your Map, the Hills. We will use this as a map to cut and piece the bottom third of the Mountain Frolic block!

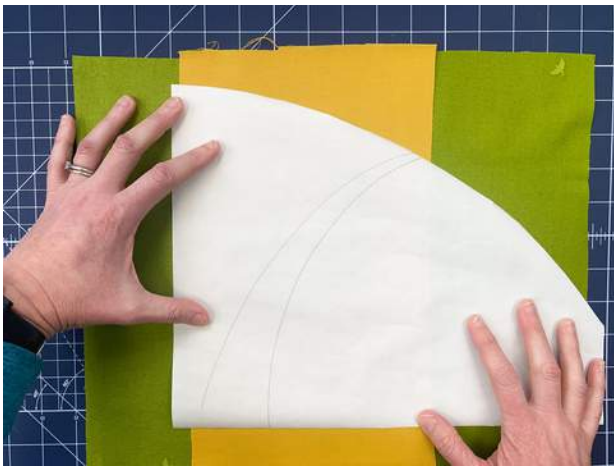


Photo 5

8. Layer the yellow fabric over the light green fabric as shown. Here is where you may need adjustments to your yellow fabric size. You want the yellow trail fabric to be large enough to fit behind the trail you sketched on your Map (Photo 5).

This is a great place to use scraps, but it is helpful if you can align the grain of the two fabrics so that the warp and weft are heading in the same direction for the green fabric as the overlaying yellow fabric.



Photo 6

9. Position both layered fabrics right side facing up, and using a rotary cutter, carefully cut a curve that mimics the top or left edge of the trail you drew on your map. You will be cutting through both fabrics, but not the Freezer Paper Map (Photo 6).

Directions

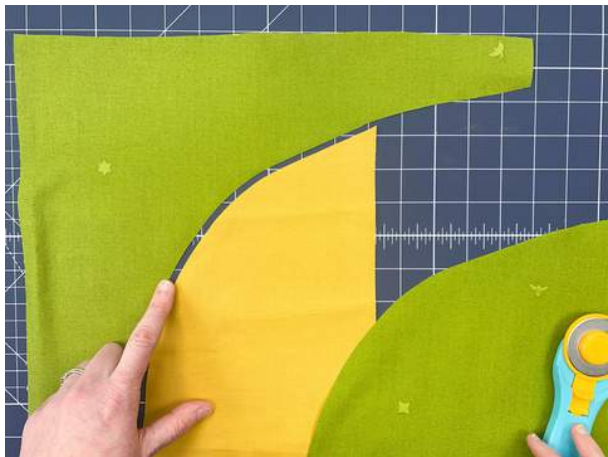


Photo 7

10. Remove the bottom right portion of the green fabric and the top left portion of the yellow fabric and set them aside (Photo 7).

11. Find a center point in your cut curve and place your fabrics right sides together, the raw edges of each side of the curve aligned at this center point (Photo 8).

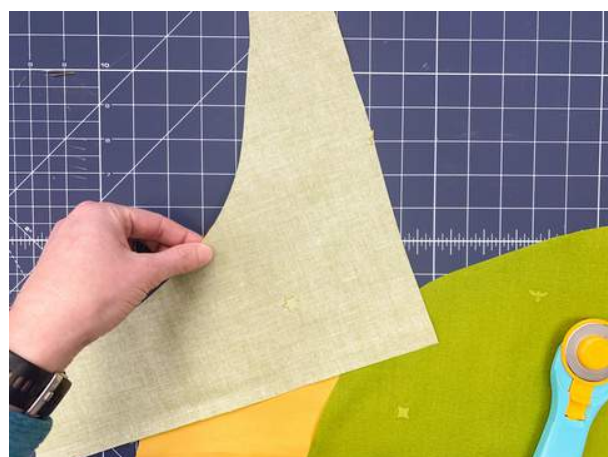


Photo 8

12. Place a pin in that center point to hold it in place. With the fabric that sticks out on top (in this case it will be the green fabric), carefully align the raw edge of the green curve with the yellow, being careful not to stretch either fabric. Pin at this end as shown (Photo 9).



Photo 9

Directions



Photo 10

13. Repeat from the center pin, moving out toward the other edge, aligning the raw edges and pinning at the opposite end of the curve.

14. Sew along the curved seam using a **scant quarter inch seam allowance** and a slow and steady pace. Press toward green fabric.

A note on sewing improv curves: There are a variety of methods folks use to help with sewing improv curves like this, and you're welcome to try a few.

Some like to use washable glue stick to gently glue the seam allowances together as the raw edges are aligned along the curve, instead of pins. Some folks like to pin frequently, holding each section of the curve in place.

I often will use only the center pin, positioning my fabrics so that the one that sticks out is on top, and carefully aligning the raw edges as I sew.

Do what you are most comfortable with, or if you're new to this style of cutting and sewing curves, I invite you to be adventurous, try a few different methods, and choose the one that brings you the most joy and fabric success.

Directions

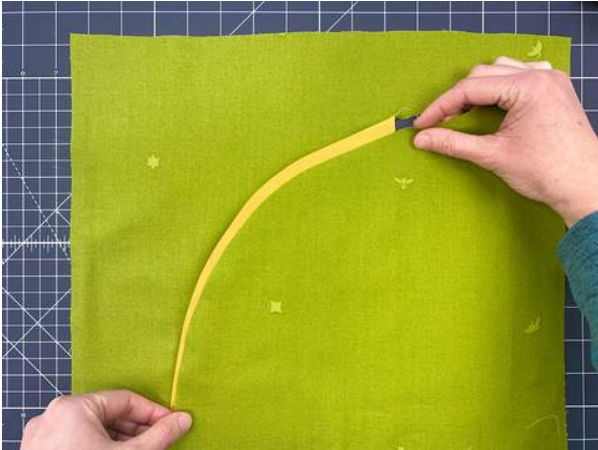


Photo 11



Photo 12

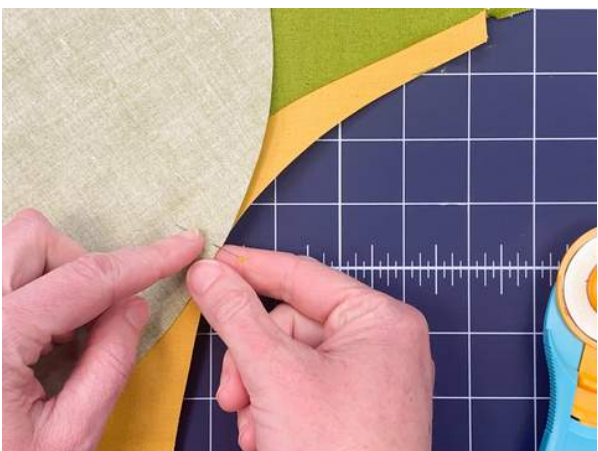


Photo 13

15. Bring back the bottom right portion of the green fabric that was set aside and lay on top of your current progress as shown, right side facing up, allowing the cut curve to follow the sewn trail (Photo 11).

16. Using a rotary cutter, cut through both the yellow and green fabrics to cut the bottom edge of the trail. Remember to begin with a narrow trail at the top, and get wider as you move toward the bottom, as we drew on the Freezer Paper Map (Photo 12).

17. As before, find a center point in your cut curve and place your fabrics right sides together, the raw edges of each side of the curve aligned at this center point. Pin the center point, use glue or additional pins to secure if wanted (Photo 13).

Directions

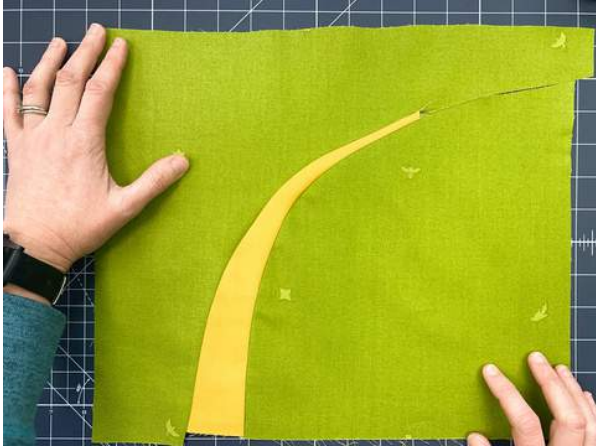


Photo 14

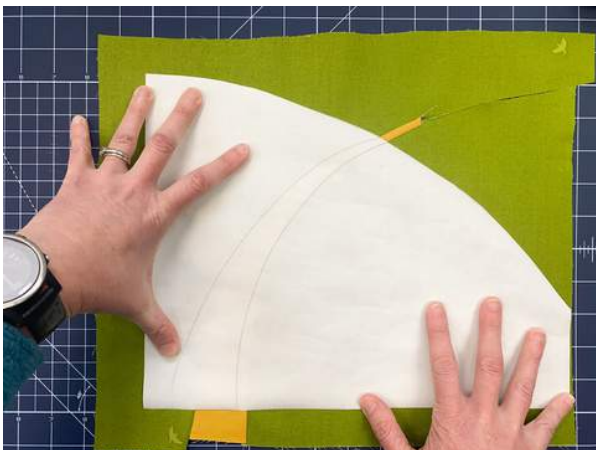


Photo 15

18. Sew with the part that sticks out (in this case the side with the path) on top. Use a scant quarter inch seam with all improv curves throughout this block construction.

19. Press toward the green hills. Admire your trail through the hills, the first part of your Mountain Frolic block (Photo 14).

20. Position your Freezer Paper Map on top of your sewn Hills section, aligning the fabric trail with the drawn trail. The shiny side of the Freezer paper should be facing the fabric.

It's okay if the sewn trail and drawn trail are slightly different! Using a warm iron, press the freezer paper to fuse it onto your fabric to help keep them together. Set aside. (Photo 15)

Directions

Piecing the Forest

Next, grab the middle portion of your Freezer Paper Map, the Forest. We will use this as a visual guide to make sure we build out the forest section of our block in the correct dimensions.



Photo 16

21. Grab your assortment of green scraps cut to strips and arrange generally in piles of a similar height. It's best to have a variety of values of green, and we'll aim to mix them up and sew them together as randomly as trees grow in a forest (Photo 16).



Photo 17

22. Begin sewing strip sets, sewing strips together along the long edge, choosing each additional fabric with as little planning as possible (Photo 17).

When piecing mine, I wanted to make sure the next fabric was different than the fabric before it and of a similar height, but beyond that left the rest to chance.

Directions

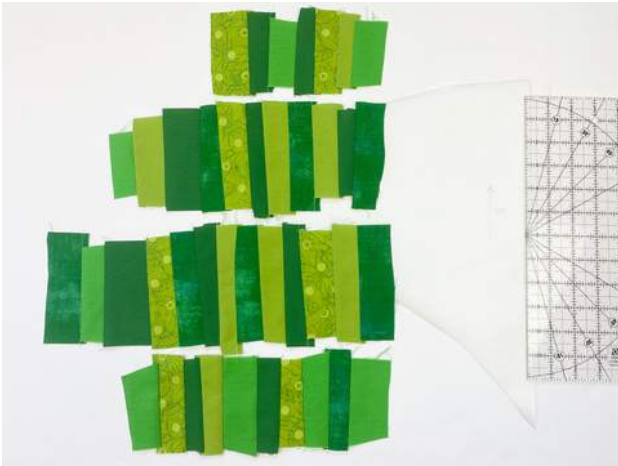


Photo 18

Begin by sewing four different strip sets, chain piecing for added efficiency, allowing sizes to fluctuate if your scraps lead to that. Add some varied widths or angles if desired, creating some natural variation in your pieced tree strips, but aiming to sew one long strip and multiple shorter strips, as shown below.

23. Once you have some strip sets sewn, press seams to one side.

24. Once you've sewn and pressed some strip sets, pause to assess the width and visualize an approximate plan for assembling them. You need your widest strip to span the width of your Freezer Paper Map, plus approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ " around all sides (approximately 14" wide). (Photo 18)

Directions

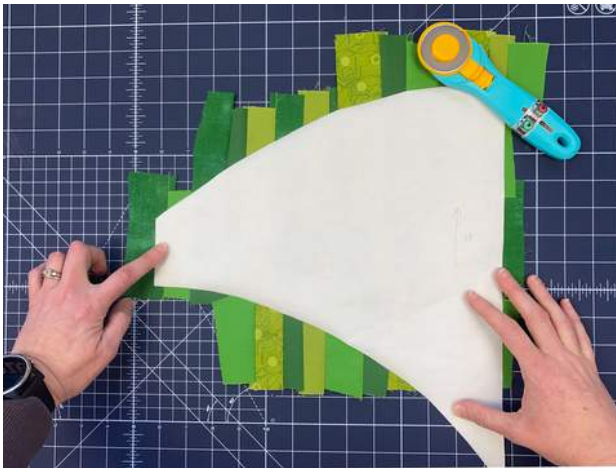


Photo 19

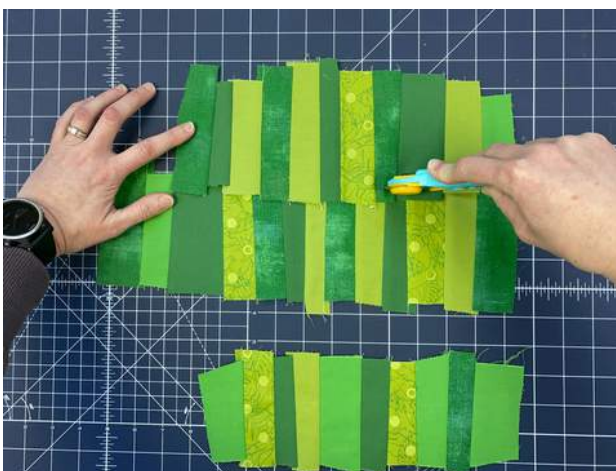


Photo 20

25. Overlap the tops and bottom edges of your tree strip sets and use the Freezer Paper Map to get a general visual of whether you need to add to any strip set before assembly (Photo 19).

If your fabric strip sets stick out on all sides of your Freezer Paper Map you're ready to begin sewing them together. If you need to cover more space, add to current strip sets or make additional ones until you have fabric extending beyond all edges of your Freezer Paper Map.

26. Move your Freezer Paper Map aside and begin with the top two tree strip sets. With right sides facing up for both strip sets, overlap the raw edges slightly as shown. I aim to overlap about $\frac{1}{2}$ "- $\frac{3}{4}$ " so that I have some wiggle room to cut my improv curves.

Making sure you're cutting through both layers of fabric, cut a gentle curve (Photo 20).

Directions



Photo 21

27. Remove the scrap edges from both the top and bottom tree strip sets, and admire your consistent curve (Photo 21).

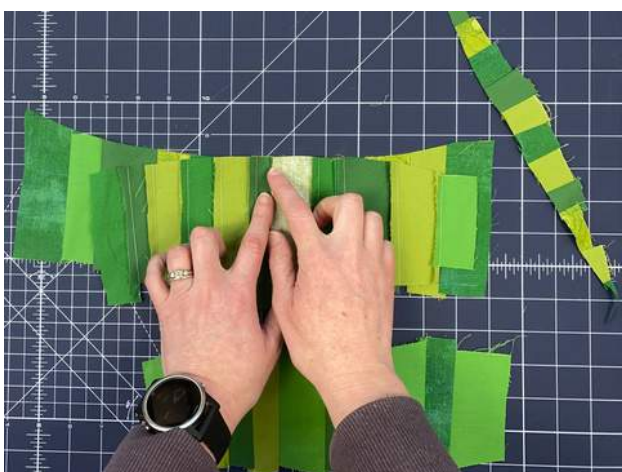


Photo 22

28. Fold the top strip set on top of the bottom strip set, right sides facing each other, and aligning the center point of the raw edges of the cuts (as we did with the path in the Hills section of this block) (Photo 22).

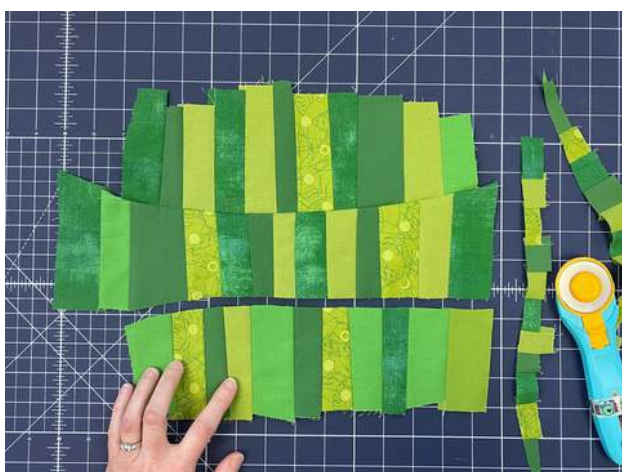


Photo 23

29. Pin that center point, and using the same curved piecing technique (pins, glue, or free form) sew the top tree strip set to the bottom tree strip set along the raw edge, positioning the side that sticks out on top as you bring it to your sewing machine. Gently aligning the raw edges of each block along the curve, use a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance to sew (Photo 23).

Directions

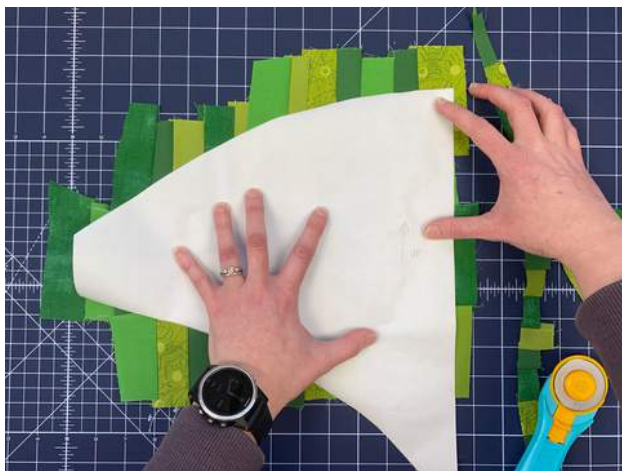


Photo 24

30. Continue sewing your strip sets together in this way, using your Freezer Paper Map periodically to ensure your fabric is positioned in a way that will cover the necessary area. Feel free to make these curves as gentle or curvy as desired (Photo 24).



Photo 25

31. When you've sewn all of your tree strip set sections together, you may discover that there's a small area that hasn't been sufficiently covered.

As you can see in the area below the bottom left corner of the forest area was sparse and needed to be filled in (Photo 25).

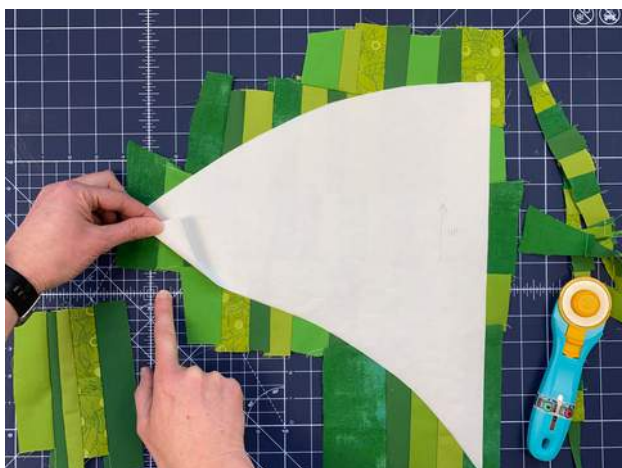


Photo 26

32. Simply sew another tree strip set large enough to cover the remaining area. This will be our forest "patch" (Photo 26).

Directions



Photo 27



Photo 28

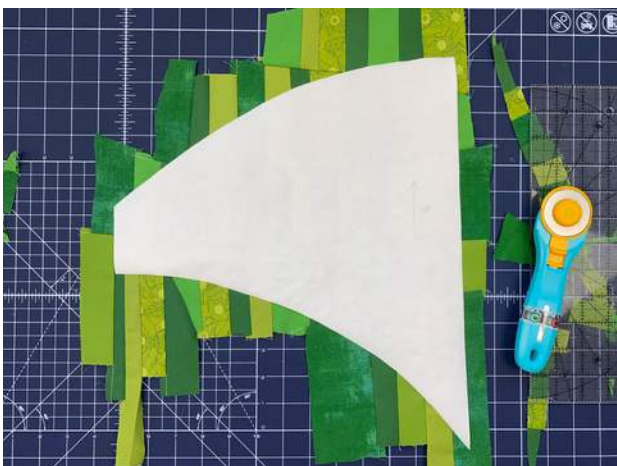


Photo 29

32. Fold the Freezer Paper Map out of the way, and overlap the additional tree strip set (the forest patch) and the existing empty fabric corner, right sides both facing up. Making sure you're cutting through both layers of fabric, cut a gentle curve between the patch and the existing fabric forest (Photo 27).

33. Using the same curve-sewing technique we've been using, sew together with a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance (Photo 28). Press toward the forest.

34. Once your pieced forest fabric panel is large enough to extend at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " beyond all sides of your Freezer Paper Map, fuse the freezer paper to the right side of the panel with a warm iron and set aside (Photo 29).

Directions

Piecing the Mountains and Beyond

Finally, grab the top portion of your Freezer paper map, the mountains and beyond. We will begin at the bottom with the lowest mountain range, and build upward from there (Photo 30).



Photo 30

35. Place one of the lighter purple 3 ½” x 20” strips right side facing up on your cutting mat. Layer the darker purple 8” x 20” strip on top right side facing up, allowing the lighter purple to extend about ½” above and to the left of the darker purple piece.

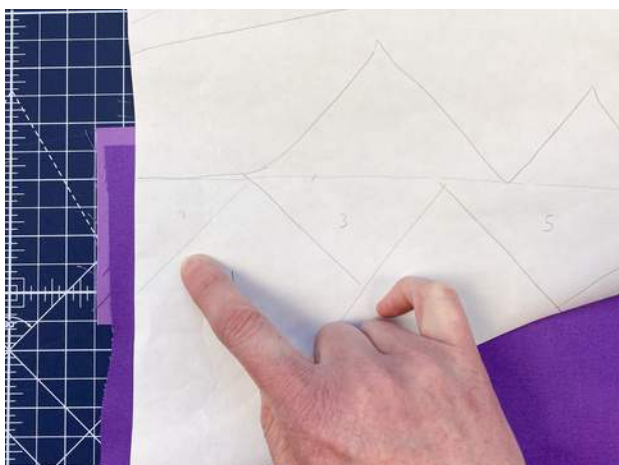


Photo 31

Use your Freezer Paper Map as a reference to get a visual of approximately where that first left-most mountain should be (Photo 31).

Remember that this is just a guide sketch and your mountains do not need to be exactly the shape and location as in your sketch.

Directions

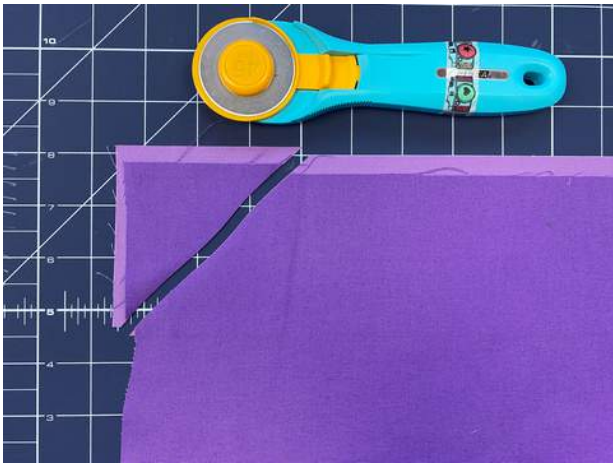


Photo 32

36. Cut through both layers of fabric along that top left mountain edge, as shown. You can make this cut as straight or wavy as you want, but a little gentle curve gives fun character to your mountain while still being a straight-forward sew (Photo 32).

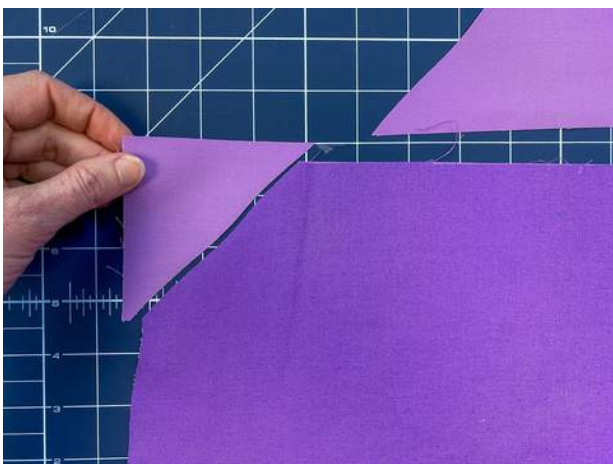


Photo 33

37. Remove the top left dark purple corner and put in a scrap pile. Remove the light purple bottom right hand strip remainder and put aside for now. Using the same method to sew these gentle improv curves, flip the light purple triangle right sides together along the cut edge, aligning the raw edges. Pin in the center and sew using a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. Press toward light purple (Photo 33).



Photo 34

38. Next, cut a gentle curve through the dark purple fabric parallel to the cut you just made and sewed, creating the front edge of your next mountain (Photo 34).

Directions

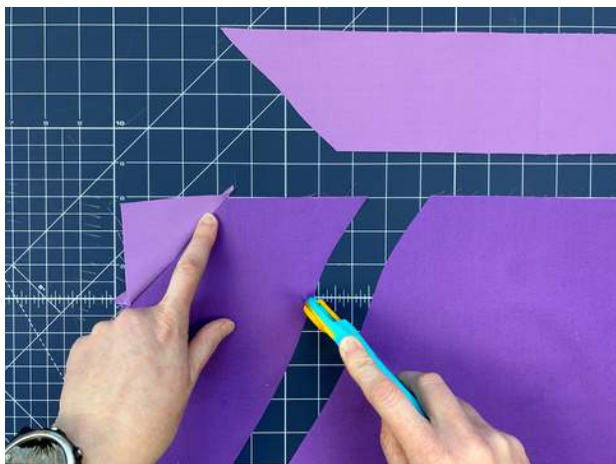


Photo 35

39. Sliding the bottom right portion of the dark purple strip aside and out of the way, next we're going to cut the right edge of that first mountain. Be sure to cut through the top light purple-dark purple seam about $\frac{1}{2}$ " down from the top raw edge, as shown (Photos 35-36).



Photo 36

40. Grab the light purple remaining strip, align so that it's in line with the existing mountain, and mirror the cut you just made. Flip right sides together along the raw edge of the cut, then sew, and press (Photo 37).

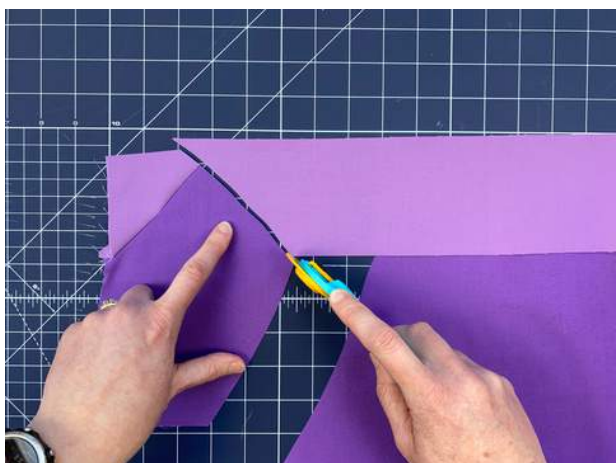


Photo 37

Directions

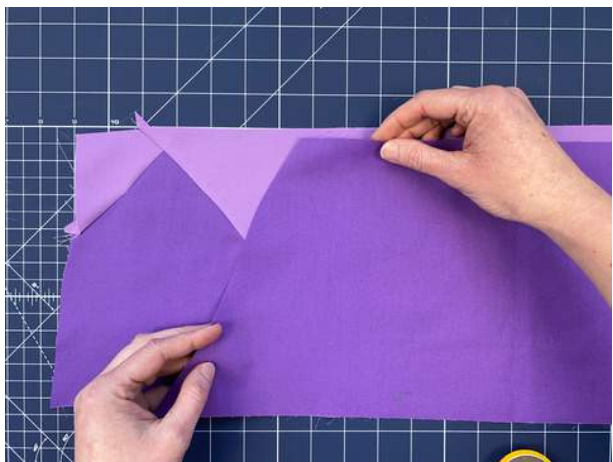


Photo 38



Photo 39



Photo 40

41. Next, bring back that set aside bottom right dark purple strip remainder. Overlap slightly with the growing mountains, and cut a gentle curve as shown (Photos 38-39).

42. Flip right sides together along the cut, sew, press. You may want to pull out your Freezer Paper Map to get a visual of where your mountains are growing so far to help you gauge where the next mountain should go (Photo 40).

Continue this process as you build out enough mountains to fit across the width of your Freezer Paper Map, plus about $\frac{1}{2}$ " extended on either side.

Directions



Photo 41

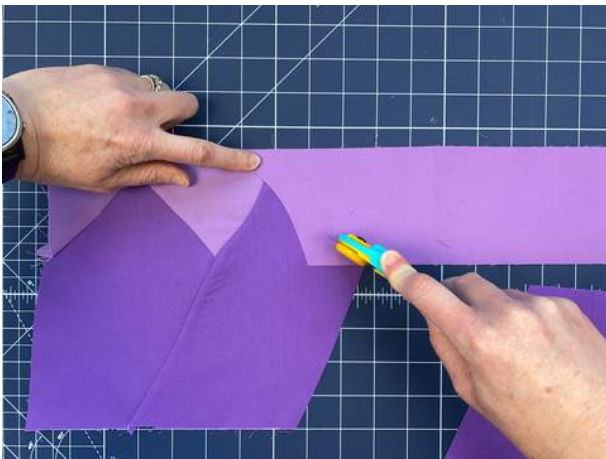


Photo 42

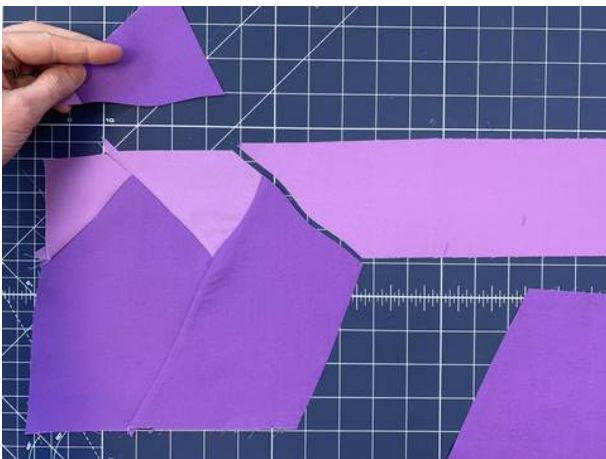


Photo 43

43. Cut the long left side of the mountain through the dark purple fabric, parallel to your most recent seam (Photo 41).

44. Overlay your light purple fabric strip remainder on top of the dark purple mountain base and cut the right hand side of the mountain, being sure to cross the previous seam at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " below the top raw edge (Photo 42).

45. Flip right sides together, sew along that seam, carefully aligning raw edges as you go, and then press (Photo 43).

Directions



Photo 44



Photo 45



Photo 46

46. Overlay the dark purple fabric and cut along that seam for the left edge of your next mountain, flip right sides together, align raw edges, sew, press (Photo 44).

47. When you get to the point where your mountains just about span the width of your Freezer Paper Map, you may want to curve the final edge gently down and out toward the right side of your growing mountain range (Photos 45 - 46).

Directions

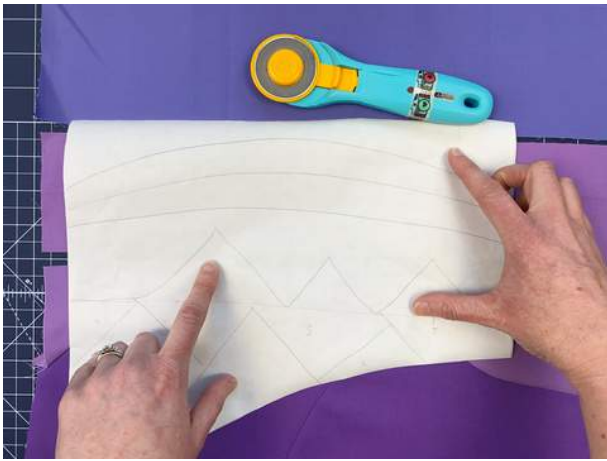


Photo 47



Photo 48

48. Next, we will build the second mountain range using the same technique and order of piecing with the blue 4" x 20" strip on top (the background and ocean) and the second 3 ½" x 20" strip of light purple fabric on the bottom (the mountains) (Photo 47).

49. Notice that the first mountain in this second row rises up between the first two mountains from your bottom row, so take that into consideration when making your first cut (Photo 48).

50. Continue piecing this mountain range in the same order of piecing as the previous mountains, being sure that the point intersections at both the top and bottom of the strip are at least ½" from the top and bottom raw edges.

Directions

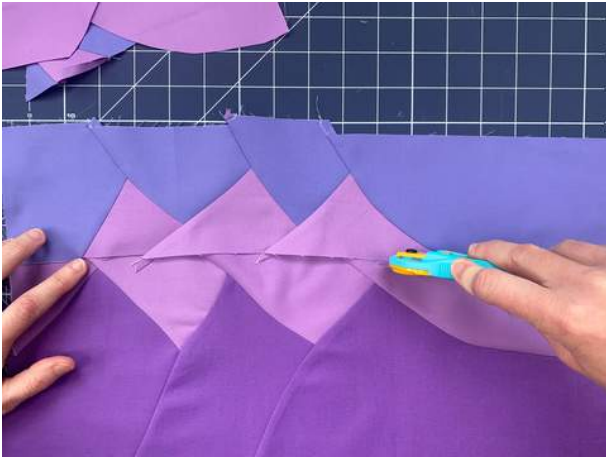


Photo 49



Photo 50

51. Once your second mountain range is pieced, overlap slightly with the bottom mountain range, and making sure you are cutting through both layers of fabric and staying at least $\frac{1}{4}$ " from each point, cut a gently wavy seam between the two. Discard the trimmed scraps, flip right sides together, align raw edges, pin, sew, and press (Photo 49).

52. Now that your mountain range is sewn, it's time to piece the sunset! Grab your three 2" x 14" strips of sunset fabric and align with the left edge of your mountain range as shown (Photo 50).

You could trim the excess fabric on the right edge of your mountain range (if there is any), but I prefer to save all trimming until the end. We'll be aligning the left edges of these strips as we sew them on and using the width of the sunset strips as our guide for centering our curves.

Directions

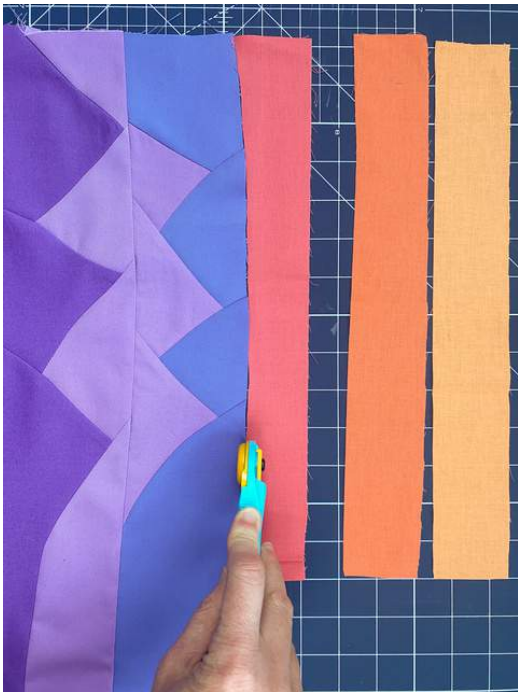


Photo 51



Photo 52

53. Because we want the next curve to be fairly smooth, like a horizon, rotate your block components 90 degrees clockwise as shown so that you will be cutting away from you as you cut these next seams.

Overlap the darkest sunset fabric about $\frac{1}{2}$ " with the top of the mountain range. Making sure you're cutting through both layers of fabric, cut a gentle swooping curve to be the horizon behind the mountains, between the ocean and the sunset (Photo 51).

54. Discard trimmings, flip right sides facing each other aligning the freshly cut raw edge, pin the center, sew, and press (Photo 52).

Directions



Photo 53



Photo 54

55. Continue with the remaining two strips to piece the rest of the sunset (Photo 53).

56. Woohoo! Your mountains, ocean, and sunset are now pieced. Using a warm iron, fuse the Freezer Paper Map onto the right side of this section, making sure to include the full sunset, and approximately aligning the mountains with your sketch (Photo 54).

Directions

Final Assembly and Trimming to Size



Photo 55

57. With all three sections sewn, you're almost there! Grab your biggest cutting mat, a rotary cutter, and all three of your fabric sections with Freezer Paper Maps fused on (Photo 55).

58. We'll begin with the top two sections (Mountains and Forest). Position each section so that the side edges are in line with each other, as shown (Photo 56).

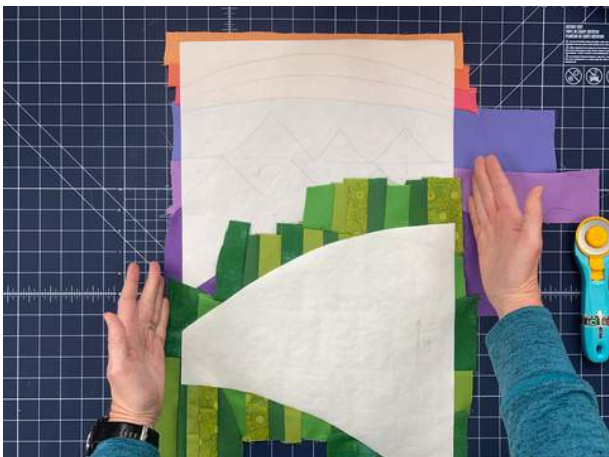


Photo 56

Directions



Photo 57

59. Overlap the fabric sections so that there is approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ "- $\frac{3}{4}$ " of space between the two Freezer Paper Map sections along the curved cut edge. We're going to use that cut curve as our guide, but want to be sure to allow space for seam allowances and so that we don't cut into the Freezer Paper Map pieces (Photo 57).



Photo 58

60. Using a rotary cutter and being sure you're cutting through both fabric sections cleanly, cut between the two Freezer Paper Map templates. Remove the trimmed fabric bits. At this point, if you want to trim the right edge of the mountain range, you may, though be sure to leave at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " fabric extending beyond the edge of the Freezer Paper Map piece (Photo 59).



Photo 59

61. Remove the freezer paper templates by gently peeling them off the fabric. Set aside (Photo 59).

Directions



Photo 60

62. As we've done for every improv curve sewn for this block, and as is now likely a lot more comfortable, flip right sides together, aligning the cut raw edge in the center, pin, align the raw edges of the curve, and sew with the one that sticks out positioned on top using a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance (Photo 60).



Photo 61

63. Press toward the mountains (Photo 61).

64. Bring the Freezer Paper Map for your Forest section back and align with that top sewn seam between the Forest and the Mountains.



Photo 62

Repeat the process from Step 59 for aligning the bottom Hills section with the Forest (Photo 62).

Directions



Photo 63

65. Following the cut curve on your Freezer Paper Map and giving yourself at least $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance on each side, cut through both the bottom edge of the Forest section and the top edge of the Hills section along that curved edge where they overlap (Photo 63).



Photo 64

66. Discard trimmings and remove Freezer Paper Maps by gently peeling off the fabric. Flip right sides together, aligning the cut raw edge in the center, pin, align the raw edges of the curve, and sew with the one that sticks out positioned on top using a scant $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. Press toward the Hills (Photo 64).



Photo 65

67. Admire your block so far—you're almost there (Photo 65)!

Directions

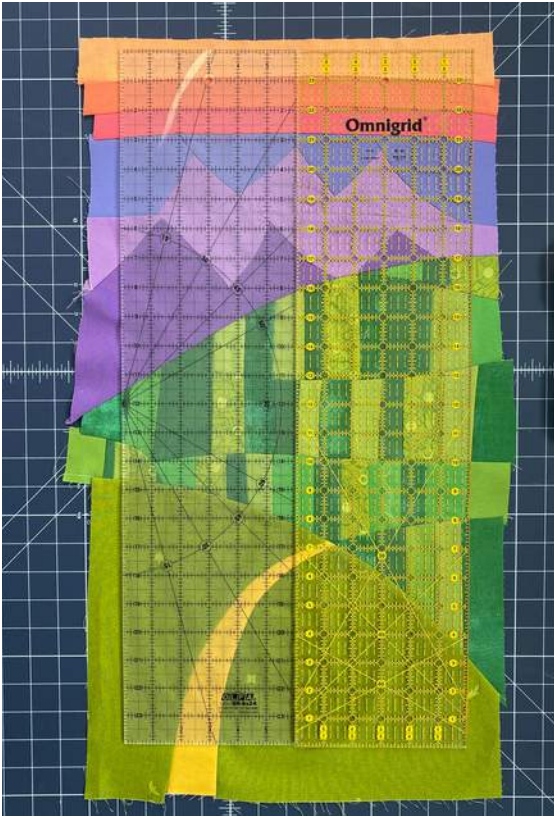


Photo 66

68. If you have two 6" x 24" rulers, grab them both and put them side by side on top of your block.

NOTE! Do not cut around these rulers—the block needs to be cut larger than the size of these rulers by ½" in both directions, but placing the rulers side by side will give you a visual idea of what portion of your block you want to include within the final trimmed block dimensions, and what you'll see as a finished block once it's sewn into your quilt.

You want to make sure you include your full sunset at the top, so you might trim off some of the bottom of your hill block—this is okay! Arrange the rulers so that you have a good visual of where you want your block dimensions to land (Photo 66).

Directions



Photo 67

69. Using both the lines on your cutting mat and any quilting rulers you have, carefully trim your block to 12 ½" x 24 ½".

Measure twice, cut once!

70. Celebrate your gorgeously improv, perfectly imperfect *Mountain Frolic* block, and imagine your next adventure & mother nature exploration (Photo 68).



Photo 68

