

Reviving the String Quilt Revival

Not your Grandmothers method

by Roger Eslick of Angel Oak Stitchery

I often get asked the question; what is a “string” quilt? So glad you asked. The “strings” could also be and at times are called “strips” but for one small detail. Strips are usually associated with all of the pieces being of a uniform width. Strings are of random or variable width that is your trimmings or cutoffs from other quilt projects. You do save your scraps right? See the bin or bag beside the cutting table in quilters sewing areas? That’s where the strips reside before we make something incredibly beautiful with them. Quilters don’t waste a thing.

In this article, I will describe a method of piecing string blocks that overcome the problems faced in the past. String piecing inherently requires pieces that are typically bias strips that require a foundation to minimize the stretching. One form of foundation was to use muslin, which made your blocks thick and heavy. Another form of foundation was to use paper. The paper used to come from old phone books or the Sears & Roebucks catalog (remember those?). After you finished the block, the paper had to be removed.

No more heavy quilts and no more removing paper foundations. The method we use is so much lighter and faster too. Let me introduce you to the best (and preferred) foundation for your string quilts. Sheer Delite! Sheer Delite is a non-woven light and wispy foundation that is absolutely perfect for string quilts. It is extremely light weight, doesn’t have a bias, and the best part is you don’t take it out. It remains a part of your block.

Let’s make a string quilt.



We call this a scrappy star but in looking at the quilt, some see stars and some see diamonds.



Sheer Delite Foundation

This is the secret ingredient to easy wonderful lightweight string quilts. Sheer Delite comes in 30" width. These block sizes are designed to get the most foundation pieces with minimal waste. Cut your Sheer Delite in a 7-1/2" strip by WOF (30"). Now sub-cut your strip into four 7-1/2" squares. No waste!



Focus Fabric

To make the star, you will choose a “focus fabric”. In our example, we have chosen a dark blue batik for our focus because we are going to be pulling random width strings from our batik scraps.

The focus fabric is cut using the string quilt template as shown below. The string quilt template is available from Angel Oak Stitchery.

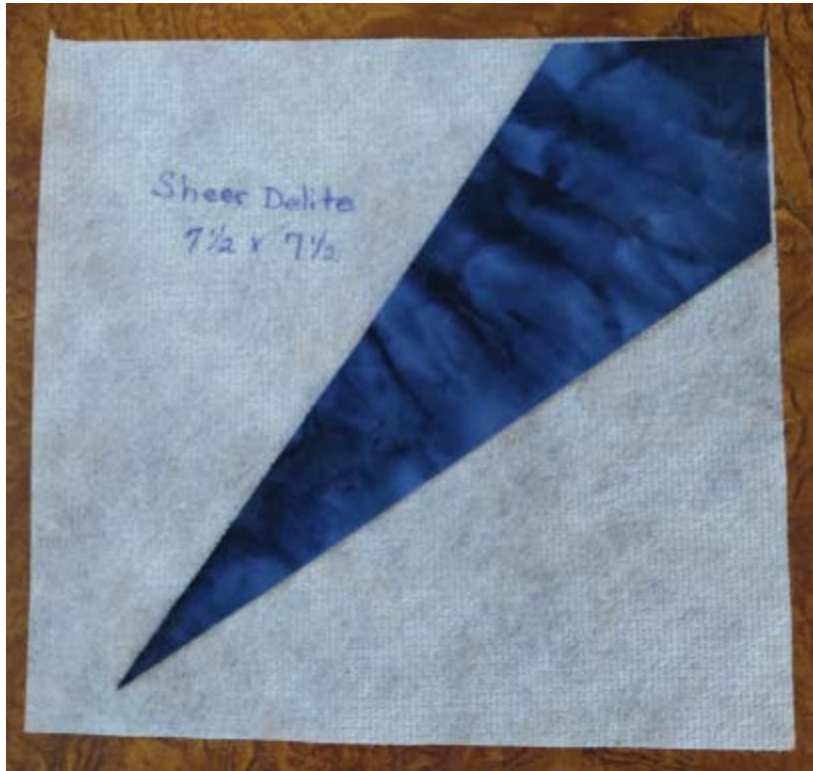


The Blocks

Our star block is made up of four smaller blocks. We are going to make the small blocks first.

Focus fabric wedge:

Place your wedge of focus fabric with the wide point in one corner of your Sheer Delite. You can pin it in place if you desire.



Strings:

Pull some strings out of your scrap bag. The strings that are adjacent to your focus fabric wedge should be of a contrasting color and not blend with the focus fabric. The strings are and can be any width you choose, but must be long enough to cover the Sheer Delite foundation. The strings will all hang out beyond your foundation. We recommend string widths from 3/4" to no wider than 2".

Keep in mind that you will be losing a 1/4" of seam allowance on each side of your strings so you may not want a string that is less than 3/4". Place a random width string along one side edge of your focus fabric, right sides together. Sew the string

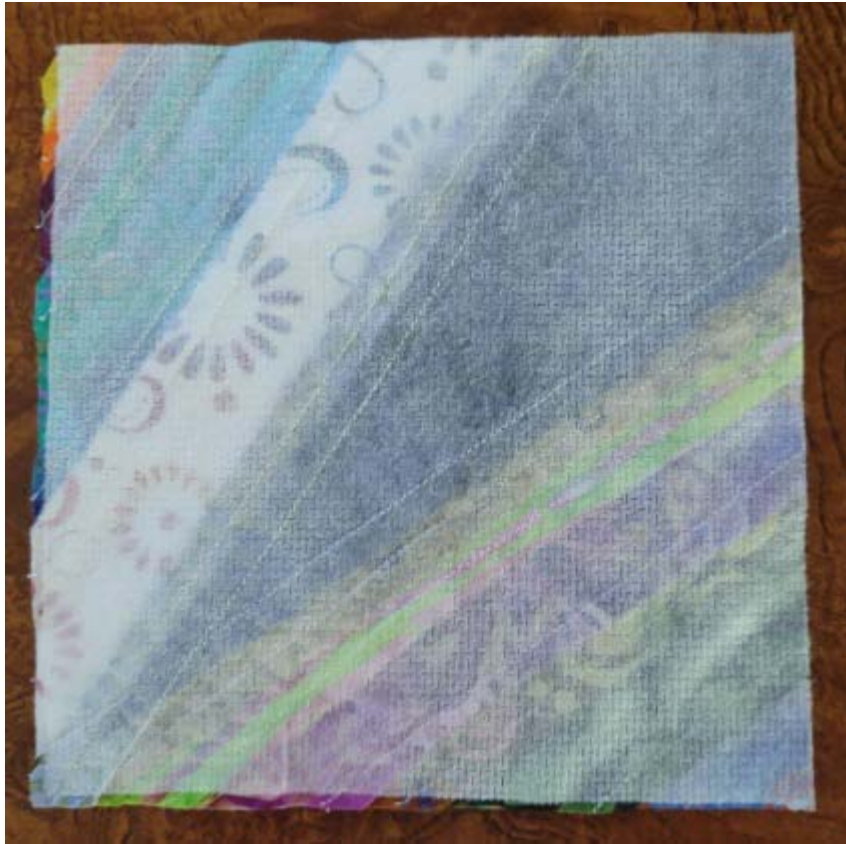
to the edge of your focus wedge using a 1/4" seam allowance, keeping the edge of your string on the edge of the focus fabric. Press your string open or finger press.

Place another random width string, right sides together onto the opposite edge of your focus fabric wedge. Sew this string to the edge of your focus wedge using a 1/4" seam allowance. Press your string open or finger press.

Add additional random width strings to each of the previously sewn strings, pressing back as you proceed. Continue adding strings to each side until all of the Sheer Delite foundation is covered.

Now square up your block at 7-1/2", trimming off the excess string lengths. Place the corner of your square up ruler on the corner with the wide part of your focus fabric, and trim the other sides. Don't trim off any of the wide focus fabric as you square your block.





This is what the back of your small block will look like. The Sheer Delite foundation is so light that you see the colors of your strings. No need to remove the foundation, just leave it in place.

Repeat the above steps and create three additional small blocks.

Place the wide point of one small block on top of another small block, right sides together. Sew along the edge, starting at the corner with the wide focus fabric, using a 1/4" seam allowance. Press open.



Notice that there are no seams to match except for the focus fabric. By squaring off of the wide point, your seams will match.

Now repeat the above steps to sew together the remaining two small blocks. Press open.



Now place one of the pieces of two small blocks on top of the other, right sides together, and the wide points together. Sew these along the edge with the wide points using a 1/4" seam allowance. Press open.

Now you will have one large block of approximately 14" square.



Note: The quilting depicted in the pictures is not a quilt as you go. The pictures were captured for this document after the sample quilt was quilted.

The Sheer Delite foundation is a product of Angel Oak Stitchery. Sheer Delite is 30" wide.

You may order Sheer Delite in 5yd, or 10yd packages, and the acrylic template for cutting your focus fabric from <https://angeloakstitchery.com> .