

Seven Shirts + Seven Steps = One Thrifty Quilt

Finished size: 52" x 64", a nice throw size

Step One: How to Cut Shirts

Gather together:

- Good sharp scissors
- Rotary cutter with a NEW blade
- Basket for holding scraps you'll deal with later
- Garbage can to toss scraps you won't want to deal with later
- Long ruler – 6.5" x 24.5"
- Small ruler – 6.5" x 6.5"
- Iron
- Fabric Finish, Best Press, Spray Starch (some product for crisping up the fabric)

Begin with seven men's shirts: 2 light and 5 darks. They must be 100% cotton, and similar weight. Ensure the fabric isn't too worn, and has good body. It should feel like good quilting cotton.



- Cut off the collar, the cuffs, and the button plackets. Toss these in the basket to deal with later.
- If the shirt is an oxford type with button down collar, use your seam ripper to remove the buttons from the front – keep the buttons!
- Cut the back yoke, the sleeves, the fronts.
- Cut off the hems and seams
- Reserve the backs of all the shirts to piece together the backing of the quilt.
- From the lights:
 - cut twelve 6 ½" squares,
 - and as many 2 ½" strips as possible.
 - Any strips too narrow for 2 ½", cut for 2" strips.
 - The two inch strips will be pieced together for the binding in a later step.
- Press and starch the pieces with a hot iron.

Layer the **sleeves** one on top of the other, and cut 6 ½” strips across the width of the sleeve



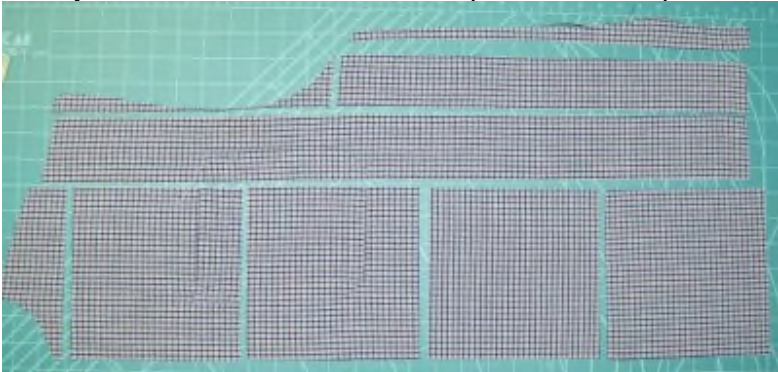
Then cut 6 ½” blocks from the strips.

You'll have 8 of the 12 squares, and lots of left over bits. Reserve the bits for later (toss them in the basket)

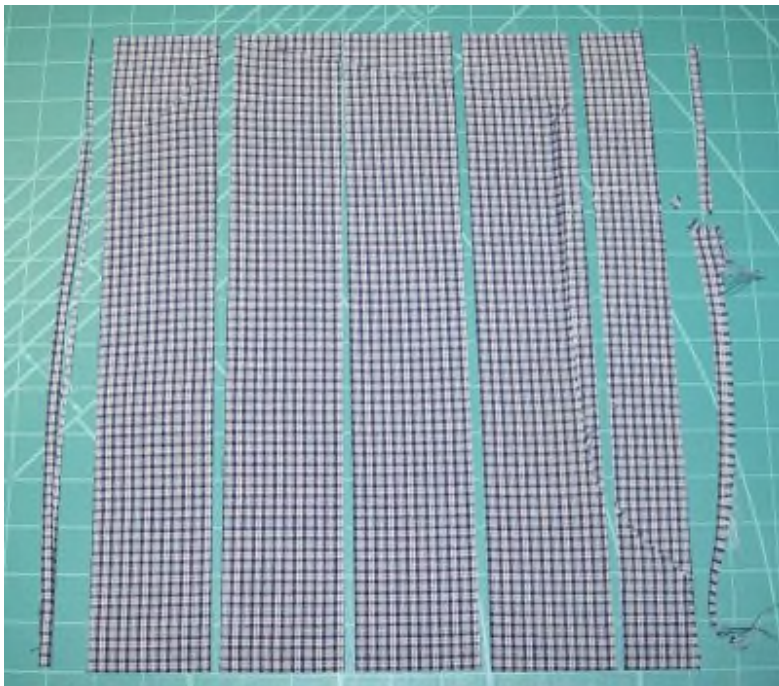


Next, a **front**. If you are like me, you'll ignore the pockets. Incorporating them into the quilt gives it some charm. If you're NOT like me (ie: normal) then avoid cutting the pockets.

Now you'll have the last 4 blocks, plus some strips, and some trash.



- With the second front, fold in half to make cutting easier.
- Cut 2 ½" & 2" strips
- Square off the ends of the strips, and toss the garbage.
- With the back yokes, layer the pieces, and cut 2 ½" and 2" strips.
- Square off the ends of the strips.



Repeat these steps with the second light shirt.

This is what you should have:

- A total of 24 6 ½" squares,
- 2 ½" strips,
- 2" strips,
- the complete back,
- and lots of good scraps to cut up later.



Now, onto the **dark shirts**.

- This time, set aside the backs AND the sleeves of the dark shirts for later.
- Concentrate on getting as many 2 ½” strips out of the fronts and back yoke.
- If you are like me, you’ll make sure the label from the yoke is centred right in the middle of the 2 ½” strip. (Again, I think this adds charm. But, if you’re not like me, then avoid the label.)





Step TWO – nine patches, and some housecleaning.

- In this step, the goal is to create a total of 24 identical nine patch blocks, 6 1/2" square.
- Of your five darks, choose one of them to be the centre patch of the nine patches we're going to make. (I went with red – it was the brightest, and I thought it would provide some 'pop' – but any colour is going to provide cohesiveness, because it's going to show up where it's expected.)
- Sew together strips, using your longest 2 1/2" strips and a precise 1/4" seam.
- 3 sets of each will probably be enough.
- 1st dark, light, 2nd dark light, dark chosen for centre, light 3rd dark, a light, 4th dark



- How the lights are placed is irrelevant, but the darks must be placed so that each of 24 nine patches will be identical.
- Press the seams, light towards dark.
- Cut the assembled strips into 2 1/2" sections, and assembly line sew them into nine-patch blocks.
- Blocks will measure 6 1/2" square.
- Press and square them up.

(**If you have enough sections left over to make four more nine patches, this is a bonus! You can use them as part of a pieced border that will be introduced in a later step. Go ahead and construct

those four extra blocks. If you don't have enough left overs, don't worry about it, we'll do something different.)

SOME HOUSEKEEPING:

(1) Prepare a border:

Of the colour you chose for your centre of the nine patch blocks, sew remaining 2 1/2" strips end to end to prepare an inner border that will be used in a later step. You'll need about 5 yards in length. If you don't have 5 yards, cut some extra strips from the sleeves that have been set aside.

(2) Prepare the binding:

Sew all of your 2" strips end to end to prepare binding. Fold in half, and press. You'll need about 7 yards in length. If you don't have 7 yards, just wait until a later step.

(3) Prepare the backing: piece together the back of the quilt using the backs of the shirts you've set aside. A total area of 58" x 70" is ideal. You may need to cut large chunks from the sleeves you have set aside. I needed five sleeves plus the seven backs.

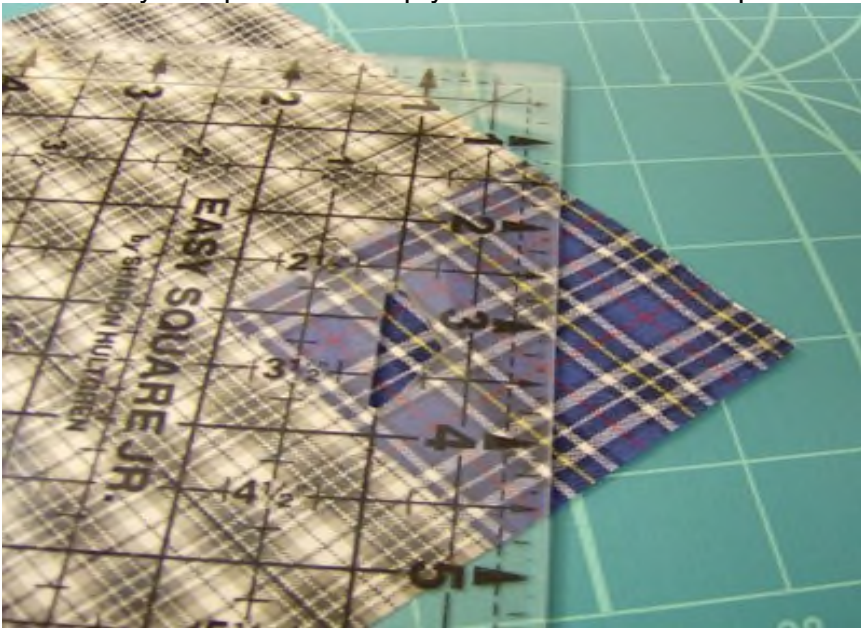
Step Three : Snowball Blocks

Cut 24 2 1/2" squares from each dark - except the dark that was used in the centre of the nine patch blocks.



- Match a dark square into the corners of the 6 1/2" light squares.
- Place a ruler with the 1/4" line diagonally from corner to corner of the small dark squares.
- It would be impossible to draw a pencil line on the dark fabric, so we're just going to cut here.
- Stitch, and press corners open.

- Make 24 identical blocks.
- Placement of the darks is IMPORTANT - so pay attention here.
- Maybe a photo will help you understand the explanation that will follow.



See how the two blue fabrics are placed the same as in the nine patch? Now notice that the black and gold fabrics are flipped to the opposite corners than in the nine patches.

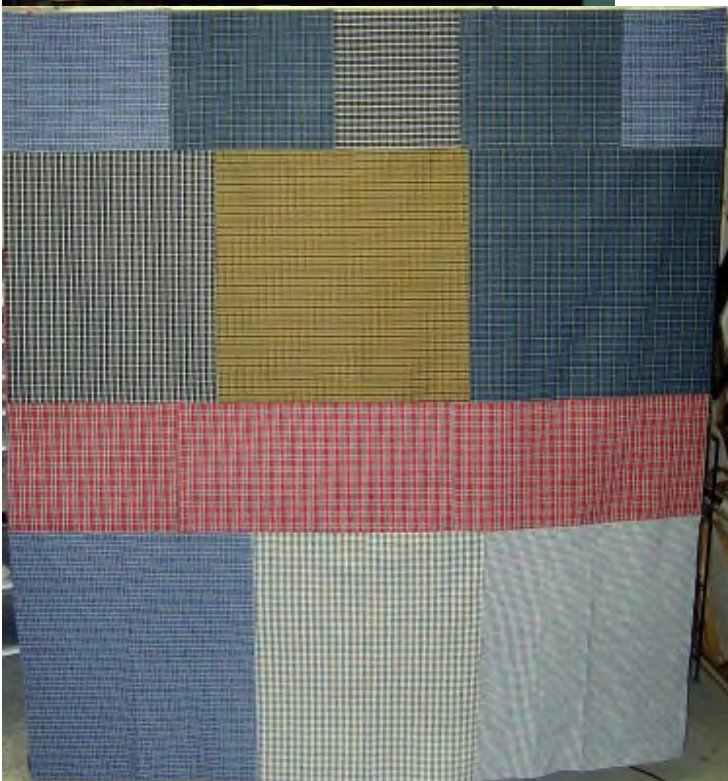
Step Four : Begin Assembly

- Using the 24 nine patches and 24 snowballs, we are going to construct 12 identical blocks.
- I guess the most important part is the placement of the lights of the snowball blocks.
- Make sure you have one of each of the two different light fabrics in each big block.
- Now arrange the blocks in such a way that a hexagon/diamond-y shape is constructed in the centre, all of the same fabric.
- Now assembly-line sew the smaller blocks into bigger blocks, and press.
- Once all your blocks are sewn, make sure they are all lying in exactly the same position, then lay them out in a 3 block x 4 block grid, and sew together.



Step Five : Add First Border

If you haven't done this step yet, prepare a border: (See step above.)
Apply the first border to the quilt.



Step Six - Second Border: Piano Keys

With all of your left over 2 1/2" dark strips, cut in 6 1/2" lengths, and begin piecing a piano key border. Of course, you can sew longer pieces together first, and then cut into 6 1/2" lengths. Now, if you had 4 four-patches left, you put those in the corners. Or, if you kept the triangles that we cut off the snowballs, you can piece some pinwheel blocks. Or, choose ANY block that will finish at 6" square to make your corners. I simply mitred my corners, but wouldn't blocks look cool? Apply borders to quilt.



Step Seven - Finishing

Now is the time to make your quilt sandwich and quilt as desired.

You kept all the buttons from the shirts, right? And check out your machine owner's manual....cuz you can sew buttons on with your machine. Cool, eh?

Consider "tying" your quilt with buttons, instead of traditional stitching or tying with thread.

Of course, you can quilt however you like, and then add some buttons in the border for embellishment.

