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# The Keepsakes Quilt

by Vicki Welsh

This is a quilt that I designed to specifically take advantage of large print fabrics like the florals in this quilt. I found that it also works very well for t-shirt quilts. I am sharing this pattern with you to use to make your personal quilts or quilts to sell. You may not teach this as a class or print and distribute this pattern for financial or professional gain.

The instructions are presented with the floral and t-shirt instructions together.

OK, let's get started. The quilt I am making is expected to be 62"-ish x 74"-ish, but we'll see how it goes. This is a very forgiving and flexible quilt pattern.



## Supplies

It's very difficult to provide materials for a quilt like this. It's all dependent on the focus fabrics and how big you want the final quilt to be. I can provide the categories of fabrics needed:

**Focus fabrics.** These are the large floral prints in the quilt shown above or t-shirt images for the t-shirt version. Hawaiian shirt prints would be great for a focus fabric too.

**Frame fabrics** - For the floral quilt version I identified 4 or 5 colors from the floral palette and got a couple of fat quarters of each. For the t-shirt version I asked the client to provide some other type of shirt that represented the person. In this case, we used camouflage fabrics for the frames. You could also use khaki, denim or a small print shirting

**Background fabrics** – For the floral quilts there were some leaf prints in that line of fabric and I used those for the background. In the t-shirt quilt we chose flannel plaids for the background. Other ideas might be stripe dress shirts, denim or golf shirt fabrics.

**Border Fabric** – I always wait until the center of the quilt is together before selecting a border fabric. There are 3 borders. The center one is made from left over frame or background fabrics.

**Interfacing for t-shirt quilts** – You need a very lightweight interfacing for the knit fabrics. Get whatever is inexpensive from your fabric store.

## Part 1A - Cutting the focus blocks for the floral quilt



This photo shows the three types of fabrics needed for the center of the quilt.

- The large prints are the focus fabrics.
- The solid, hand-dyed fabrics are for the frames.
- The smaller prints, in the upper right, were part of the floral line and are mostly leaf prints. I am using those as the background filler.

The quilt is based on a finished 12" square. Cut the large print fabric to any of these six dimensions. These are based on a 3" increment plus seam allowances. This 3" increment is an important rule of this particular quilt.

You want to find the cut size that best shows off some part of the print. The cut size options, in inches, are:

- 3.5 x 3.5
- 3.5 x 6.5 (vertical or horizontal)
- 3.5 x 9.5 (vertical or horizontal)
- 6.5 x 6.5
- 6.5 x 9.5 (vertical or horizontal)
- 9.5 x 9.5



This is how I cut one of the fat quarters. I ended up with 9.5 x 9.5, 6.5 x 6.5 and 6.5 x 9.5 blocks from this one fat quarter. Yes, there is quite a bit of waste but what else are you going to use the fabrics for? I put the leftovers in my scrap bag and give them to a local charity sewing group.



Here are the three blocks where you can see how I positioned the floral motifs



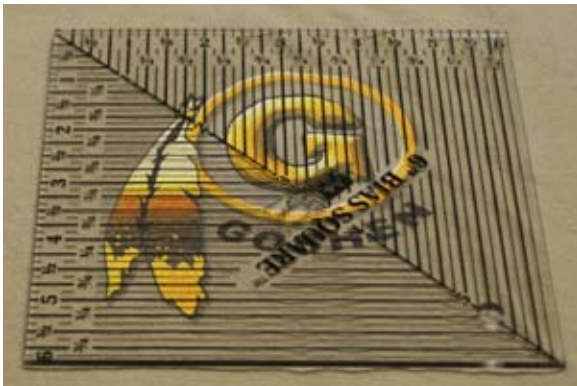
And here are all of the blocks that I cut from the floral fabrics. I probably have more than I need so I may not use all of them or I can make the quilt bigger. We'll see how it develops.

## Part 1B - Cutting the focus blocks for the t-shirt quilt

In a t-shirt version we can't rely on motifs that fit in a 9" square or smaller. The approach that I use for these is to cut the motif as small as I can but to keep it in a 3" increment (plus 1/2" seam allowance). So there might be blocks cut to:

- 3.5 x 3.5
- 3.5 x 6.5 (vertical or horizontal)
- 3.5 x 9.5 (vertical or horizontal)
- 6.5 x 6.5
- 6.5 x 9.5 (vertical or horizontal)
- 9.5 x 9.5
- 9.5 x 12.5
- 6.5 x 12.5
- 12.5 x 18.5
- 15.5 x 15.5, etc

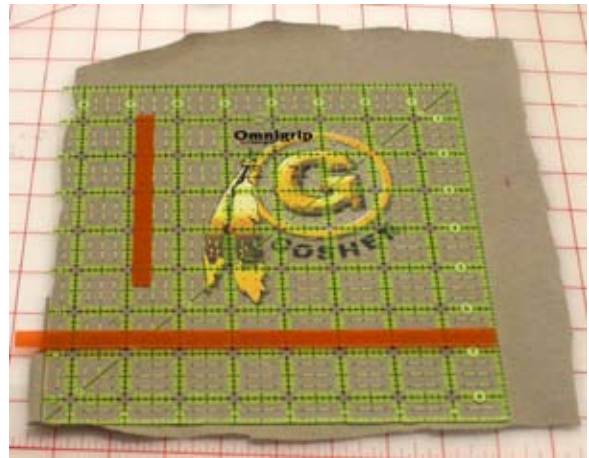
We aren't going to worry about fitting them all together at this point. Just stick to 3" increments.



I start every shirt by determining the proper finished size of the block. This particular motif fits well in a 6" finished square. Cut out the motif with at least a 1" margin larger on all sides.



T-shirt fabrics need to be stabilized. A medium or lightweight interfacing will work well. Use whatever you have or can find easily. I used a medium weight on these shirts because most of them are WELL worn and a tad bit thin. Cut a piece of interfacing about the size of the cut motif and fuse it to the back of the fabric.



I cut this motif to 6.5" square. I like to use these ruler markers to help me properly center the motif on the fabric. Cut all of your shirt motifs to any size as long as it is a multiple of 3 plus 1/2" for seam allowances.



Sometimes I leave pockets attached. I'll either sew or fuse the opening closed.



In this shirt, I wanted to use the emblem but the shirt is torn. I removed the emblem, cut the square from

another area of the shirt, interfaced the cut piece and then sewed the emblem on the new interfaced square. If you interface the square first it stabilizes the fabric so that sewing the emblem will not stretch it out of shape. The repaired block is on the right in the photo above (previous page).



Here are all of the blocks for Mitchell's quilt. A few of these were from woven shirts (the Boy Scout emblems and the Beach Luau). Those did not need to be interfaced. There are also some emblems that I removed from shirts that I will sew onto some completed blocks later.

**Part 2A** – Frame the floral blocks

Now it is time to frame the blocks.



I chose an assortment of hand dyed fabrics for my frames. I can't tell you exactly how much fabric you need. I cut about 10 fat quarters for these blocks to get a good variety of colors and I did have several strips left over.

Cut the strips 2" wide. It works best if you cut along the longest side of the fat quarter. As you select the fabric to frame each block, you can cut them to length at that point. It doesn't matter what order you sew the frame pieces to the block. The lengths are going to be some combination of 3.5, 6.5, 9.5 and 12.5".



I have 30 blocks here and that's more than I need for the twin/lap quilt that I planned. This quilt builds itself as you go along because it's a bit difficult to plan with odd-shaped blocks. This one is going to be a bit bigger than the first version that I made and I'm OK with that.

**Part 2B** – Frame the t-shirt blocks

I think that it's the frames that really pull the t-shirt quilt together and make it something more special than

a plain t-shirt quilt. It also allows you to bring other clothing fabrics into the quilt.



I actually made two t-shirt quilts for this pattern. These are for the sons of a friend. For the t-shirt quilts, I decided to use their Dad's camo clothing for the frames. I had a camo t-shirt, that I backed with fusible web for stability, and camo pants. There wasn't enough of those two fabrics for the frames in both quilts. I also had a white shirt that I decided to dye with a camo theme. I really had intended to mix the dyed and printed fabrics in both quilts but my dyed camo came out much more orange than I intended.

In the end I decided to use the dyed camo in one quilt and the printed camo in the other, but I think this gives you a good idea of the effects you can get from the fabric that you choose for the frames. The instructions are the same as for the floral quilt.



I think that you can see how adding the frames starts to pull the t-shirt images together.

### Part 3A – Putting the center of the floral quilt together



So, now your blocks are all framed. Until this point I have not had any idea how big my quilt was going to be. In both cases (floral blocks and t-shirt blocks) I have just made as many blocks as I could. This



quilt, especially the t-shirt version, is about the fabrics (shirts) and I want them all in the quilt. I adjust the size of the quilt to work best with the blocks.

As a reminder, all of the floral blocks are finished sizes of 12" square or smaller. The quilt is based on 12" finished blocks and the smaller blocks are all sized in increments of 3". THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. If your finished size framed blocks are not some a factor of 3", then you will have a lot more math to do!

Once all of the blocks are framed it's time to figure out how big the quilt will be. I have placed orange dots on my design wall that roughly mark out a grid of five blocks across by six blocks down. I start with the biggest (12" finished) blocks and place one in each grid position. I continue placing blocks, one in each grid block until I have used all of the blocks or the grid is full. That's what I did in the photo above (previous page).

Look at the 3rd row, 4th position over. There are two blocks in that grid space. Each of those blocks is 6" finished, so I know I can put two of them into one grid square.

The original version of this quilt was 4½ grid squares across and five grid squares down. These quilts can be ANY size that you need them to be!

This is not the final position of the blocks. It only determines the size of the quilt. The body of my quilt is going to be 60" (five grid blocks) by 72" (six grid blocks).



Now you can take all of the blocks down! Stack them together by block size. Start with your largest blocks (finished size 12" square) and place them on the design wall. As I place my blocks on the design wall I am trying to make sure that the sizes and colors are spread around the quilt.

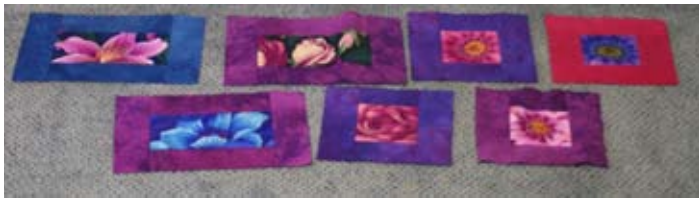
I know. My grid dots are not straight and even. They are good enough for what we are doing here!



Add the next largest blocks. In this example, these blocks are finished 9 x 12. Some are oriented horizontally and some vertically.



Keep going until you have added all of the blocks—except for the smallest ones. I use those later as I am constructing the rows. This is just the basic map. I am going to construct this row by row and will make some adjustments as I go. Notice that I am also doing some preliminary orientation within the grid. Some of the smaller blocks are oriented left or right and top or bottom within a grid square. This planned randomness is important for the overall effect.



Here are my leftover blocks. I will use some of these as I construct the quilt. A few will be totally left out.



Before you start constructing anything, there's a little bit of cutting to do! If you remember, on the original quilt there was a background of a variety of leaf prints. I am using seven different prints in this quilt. I used fat quarters.

Cut a couple of 3½" wide strips of each fabric. Cut more as you need them. Remember, all of our blocks are an increment of 3" (finished size). Because of that, we only have to cut one width of sashing. It's ALWAYS 3½".



Our primary objective is to make every block into a 12" finished (12½" x 12½") block. In the previous photo, the framed flower is finished size 9" x 9". It needs an additional 3" added to two sides. I cut a bottom sashing 3½" x 9½" and the side sashing 3½" x 12½". When these are sewn together, the block will be 12½" x 12½". Make sense?



Look at the two blocks on the top row on the left. The first block is the one I sashed and the second block with one that is already 12½" x 12½". I'm going to continue to work across the top row. I'm not concerned at all with the second row at this point.



In this photo I have all five blocks of the top row done. I made sure that I used a variety of the leaf prints and that I adjusted the orientation of the framed flowers within the finished block.



At this point, you can continue for the remaining rows, making 12½" x 12½" blocks. Or.....



You can make your quilt look even MORE random! Go back and look at that last photo on the previous page. See the blue framed block on the right in the second row? It has that light leaf print sashing on right at the end of the row. Instead of putting that fabric there I decided to put it on the far left (see above). This simple change shifted the blocks all 3" to the right. I like it better that way.

Continuing on....



I worked row three as straightforward 12" finished (12½" x 12½") blocks, just like the first row.

On the fourth row, I shifted the blocks so that I could insert a 9" wide block with two of the smallest framed flowers. In essence, instead of five 12" blocks, I have two 12" finished blocks and four 9" blocks (total of 36", or three blocks).

The reason that I do this is that I want to avoid, if possible, any area where I would need two sashing strips between framed blocks.

Even though I changed some of the rows, I maintained the rows so that the construction is still very straightforward. I was able to fit in some of the smaller

blocks on rows three, four and five.



Here's the top ready for borders! Even though I changed some of the rows, I maintained the rows so that the construction is still very straightforward. I was able to fit in some of the smaller blocks on rows three, four and five.

### Part 3B – Putting the center of the t-shirt quilt together

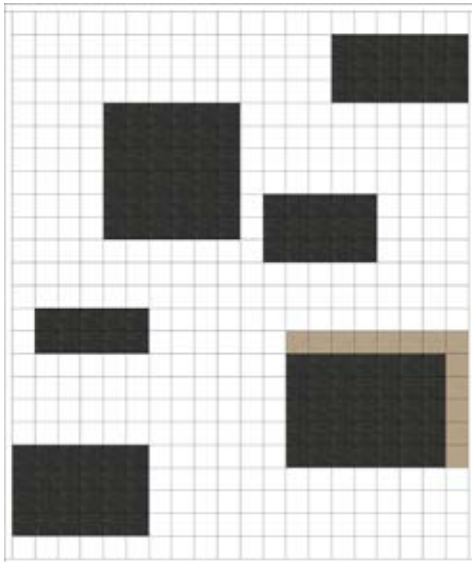
Now that you have a complete understanding of the basic method for designing your Keepsakes quilt, let's take it a step or two further in complexity to make the t-shirt quilt!





The first step is the same as for the “normal” (yeah, that’s meant to be funny) quilt. Put the blocks on your design wall just to determine the basic size of the quilt. Notice that some of these blocks are a LOT larger than 12½” square!

At this point some simple graph paper would be very helpful. Let me show you.



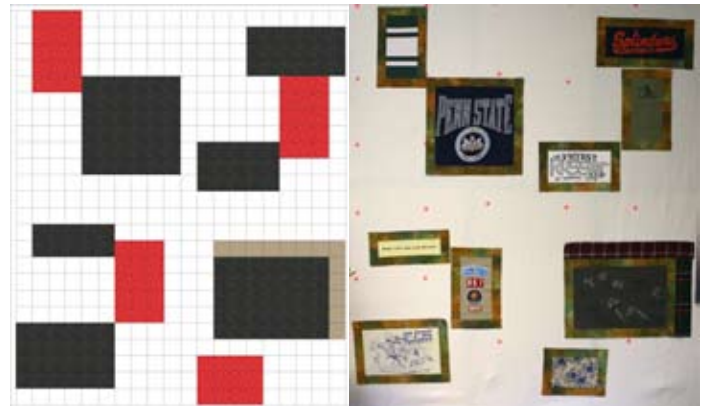
My t-shirt quilts are going to be the same size as the floral Keepsakes quilt. The center will be 60” x 72” finished. Because my blocks are still based on 3” increments, I divided my graph paper up to have four squares to a 12” block, so it’s 20 blocks wide and 24 blocks tall.

The key to working any version of the Keepsakes quilt is to ALWAYS start with the largest blocks. I used the color black to identify the location of all blocks that have at least one side that is longer than 12” finished. That one block on the right with the gray top and side shows that block with the sashing already added to it.



As I am identifying the blocks on the grid I am placing them on the design wall. This helps me make sure that

I am distributing the colors of the t-shirts around the quilt. You can see the sashing on that one large block. For this quilt, the sashing is plaid fabrics from the Dad’s clothing. I have six different plaid flannel shirts to use for this one.



In this photo I have added the next largest blocks (9” x 12” finished and 9” x 15” finished) in red.

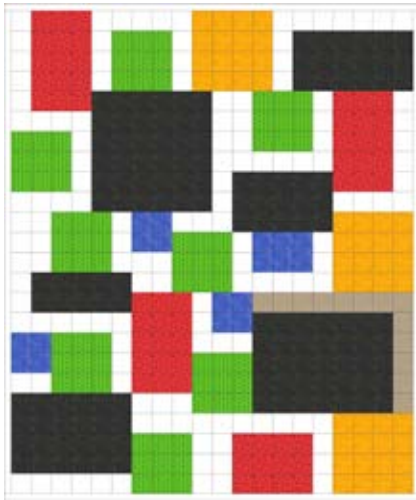


Continuing, I added the 12” (finished) blocks in gold.



Keep going! You can start to see why you need the graph paper. You will drive yourself insane if you try to keep up with the position of the blocks and the sashing

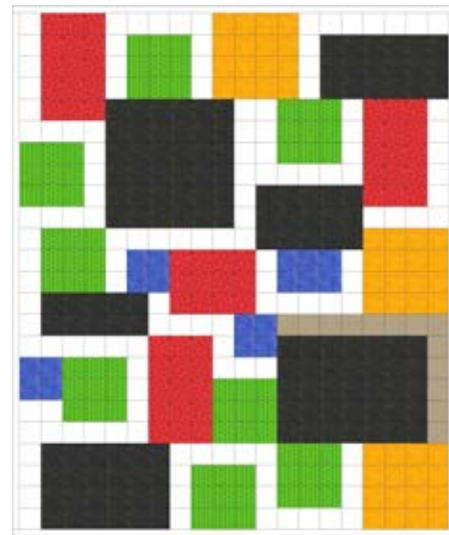
widths if you were doing this only on your design wall. I change colors on my graph paper for every size of block.



Here's a layout with all of the blocks in position. At this point it's good to take a little break and come back to look at it with a clear eye.

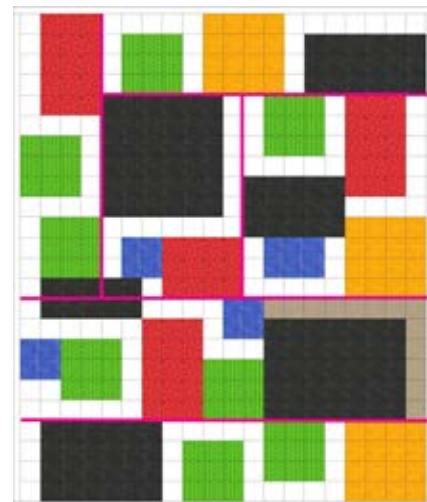


Let's analyze the layout. See the areas highlighted in pink? I've got several spots where I will need two pieces of the sashing to fit in between the blocks. I think it can be better.



I moved a couple of blocks around and it appears that everything is distributed better. I only have one spot (under the blue box on the left) where I will need two pieces of sashing (because, remember, that I've cut my 3½" sashing strips already!).

Before I start sewing I want to think about how I will put this beast together!



I want to make sure that I have large segments that I can sew together and I will avoid partial seams. Can you see that the pink line is going through the middle of a black shape on the left? When constructing this quilt I will position the black block down 3" and add the sashing above it.

Now, I want to make a point here. This is a t-shirt quilt—don't agonize over this! It really doesn't matter that much. I spent no more than 45 minutes on the block arrangement. It took me longer to edit all of

these photos and write the instructions than it did to work out the block arrangement. Good enough really is good enough with a t-shirt quilt!

If you haven't done so already, cut your sashing strips  $3\frac{1}{2}$ " wide. Taking one section at a time, add sashing to the blocks and sew it all together.



On the floral quilt I dyed a purple fabric for borders one and three. The fabric for border two is left over from the frames. Because I use leftover strips for border two, that dictates the finished width of that border at  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " (cut at 2"). I cut border one strips 2" wide and border three strips  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " wide. The length will depend on your final quilt size.

In this photo you can see the blocks sewn into the big sections.



Here's the center of this quilt all put together.

#### Part 4 – Add the borders

The final step on the quilt is to add the borders. You can do whatever you wish. You can add one border or multiples, pieced or not. Here's how I treated mine. I added three borders on all of these quilts.



First of all, this quilt isn't wonky as it looks. It's very heavy and difficult to hang straight on my design wall. For this quilt I also used the leftover frame fabrics for border two. These strips were cut 2" wide. Border one was cut from one of the flannel plaids that has particular meaning to the quilt owner. They are cut at 2", just like the floral quilt. Border three in this quilt is made from the leftover plaid sashing strips so, by default, these are cut at  $3\frac{1}{2}$ " wide.

Here are the completed quilt tops.

