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Color Strips Scrap Floor Pillows Tutorial

ON JANUARY 13 | IN [SEWING TUTORIALS + PATTERNS](#) | BY [BETH](#) | WITH 13 COMMENTS

Virginia Lindsay of [Gingercake](#) and [Gingercake Patterns](#) joined us with a number of great tutorials and thought-provoking articles. There's the [Free Owl Pattern](#) from her [Pretty Birds](#) book and the [Day Out Purse + Variations](#) (which you can make and sell). She also gave us her thoughts on [The Balancing Act of Putting a Price on Handmade](#) in conjunction with her popular [Sewing to Sell](#) book. As we kick off a new year, her [10 Big Picture Habits for Happy, Successful Sewing](#) is also worth another look!

Virginia is back with an easy and satisfying way to use the scraps you've accumulated through all of your many sewing projects! If you're cleaning out your stash to kick off the new year, this may just be the right project for you. (Once you start a Color Strips Scrap Floor Pillow you'll want to make one for every room in the house!) Enjoy the tutorial, and take a closer look at [Gingercake](#) for all of [Virginia's many patterns](#), [free tutorials](#) and more.

Do you love the look but you're set for pillows? Try a [Patchwork Tote](#)!

After you have been sewing for awhile, you realize that scrap busting is an important part of keeping your fabric stash healthy. You can get a huge pile pretty quickly if you aren't careful. Already have that huge pile? Don't worry, I do too! A few weeks ago I knew it was time for a purge. This project was a great opportunity to make beautiful pillows, showcase some favorite scraps and really make a big dent in that pile of little fabric pieces.



Large 24" to 27" pillow forms can be found at the fabric store but they are also the standard size of pillows that come with your sofa and you may have some around your home that could use a new cover. My favorite part of this project (besides busting so many scraps!) is that the pillow cover is made with a zipper side and it is fully lined. This means it can be thrown in the washing machine with no worries about fraying and coming apart! I imagine these pillows on the floor while the kids watch movies, and being able to wash them easily is a big plus!



Let's begin!

All seams allowances are 1/4" unless otherwise noted.

Materials Needed:

- Scraps of one color: at least 2.5" width
- Cotton batting 30" x 60" (or smaller depending on the size of pillow form)
- 27" pillow form (24", 25" or 26" squares will work too)
- Scissors, rotary cutter, self healing mat
- Sewing machine + thread, standard foot + zipper foot
- 22" zipper (longer will also work)
- 2 large foam boards: optional but helpful
- Iron + ironing board
- Chopstick for poking out corners



If you do not already organize your scraps by color, take some time and separate out the scraps into basic colors. Don't spend too much time making your choices. You can see in the photo below that my pile has a large variety of fabrics but all have blue as a base color (and somehow a red one got in there too!). These are only woven cottons; no decor weight and no knits!

Once you have the scraps sorted by color, sort out the same color scraps into 3 piles: The largest pile will be fabrics that have a width of at least 3".

The second smaller pile will be of fabrics that have a 2.5" width. Just keep your favorites!

The third pile will be the largest scraps in your collection. These pieces will be significantly larger width than 3", like 5" x 7", etc.



Press all of the fabrics so you can do the next step neatly. You can see my three piles here. Use your rotary cutter and mat to straighten the the sides. You will not need this many fabric pieces, but having an overage will help with your selection in the next step.



Using a board that you can pick up and move over to your sewing machine (I used two black foam boards I bought at the dollar store), start auditioning your strips of 3" width fabrics onto the boards. A few tips... Spread out the same fabric strips so they are evenly spaced. Also, mix up darks and lights so they are evenly dispersed. Don't fuss too much with the placement of the pieces though! This project looks best with quick decisions that come straight from your instincts.



You will make 10 lines of 3" strips that are about 30" long. The width will become shorter when you sew the strips together and then also when you trim them down in the next step.

Bring the boards over to your sewing machine. Try to keep your layout in order as much possible. Going line by line, sew the 3" ends of the strips right sides together. Some of them will be longer than others but all should end up being at least 27" long. Press the seams out as you go.



Once you have all the strips sewn together, keep them in order but move them vertically so that the seams don't match up. This step is OPTIONAL but i think it looks a little nicer, like bricks! This is why most of the strips are longer than 27" so you have this flexibility with the seams. If a few seams are lined up that's ok too; it won't make a huge difference.

Trim off the ends so that the strips are all 27".

Once you have all the 3" strips trimmed you can sew the long vertical sides together with a 1/2" seam allowance. Sew together five strips, set aside and then sew together the other five strips. Since the pillow form is 27", 10 strips all sewn together with a 1/4" seam allowance will only be 25". Now you can add the extra 2.5" width strip.

The reason for doing the piecing this way is to give you flexibility. My pillow forms for the four pillows I made were between 24" and 27" square. The whole idea of making the scrap strips pillow cover is to use up your scraps; we don't need to be fussing too much with the pillow form size!

- o If your pillow form is only 24", leave out this additional strip and trim 1/2" off each end to make a 24" x 24" square.
- o If your form is 25" x 25": Leave out the additional strip and trim ends to be a 25" square.
- o If your pillow form is 26" x 26": Add the strip to the center, but then trim 1/2" off each end to make a 26" square
- o If your pillow form is 27" x 27": Add the strip to the center and create a 27" square.

To add the 2.5" width strip, stack the 2.5" strips and sew them right sides together, just like you did a few steps ago with the 3" width strips. Pay attention to how they will sit between the two 3" width sections you have already sewn together. See the photo below for how I auditioned the center strip. Trim the length to match the 3" sections, press out the seams and then sew the 2.5" strip right sides together with the existing 3" sections. Press out all the seams and set aside for now. The section should be a 27" square.

Next take the stack of larger scrap pieces and start arranging for the other side of the pillow. You can also just repeat the 3" width strips instead, but this is another method to get a scrappy looking pillow, and it might be fun to try it out.



Again, use your rotary cutter and mat to even out all the edges into rectangles. Make sure you are cutting with the grain of the fabric. In the photo, I arranged my scraps into a very loose log cabin quilt block. You can see how I attached the scrap pieces together by looking at the arrows in the photo. Some trimming will be required to get the scraps together, but try to fit similar sizes together to create your block.

The scraps, all placed together before sewing any pieces together, should be about 30" x 30". This will account for seams and gives you plenty of flexibility for adjustment as you go along.

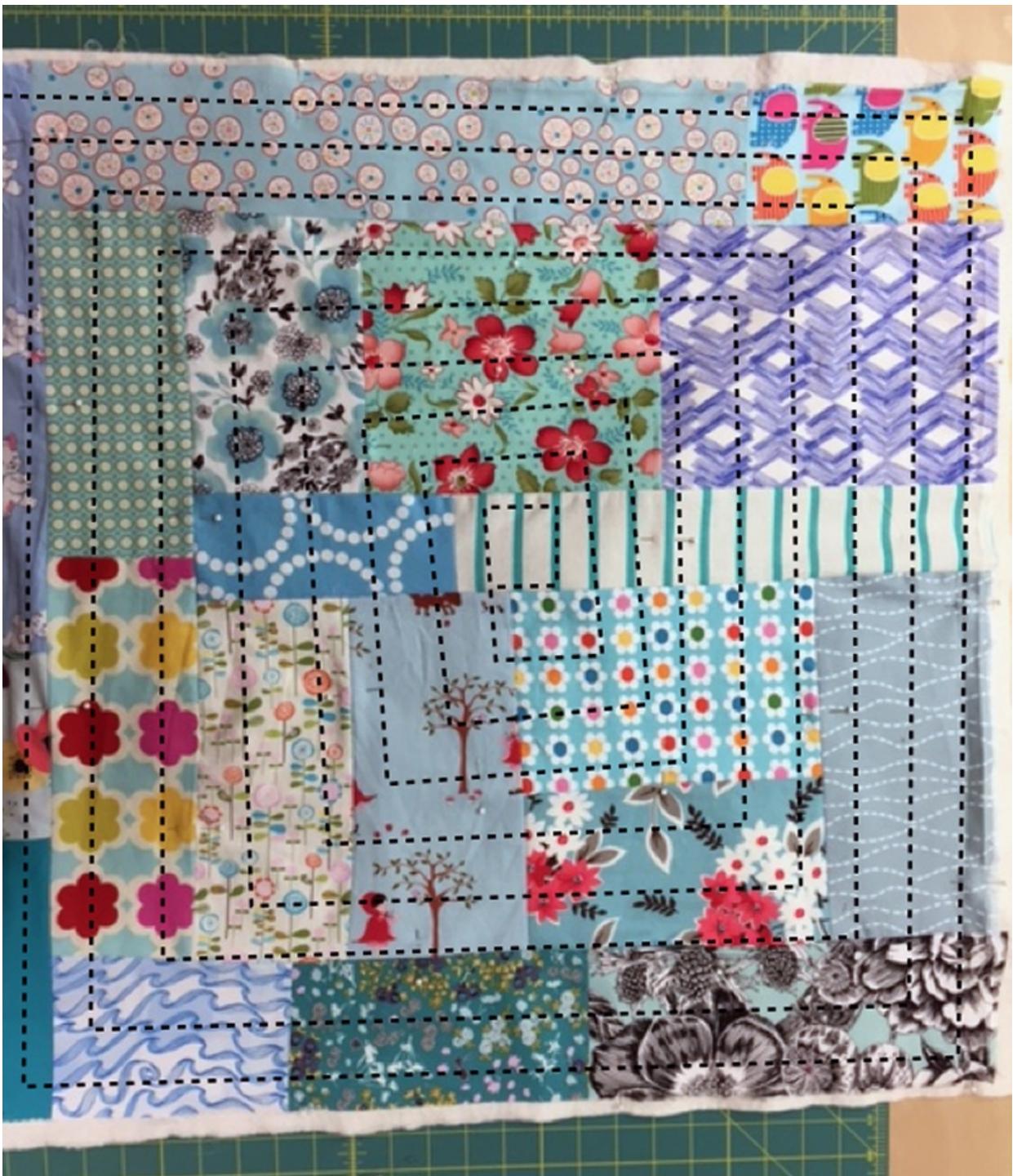
Sew the scrap pieces right sides together and press out your seams as you go. Trim down extra fabric to get pieces to fit together. Like with the strips side, pay attention to light and dark pieces and also, if possible, avoid matching seams when you join sections together. Your collection of larger scraps is going to look different from mine but the concepts of putting it together are the same.

As you sew the pieces right sides together, iron your seams out. When you have sewn them all together, trim the piece down to 27" square.

The next step is to quilt the pillow tops. Cut the 30" x 60" piece in half to make two 30" square pieces. This will give batting that is about 5.5" wider on all sides than the 27" pieces. Put one of the batting pieces aside, and then center, pin and quilt the top piece with your preferred method onto the batting. You can see from the photo below that I choose to do vertical lines every 1" or so.



Repeat this process with the back piece. You can see how I chose to sew around the perimeter and kept moving in all the way to the center. Again, this can be any form of quilting... Stitch in the ditch, loops, etc. You are supposed to make this yours!



Next, trim down the batting to match the edge of the fabric. This is a good time to check that the two sides are the same size and make necessary adjustments.

Now you need to add the fabric strips to the end of your 22" zipper. Optionally, you can use a zipper that is the length of your piece if you have one handy, like a 24" or 26". Invisible zippers would also look great on this pillow!

To add the fabric strip, cut a piece of blue fabric that is 1" x 8". Place the fabric right side facing the top side of the zipper, with the end lined up with the metal stop. See the photo. Pin and sew the fabric and zipper together 3/8" above the stop. Turn the piece over, fold the fabric down and press. Then fold the fabric in half, wrong sides together, and press again. The fabric should now sandwich the zipper end. Fold the raw end of the fabric over toward the wrong side and press. Holding the fabric and zipper together, turn back over to the right side and pin in place. Topstitch 1/8" down from the front side folded edge to secure the fabric in place on both sides of the zipper. Repeat with the other end of the zipper. See photos.



Pin the zipper to one edge of the pillow front (or back) right/top sides together. Using a zipper foot, sew the zipper in place. Repeat with the other front side of the zipper and the other pillow side.



Next cut two pieces of lining fabric that are the size of your pillow form. For my pillow it will be two 27" pieces.

Open up the quilted pillow top pieces and face them down on your table with the zipper in the middle. Pin the lining fabric, right side facing the back side of the zipper (in my photo it's not easy to see the wrong side since this particular fabric is printed on both sides). Arrange the lining piece like you see in my photo, with the lining fabric pinned covering the zipper; pin in place only with the zipper and do not go through the exterior piece. Flip the piece over and use the stitch line from where you attached the zipper to the exterior as your guide to sew the lining to the back. Repeat this process for the other piece of lining.



Open the zipper half way before moving on the next step. Pull the sides apart so that the zipper is in the center and the lining pieces are right sides facing; exterior pieces are right sides facing. Pin the sides together so they match up evenly and sew like you see in the photo. Leave an 8" opening at the end of the lining side for turning. Where the lining and exterior seams meet, sew the seams toward the exterior side.



Trim the corners and then pull the piece right side out through the opening in the lining and through the zipper opening. Check all of the seams and poke out the corners of the exterior with a chopstick. Then, topstitch the opening closed by pressing under the raw edges and sewing 1/8" to the edge.



Push the lining inside the exterior, zip closed and press thoroughly.



Insert your pillow form and admire your beautiful patchwork pillow!



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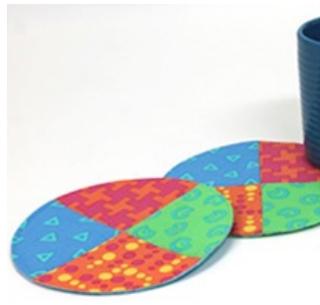
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JILB

at

Gamma Jane, I have the same problem. I usually have to read things super slow and either Youtube or map every step down in my head which can take quite awhile. Forget about auditory learning. Thank you for being a teacher that saw the outside the box of kids being wired a little different. I'm off to source Youtube for a zipper/ lining reminder. JilB



JANE

at

Oh my, these pillows are gorgeous. But, I have difficulty following written instructions so it may take me awhile to figure out the zipper and lining part. My pesky learning disability had been something I've had to overcome and thank goodness for You-tube. It change changed my world. My issue is not severe but it effects spatial understanding which makes it difficult for me to visualize your instructions. Believe it or nothe I am a 30+ yr.teaching veteran of special education. I was able to help students because like them I understood WHY they couldn't understand. We are smart people but our brains just work differently. I was never able to follow an entire swing pattern. Just like your pillow instructions are for most very clear and concise, but for me I became totally lost at the zipper but the lining was totally Greek to me. Are there any other sewists/quilters Pou there like me? Is the aputube tutorial for this? Thanks Lori, I love love all your fabrics and projects. It just takes a lot of practice and Mistakes for me to get a final product.

Gamma Jane

Grandmama s Stories



FIONA

at

What a great way to use up straps, I really want to make one of these now. Off to raid the scrap bin 😊



JANET BOYLE

at

Lovely pillows and colour combinations, given me ideas to use some of my scrap material



LARA B.

at

Beautiful pillows Virginia and what a fun way to use up the scrap piles! They all look great together and I love the photo with your darling little girl!



NINA

at

What gorgeous pillows, and a genius way to use up those little scraps!



LYNNEP

at



This is so pretty, thank you for sharing.



JAMIE

at

Really lovely! Adding to my to do list!



VIRGINIA

at

hi ana,

No need to wash the batting before. It is wonderful to work with!



CANDY FROM CANDIED FABRICS

at

Ooooooh LOVE this way of sewing a zipper in the side seam!!!! Genius!



HEATHER

at

What a great idea! I am thinking of using all of my flannel scraps to make some zippered pillowcases for the kids now!



ANA

at

What a great way to turn scraps into something beautiful!

I have a question: should the cotton batting be pre-washed? I've never worked with cotton batting before so I wonder if it would shrink if I didn't wash it.

Thanks!



JACKIE

at

Oh.my.goodness. I love these pillows!! Pinning for a future project. Thank you so much for sharing and I am so happy that Sew Mama Sew is back in my world!! 😊

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Meet Kristin + Beth

We always travel with handmade bags. We have vintage embroidery framed on our walls, piles of fabric next to the sewing machine and more WIPs than we'll ever finish. We love the history, craft and artistry of sewing. [Read More](#)

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