

1. Creative English Paper Piecing - Introduction

English paper piecing (or EPP), sometimes called mosaic patchwork, has a long tradition in patchwork, particularly in the UK*. EPP is a form of patchwork that's traditionally worked entirely by hand, where you tack (baste) pieces of fabric to paper templates, stitch them together, and then remove the tacking and papers when your block or piece is complete. It allows for very accurate piecing, and also lets you piece together some very complex and irregular shapes.

You often see EPP done as hexagons, sometimes in the pattern known as granny's flower garden, although this course isn't going to cover hexagons. EPP is such a creative way of making patchwork, whether it's for decorative work like textile art or quilted wall hangings, or for more practical functional objects like quilts or cushion covers, and you can make it from any tessellating shape.

As well as allowing for very accurate piecing of intricate designs, the other benefits of EPP are:

- (My favourite) It's slow and quiet - It can easily be worked as a mindful practice, as it allows your hands to be busy while your mind can rest or wander
- It's portable - As well as working this patchwork mindfully and quietly, you can also do it while chatting with friends, watching TV, listening to music, travelling (only as a passenger, of course!), waiting for appointments etc
- It's very accessible - you don't need much equipment for this form of patchwork. You do, however, need some dexterity, and some strength in your hands and fingers.
- It's a great way to use fabric scraps, and it's a good way to use scrap paper too - junk mail, circulars, old letters and bills etc can all be used to cut the paper templates
- It's very easy to design your own patchwork
- The paper stabilises your fabric, so you can use a very wide range of fabrics for this kind of patchwork - not just quilting cottons; you can use lace, ribbon, sheer and semi-sheer fabrics, novelty/glitzy fabrics, lightweight linen, silk - almost any light to medium weight fabric will be fine.

In this course I'll show you how to cut and prepare your papers and fabrics, how to tackle a range of piecing techniques, and also how to design your own patchwork using a sketchbook. We'll make a paper-piecing sampler together, which will give you some practice with piecing rectangles, triangles, irregular shapes, and curves, as well as piecing blocks together. I'll show you some ideas for things you can make with your patchwork, including the quilt-as-you-go technique, if you're ambitious enough to think about making a quilt this way.

Once you know the basic techniques, you can make your patchwork any shape you like - you can make patchwork circles, hearts, etc, which you can incorporate into other textile work, for instance by applying them to a piece of textile art or other object.

If this has piqued your interest and you'd like to learn more, then come and join me here for this informal wander through the world of paper piecing. Classes are pre-recorded, and you get lifetime access. You can also download lessons to your computer for extra convenience. In the first lesson we'll look at the supplies you need to get started, and I'll look forward to seeing you there.

* If you're interested in the traditional aspect of EPP, *The 1718 Coverlet* by Susan Briscoe (David & Charles, 2014, ISBN13-978-1-4463-0444-0) is a fascinating introduction to the earliest surviving example of English paper-piecing, and shows you how to recreate the historic coverlet.