

Improv Recipe for a 15" x 20" Block Patrice Denault © 2025

Use 5 or 6 different fabrics of the same color family but different values. Solids or something that reads as a solid works best. Grunge by Moda is a great choice.

¼ yard cuts will be more than enough for your block.

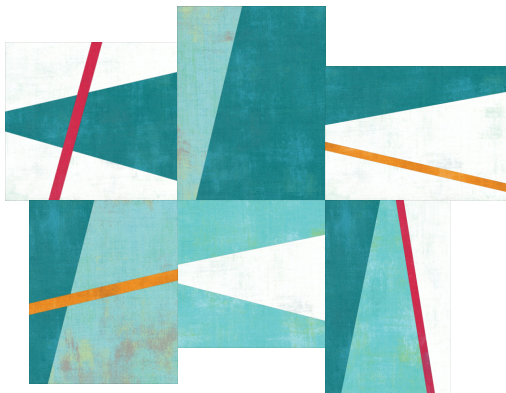
Select at least two contrasting fabrics for the inserts. Left over 1" wide strips are perfect for these.

Start with six 7" x 7" squares layered with all fabrics right side up.

Make 1 vertical slice through the layered squares. Mix them up and sew the two pieces for each block together. Add a 1" insert before sewing them together or just sew together with no insert. You can also layer two or more of these blocks and make another vertical slice. Swap the pieces and sew them together with or without a 1" insert. You can also make a horizontal slice and add an insert to one or two of the blocks.



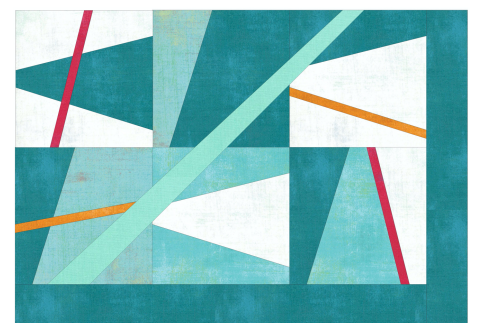
Trim the blocks that you have created so that all edges are even. You are aiming for 6 blocks that could be trimmed to 5 ½" x 5 ½" but don't trim them to that size! Start arranging them and don't hesitate to add more pieces and inserts as desired or needed to ensure you have a large enough slab of fabric.



Once you have arranged these squares and/or rectangles sew them together into a slab that can be trimmed to 10" x 15". Consider making one or two diagonal slices across this piece to add an insert or two. Then trim to 10" x 15".



Now start adding borders: Cut a 2" x 15" strip and a 2" x 11 ½" strip. Sew the longer strip to the top or bottom of the placemat, and the other to one of the sides.



Next work on the improv borders.

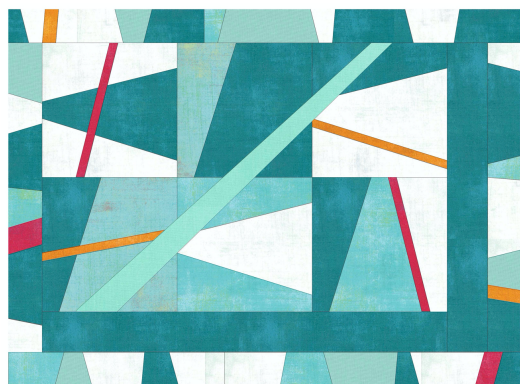
Start with six 6" x 10" rectangles. Stack them and cut 4 or 5 slices through them. Shuffle the pieces. Start sewing each set together adding 2 or 3 inserts as you go.

Sew the sets together into two strips of three sets each.



Trim the two strips so they are 5" wide and cut them in half lengthwise. You will have four strips and they should each be 2 1/2" x 21"

Sew the borders on as desired and trim off the extra. Consider using the left over border pieces to make a strip that you can use on the back of your placemat.



After sewing on the borders your block should measure 15 1/2" x 20 1/2". Once finished in a quilt, or perhaps used as a placemat it will be 15" x 20"

Feel free to break the above rules and/or create your own rules!

This is my current creation which actually started with four squares and some scraps sewn together and added for my main section.

