

EPISODE 16 CLASS NOTES: JOINING BLOCKS TOGETHER

In this episode, we'll start joining our blocks together using my 'Between the Block' Quilt As You Go technique. I hope you've got most of your blocks quilted – remember we left two unquilted just in case we need to adjust sizes later. Joining the blocks now will give you a good idea if your measurements are lining up.

Preparation:

- You'll need your **Spacer Strips** cut from your backing fabric (use the [Episode 14 cutting chart](#)).
- Ensure all blocks are quilted and trimmed according to the chart, *except* for Block A2 (the Tulip Appliqué block) and the two deliberately left unquilted.

Trimming Block A2 (Tulip Appliqué):

- *Note: You may have recorded this block as A3, as A2 and A3 were used interchangeably.*
- This block needs trimming now after the appliqué is complete.
- Trim Block A2 to **10 ½" by 4 ½"**. Use a square ruler to keep things accurate, taking a little off each side if possible. *How much it pulled in depends on your quilting and appliqué stitching.*

Spacer Strip Placements (By Unit):

Here are the spacer strips used to join block pairs *within* each unit:

- **Unit A**
 - A1 to A2 with a 2 ½" x 10 ½" spacer strip
 - A3 to A4 with a 2 ½" x 9 ½" spacer strip
- **Unit B**
 - B1 to B2 with a 2 ½" x 10 ½" spacer strip
 - B3 to B4 with a 2 ½" x 10 ½" spacer strip
- **Unit C**
 - C1 to C2 with a 2 ½" x 10 ½" spacer strip
 - C3 to C4 with a 2 ½" x 10 ½" spacer strip
- **Unit D**
 - D1 to D2 with a 2 ½" x 4 ½" spacer strip
- **Unit E**
 - E1 to E4 with a 2 ½" x 6 ½" spacer strip (*Note: these join horizontally*)
 - E2 to E3 with a 2 ½" x 10 ½" spacer strip
 - E5 to E6 with a 2 ½" x 10 ½" spacer strip
- **Unit F**
 - F1 to F2 with a 2 ½" x 10 ½" spacer strip
- **Unit G**
 - G1 to G2 with a 2 ½" x 6 ½" spacer strip

Joining Blocks Within a Unit (Example: Unit A):

We'll join blocks using the spacer strips. Let's start with Unit A as an example:

- **Arrange the Blocks:** Lay out your blocks for Unit A on your design wall or workspace, leaving space for the spacer strips.
- **Select the Spacer Strips:** From the cutting chart in Episode 14.
 - *For the gap between A1 and A2: You need the 2 ½" x 10 ½" spacer strip.*
 - *For the gap between A3 and A4: You need the 2 ½" x 9 ½" spacer strip.*
- **Position the Strips:** Lay these strips in the gaps with the **wrong side facing up**.
 - *Set aside the 3 ½" x 15 ½" spacer strip also cut for Unit A- we won't use that one just yet.*
- **Check Length & Adjust: IMPORTANT:** Make sure the spacer strip length exactly matches the length of your blocks. If needed, trim the spacer strip to match *before* sewing.
- **Pinning:** Using Flower Head Pins, pin a spacer strip to the edge of the first block (eg. A1). I like to sew with the spacer strip on top.

Machine Setup for Joining:

- **Thread:** Choose a thread that matches your backing/spacer strips (I'm using a light grey Rasant cotton/poly blend) in the top and bobbin.
- **Foot:** Use your preferred foot for a 1/4" seam. I use the Open Toe Foot and adjust my needle position. (For my Bernina 570QE, it's needle position #4 to the right). Set yours up for an accurate 1/4" seam.

- **Foot Pressure:** Start with normal pressure. If you find the fabric layers shifting or stretching as you sew, reduce the foot pressure slightly.
- **Sewing:** Sew the spacer strip between the blocks using an accurate 1/4" seam. Remember to reverse stitch at the beginning and end. Repeat to join all pairs within a unit (eg. A3 and A4.)
- **Pressing:** Press the seams towards the spacer strip. You can remove the block tags now.

Planning Sashing Placement:

- Lay out your joined block pairs/rows, or even all your quilt blocks, on a design wall or floor and experiment with placing your finished sashings over the spacer strips.
- The goal is to balance the colours and styles across the quilt. Don't feel you have to copy my placement exactly.
- Most of the sashings finish at 2" wide and can be swapped around. You might need to shorten
- or lengthen them - unpicking sashing seams is okay if needed.

Applying Sashings Over Spacer Strips (Example: Unit A):

- Once you've decided on your sashing placements, ensure they are the correct length for the space. Trim or unpick sections if needed. Make sure batting is inside the sashing. (For my Unit A example (*see the pinned versions below*), I chose the Triple Up and the Flower Appliqué sashings).



- Run a line of small dots of Roxanne Glue-Baste-It down *on* the stitching line where the spacer strip meets the block, on both sides. Gluing holds it perfectly; pinning can create distortion.
- Carefully lay the folded edge of the sashing directly onto the glued stitching line and press with a hot iron to set the glue.
- **Tip:** Gently pull the block/spacer strip taut as you press to avoid bunching.
- Glue all sashings for the unit before stitching.

Stitching Sashings Down:

- **Machine Setup:**
 - **Thread:** MonoPoly clear thread in the top and bobbin is recommended for a neat finish on multi-coloured sashings.
 - **Foot:** Open Toe Foot.
 - **Stitch Length:** A slightly longer straight stitch, around 2.5, works well.
- **Technique:**
 - Position the block so the *inside edge* of the Open Toe Foot runs right up against the edge of the glued-down sashing.
 - Adjust your *needle position* sideways so the needle stitches exactly on the inside edge of the sashing fabric. (My Bernina 570QE setting is position #5 to the right).
 - Watch the edge of the foot and the needle as you sew, keeping the foot snug against the sashing edge to maintain a straight line.
 - **Foot Pressure:** If you notice the sashing buckling or pushing, especially over bulky seams, stop and reduce the foot pressure until it feeds through smoothly.
- **Stitching:** Stitch down both sides of each sashing.

Next Steps:

- Continue joining the blocks within each unit (B, C, E, F, G etc.) using the correct spacer strips (listed above) and applying your chosen sashings over them.
- We are *not* joining the completed rows or units together yet. That, along with adding other features, will be covered in the next episodes.

Get all your sashings applied to the joined block pairs within each unit and get ready for the next exciting steps. Happy stitching!