

Chaos quilting

By Marisa Simmons

When I finish a project, I usually have fabric leftover in various quantities. Sometimes I cut it up and add it to my scrap bags, but sometimes I think "Here is a pile of fabric that I know all works together, but I don't know what to do with it." Chaos quilting is a way to use up all that coordinating fabric without the need for planning and drafting a pattern or finding something that works with the quantities you have. There is very little measuring and no worrying about points being cut off or seams matching up. It can be very freeing for the Type A quilter (like me).

1. **Gather leftover fabrics.** These can be large or tiny or anywhere in between. Leftover triangles and odd HSTs or flying geese are great too.



- a. Press any sewn items (HSTs, flying geese, etc.). Do not trim or square up.
- b. Create piles—triangles, sewn pieces, small squares/rectangles, larger squares/rectangles and long, skinny strips

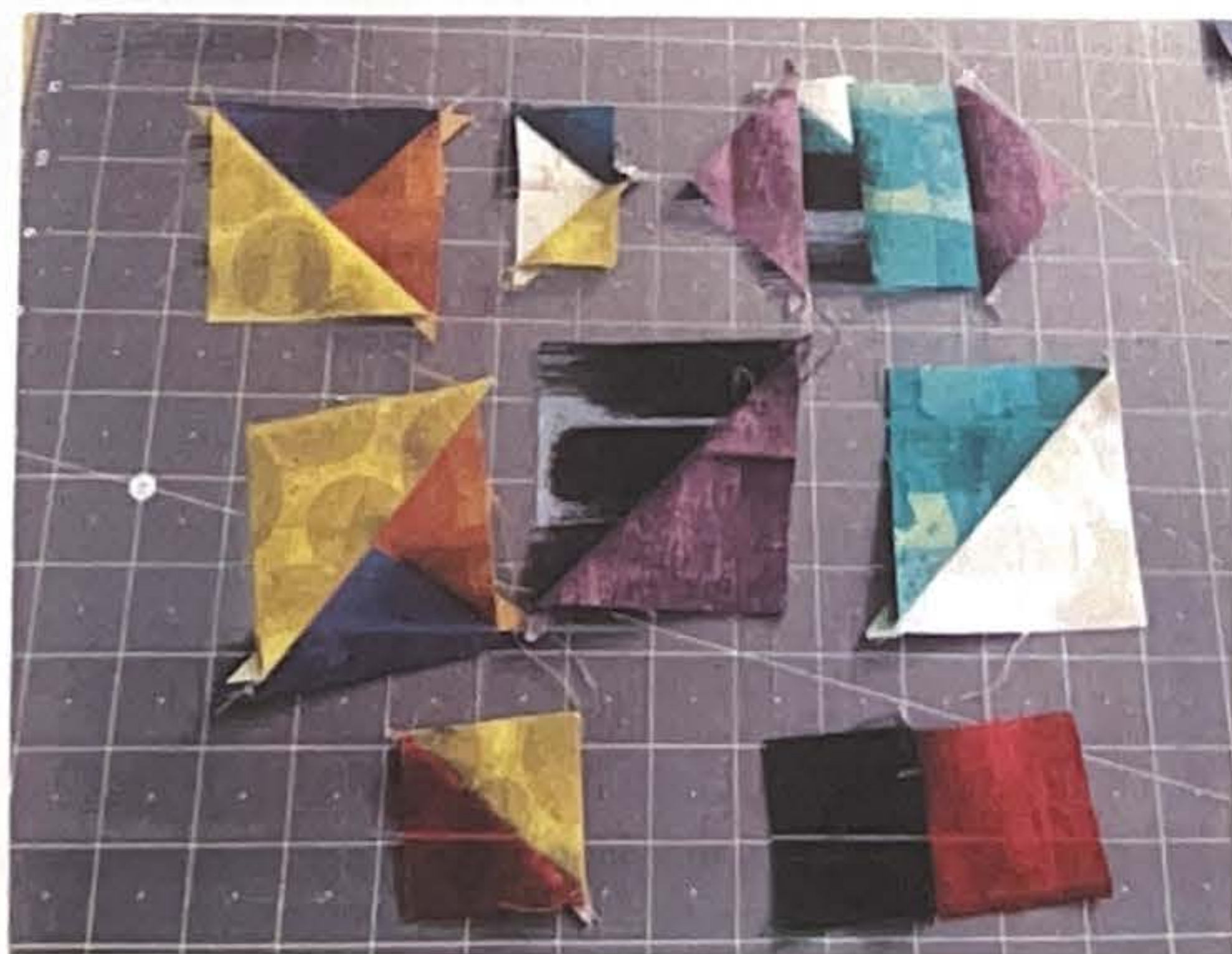


2. **Cut down large pieces/yardage.** Give pieces a quick press to get out any major wrinkles. Follow the guidelines below and separate the cut pieces into the piles you created. Eventually you want a big pile of small squares/rectangles and smaller piles of the others, but that may vary depending on your preferences, how lazy you are feeling about cutting, and how much fabric you have leftover.

- a. Pieces can be any size, but probably nothing larger than 7-8" in the large square/rectangle pile, no smaller than 1 1/2" in the small pile and no longer than 10-12" in the strip pile.
- b. Don't measure! Just line up a line on your ruler and cut.
- c. Make squares, rectangles, and maybe a few triangles.
- d. Err on the side of a bit bigger. You can always cut extra off later.

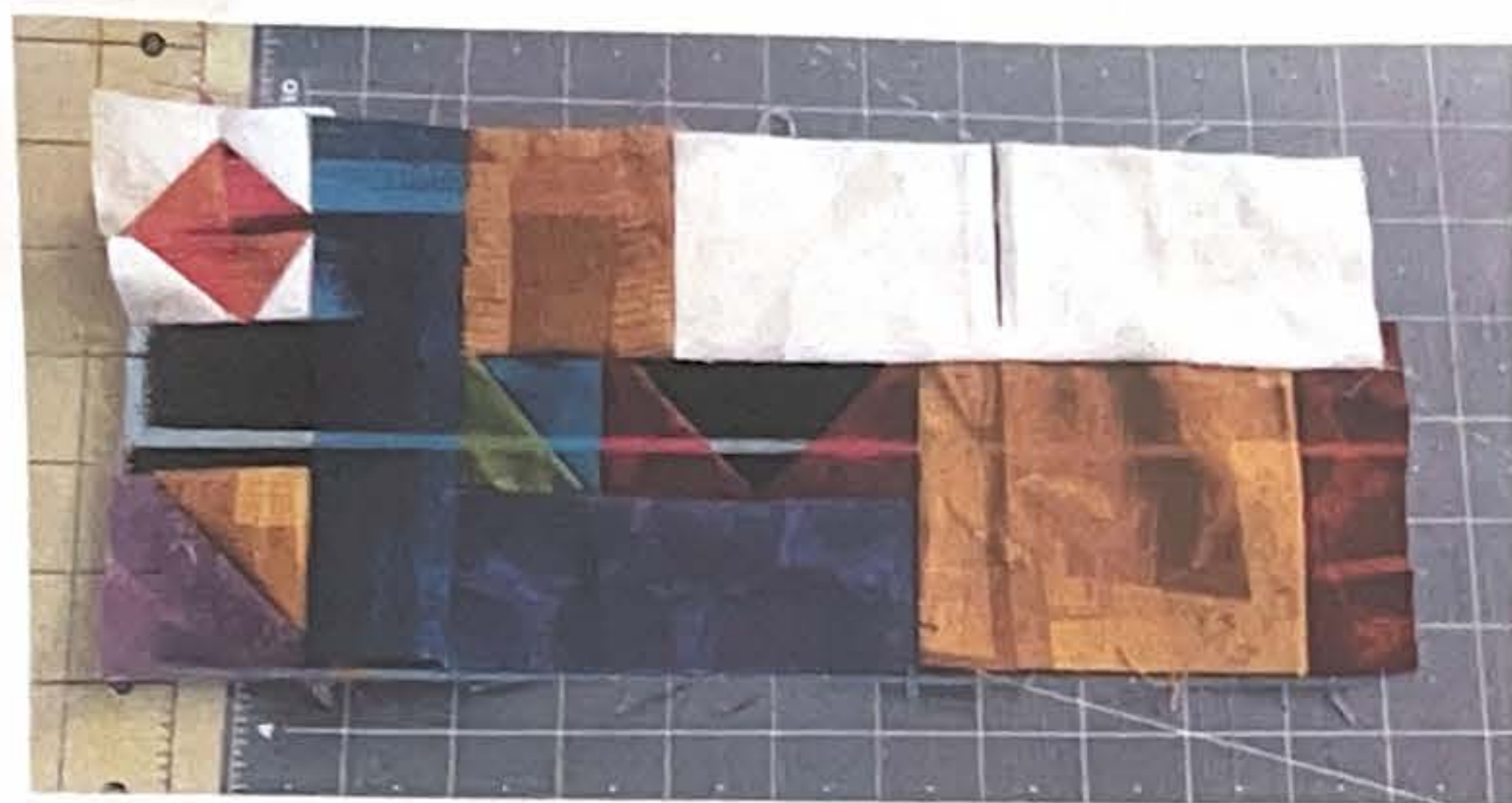
It's time to start sewing!

1. Start with the small pieces. Pick two pieces of similar size along one edge and sew together. Don't worry about points being cut off or if something is a bit too big.
 - a. Make square in a square by adding triangles to squares or rectangles.
 - b. Make half square triangles and quarter square triangles.
 - c. Make four patches.
 - d. Try not to sew the same fabrics to each other.**
 - e. As you sew pieces together, they can be sort of square or strips. You can press with an iron or just finger press as you go. Keep adding pieces.



2. Leave a few small pieces to add to strips to get closer to the needed length.

3. Have a piece that is getting long and narrow? Add a strip to a longer side.
4. Don't have a piece long enough? Add a smaller piece to a strip.
5. Feel like one is too long? Cut some off. Feel free to cut across seams. Just sew it back together another way.



6. Once you have several medium-sized pieces, press them and start sewing them together.
7. Keep going until you have several "blocks" of about 8-14 inches and all your small pieces of fabric are used up. You might still have some big pieces and several strips.

Now take your blocks to the iron and press them flat. Sort them by similar length on one side.



Lay them out in rows or arrange them until you have blocks that share one side that is similar size. Cut to the same width. Then trim the sides to make 90-degree corners. Add those longer strips to make one a little wider if needed.

Sew into long rows or whatever larger size you prefer. Add some or no longer strips between blocks. Add some sashing to tie it all together.

Done!

