

all points patchwork

English Paper Piecing
Beyond the Hexagon
*for Quilts &
Small Projects*

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Choosing Templates

All EPP begins with some kind of template. Traditionally, these templates were made from scraps of household paper, but these days, there are many more options available. Strictly speaking, any kind of template should be just fine for EPP, but I've definitely found that different templates work best for different projects. So I'll get a bit nerdy for a moment and share the pros and cons of the most commonly available types. I recommend experimenting with several kinds of templates and seeing which you like best.

SCRAP PAPER

Originally, EPP templates were cut from saved bits of paper, such as old letters or catalog pages, and you can certainly continue this tradition. I save misprints from my home printer for EPP, and sometimes I cut templates from magazine pages and junk mail. You can trace your template shapes onto scrap paper, draw them by hand with a ruler, punch them with craft



punches, or print them from your computer. (We'll talk more about making your own templates in chapter 3.)

Best used for: hexagons, tumblers, octagons, pentagons, or any shape with wide-angle corners.

Less great for: diamonds, triangles, jewels, or any shape with narrow-angle corners.

Reusable? Sometimes. Scrap paper templates are a bit prone to damage during basting and sewing, but some will survive to take on another project.

Pros: Scrap paper is free (your recycle bin is full of it), and it's very easy to pass a needle through this material for basting. Paper-based templates are flexible and easy to manage as you sew the patches together.

Cons: Paper can bend easily when you fold fabric over it, and this can distort shapes as you baste them. Working with paper requires paying close attention to this tendency.

PAPER PUNCHES

If you like the idea of using up your scrap paper for EPP, you might want to look into paper punches for cutting your templates. Interesting shapes and sizes are coming on the market all the time. With these, you can easily punch out as many templates as you need, using any paper you have lying around. (See Resources, page 204, for more information.)





CARDSTOCK

I use cardstock templates for the majority of my EPP projects; their crispness makes precise fabric folding so easy. As with scrap paper, you can print your own cardstock templates on your home printer, or trace, punch, or draw your shapes.

You can also buy packets of precut templates online or in craft stores. I use these all the time and love them. Because they're machine cut, you can be sure they're all the exact same size and shape, and this makes it a breeze to match up patchwork points. (See Resources, page 204, for more on these templates.)

Best used for: any shape, especially those with sides measuring about 3" or less.

Less great for: shapes with sides longer than 3"; large templates are best made from paper so they're more flexible and easier to handle.

Reusable? Cardstock templates are very resilient. Just press them with a warm iron after use to flatten them back out. I usually get about five to seven uses from each one.

Pros: Cardstock won't bend during basting, so it's quite easy to get precisely shaped patches that fit together well.

Cons: Basting through cardstock can be somewhat hard on your hands and needles over time. Some EPPers also find stiff cardstock patches challenging to wrangle as they sew.

FREEZER PAPER

You can draw or trace your template shapes onto freezer paper. Many grocery stores carry large rolls of this material, which is designed to be a watertight wrap for meats but is also great for EPP. One side of the paper is coated with plastic. If you place that side against fabric and press it with a hot iron, the plastic will melt and lightly stick the paper to the fabric. When you're done piecing, you can peel the paper away from the fabric easily, with no residue left behind (see Using Freezer Paper on page 38).

Best used for: shapes with wide-angle corners, especially those with sides longer than 3".

Less great for: diamonds, triangles, jewels, or any shape with narrow-angle corners.

Reusable? You can usually get at least one reuse out of freezer-paper templates before the plastic surface is gone.

Pros: Freezer paper bonds fabric and paper together very securely, which is helpful in making precise patches. Freezer paper is also flexible and easy to baste through, making it a great choice for working with large patches.

Cons: As with any paper template, it's easy to accidentally fold narrow points while basting, so you'll want to watch this tendency as you baste.

REUSABLE PLASTIC TEMPLATES

These templates are made in several shapes and sizes. They have holes so you can pin them to fabric for basting, and lines scored across them where you can fold them while sewing. Personally, I find them a bit thick and slippery to work with, but many EPPers love them.

Best used for: These templates are manufactured primarily in hexagon and diamond shapes, and in sizes that are optimal for the plastic.

Less great for: any shape or size the templates aren't manufactured in!

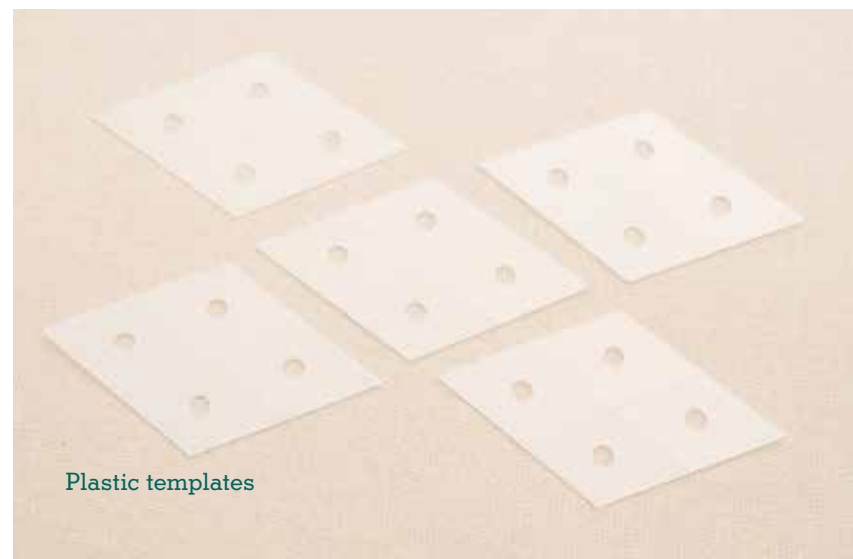
Reusable? You can reuse plastic templates more times than any other kind.

Pros: Stands up to repeated reuse, and the stiffness of the plastic creates very precise patches. A great choice if you like working with specific shapes very often.

Cons: Plastic templates can be rather expensive and take some practice to get used to. If you want to make a large project with them, you'll have to invest in a lot of templates, or keep removing them from your work to make new patches to add.



Freezer-paper templates



Plastic templates