

Hey everybody, welcome back to Man Sewing. This is Rob and today on the show, I'm going to teach you how I like to do my curve piecing. Now I can't take all the credit for this. Ricky Tims, a good friend of mine, showed me and he calls it his "cave man" style. But we're going to make some cool curved piecing like you see here in this quilt behind me. And it is so fun and easy and please do not feel intimidated.

Ok, so what you're going to need to create this project is basically just a rotary cutter and a ruler so we can make some strips to start with and then we're going to use the same cutter to make our curves. I want a nice hot iron and an ironing mat real close because I'm going to use the tip of the iron to press it out. And I just grabbed some of my favorite fabrics. This happens to be aged muslin from Markus which started with a large fat quarter bundle pack basically so I have a big variety of colors. Now I want to point something out real quick, I love working with fabrics like this that kind of read as warm or a batik style because I like not having to be so concerned with where my right side or my print side is. However, for this technique, when you're cutting you'll always have your print sides both facing up. So just keep that in mind at home, please. That even though I'm showing it with a wonderful kind of neutralized fabric, when you're cutting, it's always print sides up. And speaking of the cutting, I say we get to it.

Ok, so as we're getting ready to cut this fat quarter, and I've got this laid so basically my 22 inches are folded in half for about 11. And I'm going to cut six inches here. I just want to point out also, that one of the reasons I use the 22 inch mat is I really have struggled with, if this is much longer than 22 inches, the fabrics will start to pull apart in this next step. So for our next step, what I want to do is I'm going to show you how to make a curve just like this. But what I want you to do at home is do the first one with me and just consider this a practice piece, please.

So you're going to take your first color, and remember if this is a print, it's print sides up. You're going to take your second color and remember this is a practice, and so I'm going to lay it right on top. Later on we can start to split these apart to get really intricate but right now we're just doing a practice piece. Both of these are print side up, print side up, ok? Now the next major step, and this really helps with our curved piecing because when you go under the presser foot, if you're on a curve, the fabric looks crazy. I'll be showing you that. So what I like to do is I like to make a nice straight cut for a couple of inches and then I get my fingers behind the blades so that I'm not at risk. And then I'm just going to make a nice gradual, meandering curve with my rotary cutter. The bigger the hips and the deeper the valleys, the harder this is going to be to piece. So I want nice meandering curves. And this is for the kind of curves that are not

symmetrical and not real even. Now I'm just going to pull this apart. Now that they're separated here, I'm going to match one of the bottom colors to one of the top. Just like that. And that's going to be our stitch line. So this is that really important point that I want you to remember. With that straight edge, that's where we're going to start our piecing. We're using a quarter inch seam allowance, and the next step from there is where we piece the curve together.

And with piecing the curve together, what's going to be most important is I'm actually holding the fabric almost like I would if I was braiding hair. Because I want to be able to go in and out of my hips and valleys as I work. So that straight cut that I made at the beginning allows me to start to, allows me to start to push all the fabric in the presser foot hole or in the throw plate hole there. Let's just get a nice little fresh start on there. There we go. And now that the machine's up and rolling for me, I'm going to very slowly start to work that green fabric underneath. And I'm watching my quarter inch mark and there gets to be a bit tricky section where you're kind of going blind and you've got to start to bend the top fabric, or the gray fabric back into that curve. And let's say you're getting into a hot spot, you could stop, you could put your needle down, you can lift your presser foot and get things reorganized if you had to. But the biggest key with this is keeping your stitch width consistent. So like that quarter inch, you don't want it to be traveling in and out of the quarter inch too much because it will make it harder to press open to lay flat. Here comes another one of those valleys. Sometimes towards to end, I have to re-position my hands. And I'm literally just sliding one piece of fabric at a time underneath that curve. See I told you, it couldn't be easier. No pins are required, nothing. Just a little bit slower pace at the machine. And you'll be experts at this in no time. So the reason I had you make these strips this way is now you have two pieces to practice on, right? So what I want you to do, we're going to iron this open in a second, but don't forget, you've got these two beautiful pieces right here that are also matched up and I want you to practice on those too before we start on your real fabrics for your quilt.

Like all good sewing rooms though, I've got a mess over here so let's tidy up for a second. I made a bunch of strips to get started with because as you can see in the quilt behind me, the key is lots of fun color and movement. So there's all my strips and some of my parts and pieces I've been making. Now here's the next key that I like to do. When I come in at most of my seam allowances, I use the big wide edge of the iron to press open the seams. But on this I'm actually going to be using the tip of the iron to set the seam. And then I'm letting the body of the iron flow over the top. So I'm just laying that curve in there. See if I can move some of that out of your way at home. Ok, just like that. Presto, we've got one of our units put together in a nice basic

curved piece. It's so easy and simple to do, I'm going to show you again. Now that you've seen it happen once, I want you to watch for those key points.

The major key point is starting on that straight cut we made. So I'm going to fold that over. I'm going to head right to my sewing machine. And that way if the needle knocks the fabric into the stitch plate or anything odd happens, you've got a little extra room. Second key is just nice and slow as you go. If you have needle down, it's great. I've got my hands of the fabric kind of like if I was braiding hair, not too far back. And I'm just going to slowly, gradually work those curves together. Here I am getting into that blind corner again. Maybe I want to scoot up my fingers. And then the last key point is just respect your quarter inch, please. Try to keep your quarter inch as consistent as possible so that you don't get a lot of puckers. And I guarantee you that almost every one of these I do gets puckers in them as well. But it really doesn't show up over the long run of the quilt. We're practicing that expression: "It will quilt out." And as you become more confident, you'll pick up the pace a little bit. But it's always faster to slow sew than it is to seam rip and sew again. I promise you that. And coming into the last curve, nice and gentle. And I'll show you how to iron it again as well. I use the tip of the iron versus the flat edge of the iron. And now the cool thing about this as we're finishing up, I want you to be thinking about what you're going to be doing with your next piece.

Ok, so now as I'm finishing this second sample for us here, the nice thing is these turned out really good so we've got two units pre-prepared. But in the quilt you see behind me, you'll see that I've used between three and five different colors of fabric putting together to create the base units that become the big blocks. So what I need you to do now is sew on another strip. Now, I want to point out a few of my samples here. Here's one that actually has that other strip sewn on. And here is the second that I started with. This is something I want you to think about. Not all of your strips may finish the same length because of how they were cut. Maybe they weren't actual fat quarters or something like that. I don't start trimming any of this until I'm ready to true up to make the major blocks for the quilt because I might need some of that math in my favor down the road. So we're going to now make one of these that has three colors but I'm not trimming this off of anything before I get started.

So I'm just now going to grab myself another strip. And this is the second "more advanced" phase of this, ok? And you can see this one's a little shorter. I'm not going to let that worry me. But what I am going to do now is I'm going to point out a couple of key things. Let's see this major line here on the ruler. I'm going to lay first piece of fabric with about a two inch overlap. I'm going to be cutting my curve right down this line here. The next piece of fabric, I'm going to

actually overlap an inch or two on the other side of that line. And I'm just scooting it up on my ruler, or my mat, just enough so I can see. This is going to give me a very intricate set of cuts. What I do here, is I'm going cheat. I was going to make a nice straight cut all the way up but I'm going to cheat for us and let's make this as easy as possible, right? Start with our nice edge down here and again my straight cut first and then I'm going to curve. And what I want to be cautious of, I don't want to do like hour glasses or hips and valleys. I don't want it to look like I'm echoing or mirroring the other side of the curve with the third color fabric. And of course, I missed, so we'll just take that off there. So you can get really intricate with this stuff and the key is that first straight seam. Now I'm going to fold these over and do exactly what I did before starting on that straight seam. Making a nice easy pass at this. And away we go. Using my hands to braid the fabric together in and out of the hips and valleys. I'm going to reposition for a second. I'm not lifting the foot, so I didn't put my needle down. That's just another little trick. Always put your needle down when you're lifting your foot. And we'll finish that out. Back to the ironing board we go. And I'm going to use the larger portion of the block down on the table as I begin to press this open as well. And it is so cool the way this works. And I've had a zillion different friends that I've taught this technique that have gone on to make incredible quilts with this process. But it's super, super simple and super easy to go through and start pre-preparing these units just as you see here. And like I said, I've started to get a little advanced on this one, more advanced than what you see on the quilt you see behind me because I wanted to show you what you can grow into as you do.

And if you were getting ready to prepare for the quilt behind me, let's talk about this real quick. These are small units. So these strips were all cut at roughly 10 inches by 22 inches or six inches by 22 inches so they could be put together depending on how wide we wanted our curves. And then if you look real careful, there's this big 20 inch block that we put them together so they're once again even easier to manage so let's say we're to that point. All we have to do to prepare is go ahead and true these up, like this. And let's say I had another unit that was all done, I would true it all up like yay. And now, just like with our regular straight sewing, these are going to go print sides down or right sides together, how you want to call that. Then I would go to my machine with a straight seam and seam those together.

Ok, so let's catch a walking tour of our quilt here. Let me give you the basic run down. We have a three by four down, 20 by 20 inch block layout. And there's some fun piecing in here. This is one of the practice pieces, right? Nice and wide, real easy just a couple hips and valleys. There's a couple places where we started to get intricate. Look how narrow this gets in here. That's really fun. And actually if you look really close, next to it, we used the same color fabrics to join that seam and actually make the color bleed over and you can do those tricks as well.

This little piece here I created is some of the scraps and then samples I was making for today's show. And these are wonderful for doing like landscapes. It could almost look like, like a mountain along a river, sand dunes. So these are real fun as well. And we just encourage you to be super creative in your color choices and the way you curve. Take it nice and slow and easy. Big wide curves and then later on get real intricate and intense with what you're doing. And just have fun and play with it. Of course, here at Man Sewing we want to see your photographs. We want to hear your comments. So please drop them in on all of our social media stuff for us. Because love seeing that. I know there's a bunch of pictures already out there so we appreciate you following along. We appreciate you being here today for the curve piecing at Man Sewing.