

Why hand piece?

This is the 21st century and many quilters have fancier sewing machines than ever before, and less time, so why is hand piecing so popular?

In a few minutes on Simply Quilts it is possible to show some of the simple, satisfying steps to hand piecing a quilt block. However, it takes longer to describe all of the benefits of traditional hand piecing, updated with freezer paper, because there are so many advantages!

Such a combination of blessings as set her heart in aglow.

Jane Austen, Mansfield Park, Chapter 46

You don't have to be a hand piecing snob to appreciate the benefits. On the other hand, Monkey is a hand piecing snob, and here are his Top Ten Reasons for hand piecing.

10. Economy

No expensive tools or machines, small amounts of fabric with minimal waste—and your templates can be used over and over again. Even our frugal “make do, use it up” ancestors would approve!

The tools are within anyone's budget, even for an elegant hand piecing kit.

How did we ever get along without freezer paper?



“But in the meantime, for elegance and ease and luxury. . . I shall eat ice and drink French wine, and be above vulgar economy.”
Jane Austen in a letter to her sister Cassandra.

9. Simplicity

Need we say more?



8. No math

There is no complicated measuring, addition or multiplication when you work with freezer paper templates. Just add 1/4 inch around the templates for seam allowances, and cut with a rotary cutter.



7. Design options

Anything you can draw on freezer paper and cut apart, can be hand pieced. Curved and inset seams are just as easy as straight seams and this makes complicated designs possible. Tiny pieces and insets are clues for quilt historians!

The same freezer paper methods can be used to design settings for diamonds in tote bags and blouses.



6. Personal satisfaction

Hand piecing is an uncomplicated pleasure and it creates a wonderful sense of well-being. Each small diamond brings a satisfying sense of completion.

Where does productivity end, and obsession begin?



5. *Improve your hand quilting*

Improve your hand-eye coordination by piecing with a running stitch, and you will improve your quilting stitches. In addition, the quilting is easier because hand pieced diamonds can be trimmed and pressed in ways that machine pieced blocks cannot.

The prospect of such delights was very cheering.

Jane Austen, *Pride & Prejudice*, Chapter 15.

There is a chapter in *Quilted Diamonds* (first book) about quilting designs for small blocks, like these diamonds. The tips are also useful if you are making a Jane Stickle quilt.



4. *Sociable & therapeutic*

Holding cool, silky cotton and a needle and thread, making stitches with ease, in a natural rhythm.

Is there a felicity in the world superior to this?

Jane Austen, *Sense & Sensibility*, Chapter 9



You can listen to the chatter of dear friends, your favorite music, or a voice on the phone. (Get a headset!) Work in a soothing silence if your prefer.

Some quilters enjoy a 'Zen' experience when they hand quilt, but their hand quilting is limited by sore hands, or because a big quilt is not very portable. Enjoy the same soothing, therapeutic rhythm while you hand piece, without the hand strain, anywhere, anytime.

In schemes of sisterly happiness the hours flew along.

Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, Chapter 15

3. *Finish more quilts*

Hand piecers claim they complete more projects because they are so productive with their time, but they also accomplish more because their task is easier! If the piecing and quilting are easier, you are more likely to finish.

Elizabeth could hardly help laughing at so convenient a proposal

Jane Austen, *Pride & Prejudice*, Chapter 59



2. *Precision*

Life is messy but seams can match up perfectly! The running stitch is very simple so quilters can make perfect points and exact matches without a tremendous amount of patience or skill. Since we only ever stitch through two layers, exact pinning is easy and precision is very satisfying. *If it is worth doing, it's worth doing right.*



17 pieces in a square inch

1. *Portability*

The number one benefit of hand piecing is that you can sew anywhere, anytime! Stitch in front of the TV, in the car, in a waiting room, at a daughter's dance class or in the garden at Jane Austen's House (below). Steal moments of enjoyment on a hectic day and feel the satisfaction as your pile of diamonds grows.

