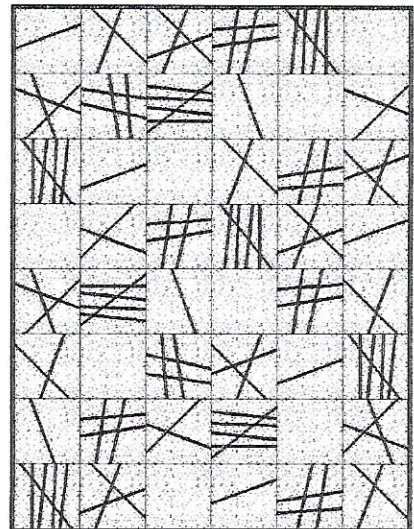




Stix: An improvisational quilt - any size

The improvisational pieced blocks for this one-of-a-kind quilt can be any size you want. For the example shown, we'll start with 10" squares of background fabric (light) and 1" strips of contrasting fabric (dark). Use any solid appearing fabrics, even several different combinations, if you like, as long as there is strong contrast, to show off the design. A background square is cut into two pieces, and a strip is inserted to form a line. Depending on how many lines are inserted, the resulting design might resemble chopsticks, hash marks, tally marks, etc..

The quilt at right has blocks with up to 5 cuts, and a few blocks that have not been cut at all. It's up to you how many times you cut each block and insert a strip; each time you do, the block gets a little wonkier, so keep in mind that you'll end up with smaller blocks than you started with, after they are all squared up to the same size.



Here are some suggestions to help you get started:

Press your selected fabrics, then cut a few 10" square blocks, from a solid appearing fabric.

From a contrasting fabric, cut some straight-of-grain strips about 1" wide and 12" to 16" long (diagonal lines use longer strips). Place a square of fabric on the cutting board, and with rotary cutter, make a straight cut from one edge to the opposite edge, dividing the square into two (preferably uneven) parts. Use a ruler if you wish, or just take aim and cut a *relatively* straight line, which will be more interesting if it is a little imperfect. Imperfect is charming, it has character. Embrace it! (*Hint: If you want to cut curves, bias-cut narrow strips work better.*)

Keeping the two halves in their relative positions, sew a 1" strip of fabric in between them, with approx. $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowances (right sides together, of course.) When sewing the second side of the strip, try to line up the two parts of the square as much as possible. Edges will be a little wonky, but don't worry, they are going to be trimmed later.

Press the seams toward the background, away from the narrow strip. This will allow you to stitch in the ditch on the narrow strips, later, when you quilt. Or, if you prefer, you can press them another way.

Make another cut and insert another strip. A strip can cross other strips; just cut and insert one strip at a time.

If you'd like, you can taper a strip so it is narrower at one end, like a chopstick: sew the first side straight, then lay the second background piece on the other edge of the strip and angle it gradually away from the raw edge to expose more of the strip at the bottom of the seam. Stitch as straight as you can, but vary the seam allowance to your advantage, to make more interesting lines.

Make as many blocks as you like; they can all be different. When you have enough for a quilt, square them all up to the same size and join them together in rows. If you don't have quite enough, you can make a few more, or just slip in some plain squares. Add borders or not, it's up to you, to finish your improvisational quilt as you like.