

# Sophie's Tips For Free-pieced Rose Blocks



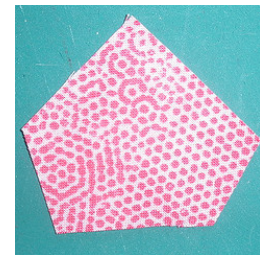
There are no rules or specific pattern for making these log cabin-style, liberated, wonky rose blocks. The nature of these blocks and improvisational piecing allows you to create blocks that fit your aesthetic and which look like roses to YOU. I'll cover the basics with some suggestions about how to achieve your vision for these wonky blocks.

Note: Full size images used here are available in my Flickr photoset, Free-pieced Roses, Step by Step, at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sophiejunction/sets/72157624573456132/>

## The Basics

1. When choosing fabrics for this block, more is more. When we made this block for the Block Lotto, at least three different fabrics for the rose were required. This is a great opportunity to use small or odd-shaped scraps.
2. Begin with a NON-square. To create the illusion of a circular rose and avoid a blocky log-cabin block look, start with a triangle, pentagon or hexagon shape, cut it freehand—imperfect shapes will be more organic looking. I like triangles and pentagons, though the angles and sides do NOT need to be the same. Four-sided squares and rectangles may exist in nature but rarely in the center of flowers.

If you begin with a 5-sided pentagon-like center, avoid any square cornered "house" shapes.



3. Add fabric to the sides of the center in log cabin-fashion, by starting on any side, and then adding to the next adjacent side, working your way around the center, clockwise or counter-clockwise doesn't matter as long as you're consistent. The Logs or Petals you add do not need to be straight strips. Here is a perfect place to use scraps and off cuts. If you add straight (even width) strips, consider trim them at angles after they've been sewn to the block so that your rose block grows in an irregular, organic way.
4. A good reason for add the strips in a consistent way around the block is that it gives you an opportunity to create the illusion of curved petals by using the same fabric on 2-3 adjacent sides ONLY. I think by adding "L's" or "C's" it adds to the illusion of curved petals. Few roses look like bull's-eyes, so avoid using the same fabric all the way around the center. Whatever the shape of your center, after you have added all but the last log on the first round, you can always tell where the next log goes by looking for the side that has 2 seams intersecting it. In the two blocks in progress here, the one on the left was made correctly and you can see that the next log will be added to the lower left side. I lost my way on the block on the right, as evidences by the bottom edge which has three seams intersecting it.



If you goof, it's not fatal, just pick a direction and carefully add the next round of strips.

5. Feel free to edit and trim your block at any time. I felt this pink block was becoming too elongated and trimmed it to a rounder shape before continuing.



6. When you are happy with your rose, continue adding logs in your background/leaf fabric until the block is the desired size. Square up and trim.



### Make a Target

As my rose blocks grew, I found it helpful to have a template square that was my target size. If you happen to have a quilting ruler that is the same size as the rose block you want to make, that's a great target. If not, you can make one. This 9-1/2 inch target was made from a magazine cover. You're not using this target as a ruler, so it can be made of paper. It's a visual aid to help see when your rose is large enough/too large.

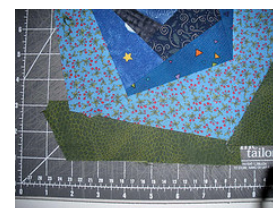


When you decide your rose is finished, lay it on the template to decide on its orientation and add green fabrics to make the block square. Trim to size and you're done!

### Creating Square Blocks with ON-Grain Edges

If you create square blocks with on-grain edges, it eliminates any stretch from bias edges and makes it easier to put the blocks together into a quilt.

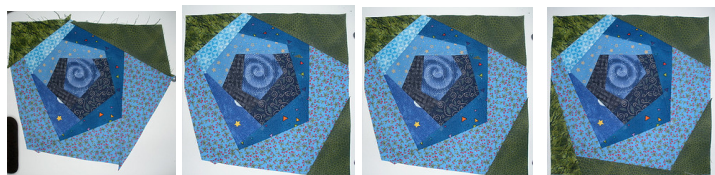
To cut background shapes to fit around your rose, lay the background fabric on your cutting mat so that the straight edge is where you want the side of the block to be, then lay the rose-in-progress over it, in the desired orientation. Slide them apart a 1/2 inch (or a little more) to account for the seam allowance, then cut the background even with the edge of the rose.



The resulting triangle will be cut at the right angle to fit and will have a straight of grain outside edge.



My approach for filling in the background is to add enough background on one side, so that I can square up the block in progress on that side, including both corners. Once I've defined two corners and one straight side, it makes it easier to figure out what you need to fill in the spaces to complete the next corner and work your way around until you have a square block.



## Fixing a Too-Blocky Block

Always keep in mind that you can, at any point in the process, re-shape your rose. After I finished the block on the left, I thought it looked too blocky and so I added some more angles at the bottom and filled the space with green.



## Some Example Blocks

Here are 20 of the rose blocks made for the Block Lotto by Andi, Caroline, Ginny, Kate, Kathie, Kim and Pat. As you look at these, think about what you like, don't like; what you think works well ... or not at all. It will give you a head start on making your own rose blocks.



## More Resources

Brenda has a lovely tutorial on joining roses with curved piecing on the tutorial page of her blog, Scraps and Strings at: <http://scrapsandstrings.blogspot.com/p/tutorials.html>