

MODERN ART QUILTERS Sew-A-Long: **TEACHING NOTES**

These sheets are intended for friends and sewing groups to learn together and you are welcome to print them as many times as you require for this purpose. You are also encouraged to use these instructions to make blocks for charity quilts. DO NOT use them for commercial gain or as a basis for paid teaching. Whether the block designs come from traditional roots, or have been created by ourselves, all the wording, photographs and diagrams are © Modern Art Quilters. Do not change or amend them in any way.

In order to teach this with any sort of confidence you must have made enough of the blocks yourself first; you need to understand the technique and be able to help your students through any potential difficulties. We would strongly recommend that you make a quilted & bound handling sample or two to show to your class. It doesn't have to be very big, we usually make ours about between 16 and 20 inches square. Make it of nice material to show off what you are about to teach, but don't be too precious about it – let people handle it and pass it around. Because it is quilted and bound your sample will withstand any amount of handling whereas one that is just pieced will fall apart quite quickly. It is, however, useful to have a couple of unquilted blocks so students can see the back and the construction method.

Recommend that your class use good quality 100% cotton quilting fabrics – the results will be so much better. Your students, especially beginners, will be much more encouraged and gratified by the results when using nice, new fabrics.

All the blocks we have included here are based on machine sewing, None of them requires anything fancy in the way of sewing machines – straight stitch is all that is needed. Remember to tell your students to bring the power lead, foot pedal and INSTRUCTION MANUAL. This last is most important since it is good teaching practice to check that everyone's thread tension and stitch length and every machine's adjustments are slightly different. Visit each student in turn to check, usually after the first demo as they are starting to sew. Sewing machines draw a very small amount of electricity and are not running constantly, so it is usually safe to plug up to six into one socket.

Don't try to teach too much in one day - a block per half day is probably enough for a big group. Your students are there to enjoy themselves – allow them time for chat, tea, lunch, more chat, cake and of course sewing. Not everyone will work at the same speed, tell the quick ones to make more blocks, but please don't make the slow ones feel that they are in any way inadequate.

Allow each student enough room. They will need space next to their machine sewing for working and cutting. You will also need room to move about behind them so you can check how they are doing.

If you need trailing sockets (extension leads) to reach wall outlets, make sure these wrap round a table leg and are then stuck to the floor wherever possible to minimise the risk of tripping anyone over. If your venue doesn't have the flexible rubber strips for this, gaffa/duct tape is useful instead – it sticks to pretty much anything, but will come away without leaving too much residue if removed in a few hours.

Pressing stations; when we teach we usually request a pressing station (ironing board and iron) for every four students – pressing is as important as sewing with patchwork, both before you start cutting and during sewing a block. This may mean people bring ironing equipment from home – that is fine, but check ironing boards and iron soleplates are clean (FAUTLESS Hot Iron Cleaner is great – available at various places on the internet including Amazon and Lakeland Plastics <https://www.lakeland.co.uk/7260/Hot-Iron-Soleplate-Cleaner-Cream-28g>) WE RECOMMEND THAT YOU DO NOT USE STEAM so make sure any loaned steam irons are empty and dry. Irons are a heavy draw on electricity - don't plug more than two irons into one socket. Check the irons are set to the correct temperature; an iron set to the COTTON setting will melt polycotton which is another good reason to get your students to use cotton fabric and threads

Depending on the experience of your students you may need to be prepared to teach the basics of rotary cutting and using rulers. Whatever their knowledge level it is always good to reinforce good rotary practice: close the cutter EVERYTIME you put it down, always cut away from you, don't use your blade to scrape fabric from the cut edge it ruins the blade. Yes, blades are not cheap, but a blunt blade is horrible and if you have to make the cut three times it will not be accurate – change it regularly!

With most of these blocks a consistent seam is more important than an accurate ¼ inch seam. Allow your students some leeway – they may not be as good at sewing as you, but it is important that they enjoy the experience. Teaching is about empowering your students, not bolstering your ego. Praise, don't denigrate – you can always find something nice to say. Your satisfaction should come from seeing your students learn and grow in confidence, then you know you are doing right.

