

Tips on the Disappearing Hourglass block

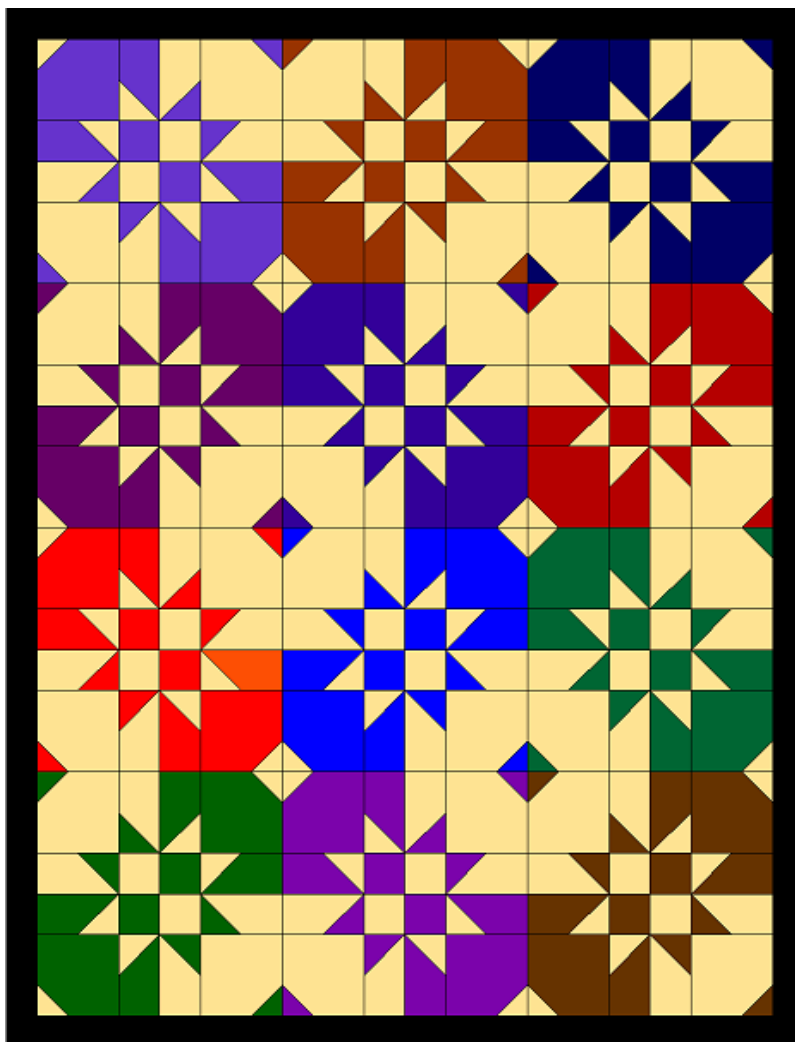
(plus food for thought about other “disappeared” blocks)

By Tina van Roggen 2014

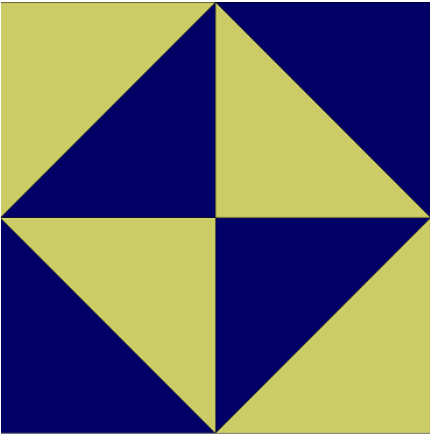
The Missouri Quilt Company has a great video tutorial out on the Disappearing Hourglass:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXggafOP230>

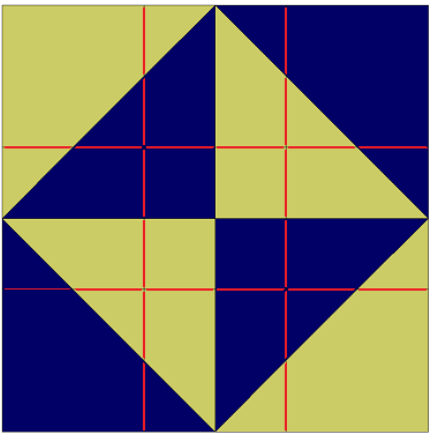
The quilt looks much harder than it is:



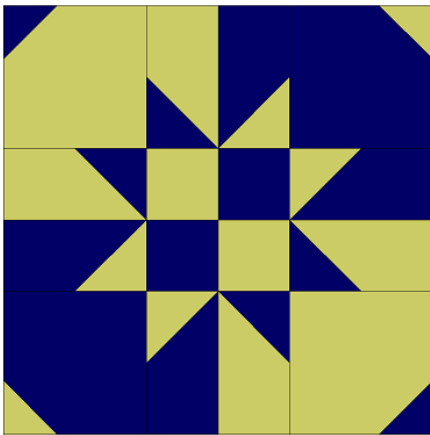
Each block starts out as a simple hourglass block that is made up of 4 large half square triangles:



Then you slice it into 9 equal pieces:



Rotate all the pieces 180 degrees, but the center you rotate 90. Sew them back together. And you get this:



Ta-da! Very EASY!!

Here are some tips about making the Disappearing Hourglass block.

Making the half square triangles

The video tutorial listed above recommends using a layer cake of 10" squares. She tells you to put two 10" squares right side to right side. Then you stitch the squares together using a ¼" seam around the outside of the squares, and then you slice them apart along both diagonals to create 4 identical half square triangles. What I found when I did this was:

1. Not all 10" layer cake squares are really 10".
2. When you create the star block you will have bias along the outside edges of the block. So you have to be careful when working with the blocks and when adding your borders.

Because of variability of the 10" squares in a layer cake, I recommend you trim down your half square triangles to 6.5" before putting them together into a block. If you do this, your block will be 12.5" unfinished, which means you will make your cuts at four and an eighth inches plus a thread or two.

If you don't like such inexact cutting directions, then consider trimming your half square triangles to 6.25". Then your unfinished block will be 12" and you can cut it into 9 equal 4" pieces – much easier.

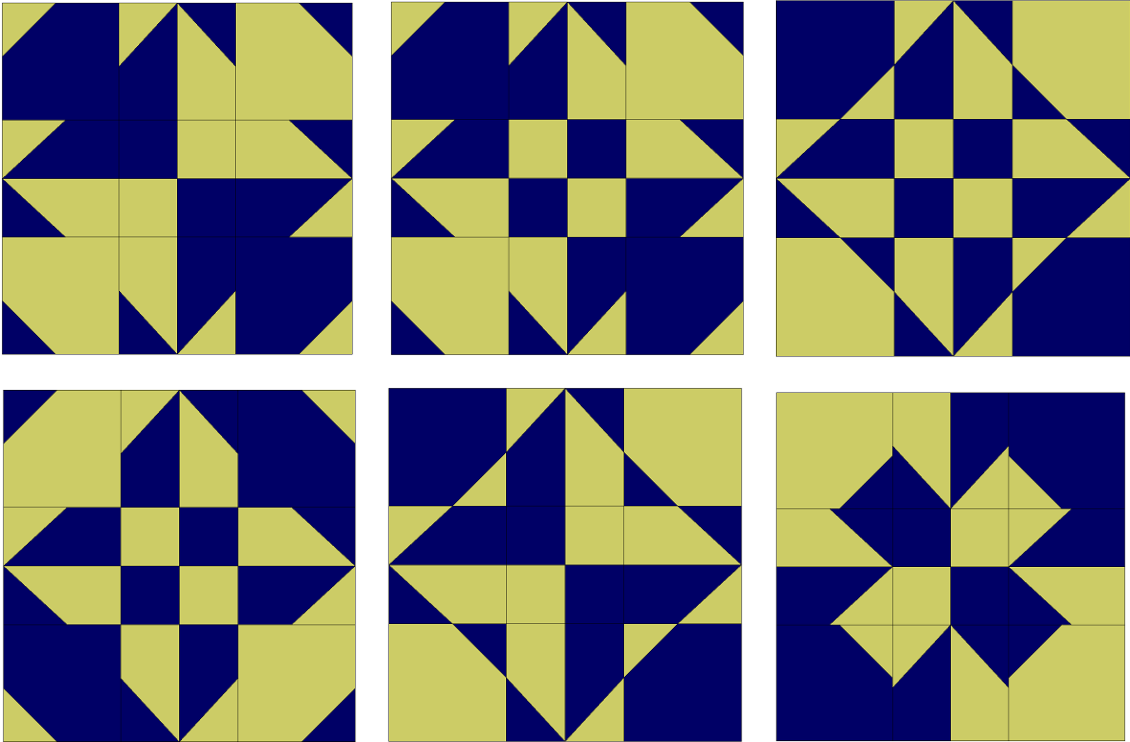
If you don't like the bias problem mentioned in #2 above, then here's a better way to create the hourglass block:

1. Use 2 smaller squares instead of one 10" square. Start with two 7" dark squares and two 7" light squares.
2. Draw a line along one diagonal on the back of the light squares, and place the dark and light squares together, right side to right side.
3. Sew a seam ¼" away from the diagonal line on the left side, then sew again ¼" away on the right side. Repeat for other squares. Use a small stitch length.
4. Cut on the diagonal line. Press seams open.
5. You'll end up with 4 of the same half square triangles, which you then trim to be 6.25" squares.
6. Sew 4 half square triangles together into the hourglass block. Try to have the seams line up as best as you can. Block should measure 12".
7. Cut the 12" hourglass block into 9 equal 4" squares.
8. Rotate all of the squares 180 degrees, except the middle which you rotate 90 degrees.
9. Sew back together into the star! Block should be 11" unfinished or 10.5" finished.

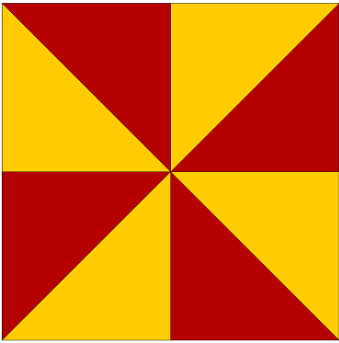
Note: whenever I work on blocks that have a lot of seams coming together, I press my seams open instead of to one side. That way the blocks are flatter and easier to quilt. But when doing this I make my stitches smaller so that the seam will still be strong. Smaller stitches also help when you are slicing across seams like in this block!

Another thing to consider when working with lots of triangles – you might want to starch your fabric so that you will have less stretching of the bias edges as you work.

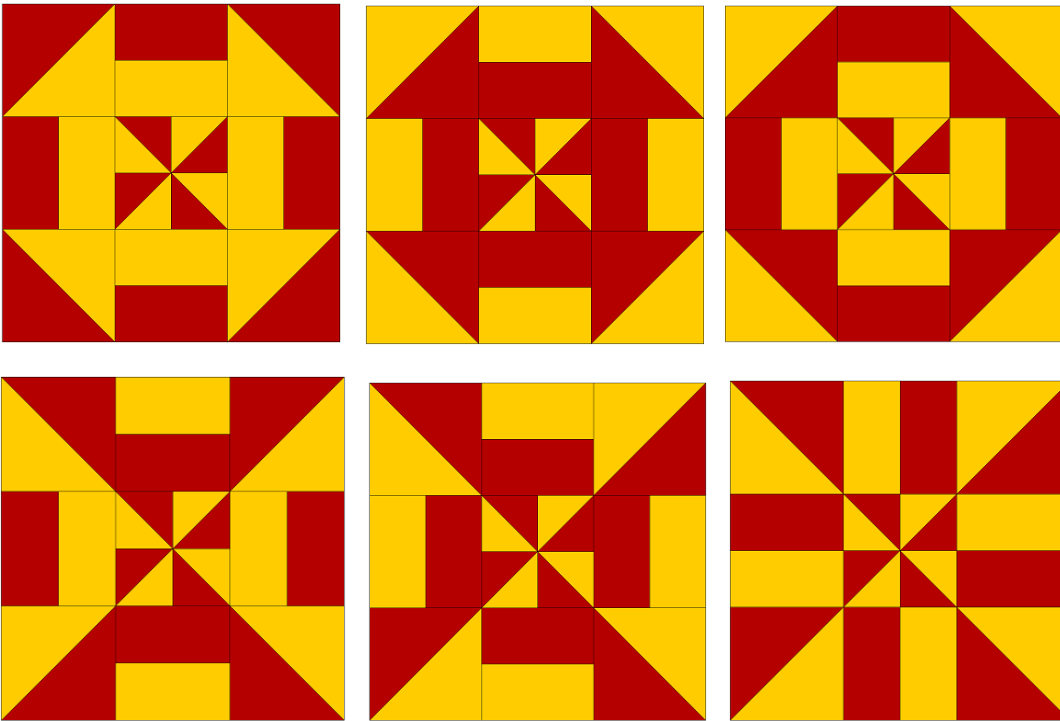
Note that there are other blocks that you can make from the Hourglass block if you rotate the squares differently, and/or exchange the corners:



Now for some history. The Disappearing Hourglass block came about because someone in a class made a mistake. They were supposed to make a Pinwheel block instead of the Hourglass. So here's what the original "Disappearing Pinwheel" block started as:

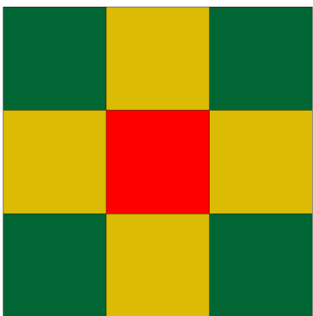


After slicing the Pinwheel up into 9 equal parts like we did with the Disappearing Hourglass, you can get blocks like these:

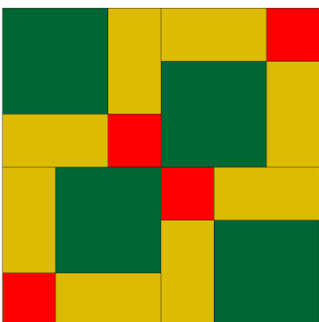


Here are other blocks that are “Disappeared”

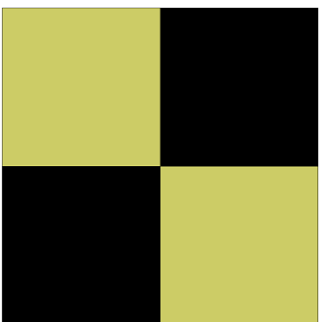
9-patch



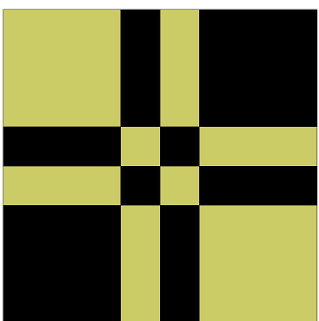
Cut once horizontally and vertically, then rotated becomes



A 4 patch



Cut into 9 pieces, but with the center strips narrower than the outer strips can become:



Search online for “disappearing quilt blocks” for more ideas!