4 Easy, Impressive Jelly Roll Quilt Patterns and Instructions

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If you’re new to the jelly roll fabric phenomenon – you’re in for a treat (and maybe a small addiction)! Jelly rolls make quilting super fast and easy, and they are the primary components in a number of stunning quilt designs. They’re extremely versatile, and you’ll be able to make hundreds of unique quilts with them, from the instructions in this e-book alone!

First – what is a jelly roll? The term “jelly roll” refers to a number of strips of quilting fabric, 2.5-inches wide by the width of the bolt (usually 40-45 inches). Rolled into a small bundle, from the top, the different colors make a swirl and look like a jelly roll cake. Jelly rolls have differing amounts of strips, depending on the manufacturer. Our jelly rolls have 20 strips each. Be sure to always read the description on any jelly roll you’re purchasing to make sure you know how many strips it has.

Cute, right?

What you’re going to love about your jelly rolls is how much time they save you in the tedious cutting process – and the pain it saves the joints in your hands! Not only that, but the variety of fabrics you’ll get when purchasing a jelly roll (usually at least 5, but sometimes 10 or more fabrics) is a huge time-saver. Jelly rolls make quilting easy and fun, and make it a snap for beginners to make a stunning quilt on their first try.

Now, onward and upward – what can we DO with these awesome little bundles?
The Simplest Way to Make a Stunning Quilt Using Jelly Rolls

You’ll be able to make this scrappy stripy quilt top in just a few hours... and you’ll be surprised just how pretty it is. The instructions for this one are very simple: sew your strips together length-wise to make a striped quilt. You probably could have figured this one out on your own, but what you might not have banked on is how gorgeous this simple piecing can turn out:

This extremely easy design looks gorgeous using multi-color assorted rolls. To make a large quilt top like the one above, you’d want to sew two strips together end to end to make each strip approx. 80” wide. So if you’re a newbie, why not try this simple pattern for your first jelly roll quilt? It’s guaranteed to impress.
A variation on the simple strip-piecing technique is to stagger your strips. This will only add about a half hour onto your total piecing time, but your finished product will look like you spent days on it! Using assorted/scrappy fabrics, it will turn out like the following:

So how to make this scrappy wonder? It’s so simple, you won’t believe it.

What you will need: at least 40 jelly roll strips, a sewing machine and a pair of scissors

1. Sew all your strips end to end in random order. Make sure to cut the bolt-ends (the white strip with the fabric brand name) off as you go along. You will end up with one very long strip of fabric – about 1600 inches long! Don’t worry. You’ll only have had to sew 39 - 2.5” seams to get there 😊
2. Cut approx. 20” off one end of the strip. This will ensure that your strips are staggered when your top is completed.
3. Fold your strip in half, putting the right/good sides together. Sew down the long side of the strip until you get all the way to the end. Cut the
end of your strip, and press open. You’ll now have a long strip that is 2 jelly roll widths wide.

4. Fold and repeat again and again until you have a pieced top that is 32 jelly roll widths wide. It’s as simple as that! Your finished staggered jelly roll quilt top will be approximately 50” x 64”. For a larger quilt... start out with more strips!

You can add your own variation to this quilt by cutting all your strips in two pieces at different places, and starting with that many more pieces at step one.

Simple for anyone – even children – to make in an afternoon! Best of all, quilting these babies is a cinch. Just back, bat, baste, and then stitch-in-the-ditch (in the seams) and you will have this entire project pieced and quilted in a day.

**The Second Easiest Way to Make a Stunning Quilt Using Jelly Rolls**

The “rail fence” quilt block is another pattern that is incredibly easy to piece and complete, even for someone who has never picked up a needle before. It requires nothing more than sewing your strips together in a certain sequence, cutting blocks from the strips, and then arranging them in an eye-catching pattern, like so:
This pattern leaves room for a lot of personalization and creativity in how you put your fabrics together, but it’s nearly impossible to make a mess of this pattern! The general idea is to put together your fabrics using hues that grade from light to dark, creating the “bolts of lightning” you can see in the picture above. But variations on this block even remove the need for that! (See the photo below of the dark florals separated by thin white strips.)

The instructions for the rail fence block are SUPER easy. You can add as many strips to your block as you like, just as long as you cut the blocks to be square. The instructions below use 3 different fabrics.

**Rail Fence Quilt Block Instructions**

1. Putting the print side of the fabrics together-- so that the wrong sides are facing outward-- sew the lightest value fabric to the medium value fabric, lengthwise. Then sew the darkest value fabric to the medium fabric. Press open, and repeat for however many units you’d like to make. The quilt top shown below uses 18 strips, 6 each of light, medium and dark fabrics, and 4 strips for the borders. You can easily modify this by using 4 or 5 strips which will make bigger squares.

2. Trim one edge of each unit. Using your ruler, measure 6.5” and cut your rail fence blocks. You’ll get 6 (and some excess) from each unit, and you’ll end up with 36 blocks measuring 6.5” square.

3. Sew the blocks together as follows:

   ![Diagram of rail fence block construction]

   - make 9 units
   - make 9 units

4. Sew the units you made in #3 together as follows:

   ![Diagram of assembled rail fence blocks]

   - →
Make 3.

5. Now sew your six long units together in the order shown below, attach your borders, and you’re finished!

**Tip:** Many jelly rolls come with lots of different shades of one color fabric. You don’t have to choose only 3 fabrics to create the above look. The important thing is to make all of your blocks gradient – moving from light at one end, to dark on the other. Putting together blocks with some lighter hue gradients and darker hue gradients will result in your quilt having a really cool scrappy watercolor look.
These blocks are very easy to make – so experiment! Put together fabrics you like and try new combinations. I think you’ll be pleased with the end result.

**The Queen of All Jelly Roll Quilt Block Patterns: The Log Cabin**

The log cabin quilt block pattern is arguably THE most versatile block you can create with jelly rolls. You’re probably familiar with the traditional log cabin block, but you may be unaware of all the amazing things you do with the exact same piecing technique. Because the log cabin block uses contrast and placement to create depth, you can really make some breathtaking designs with this simple block.

Stay tuned, because I’m going to go through 4 different ways you can piece a log cabin block, and give you plenty of pictorial evidence of how stunning they are! First, let’s look at the gorgeous tradition log cabin block.

*My prized log cabin!*
Many of the log cabin photos shown in this ebook use a larger, 4” center starting block. This is unnecessary, but adds interest to the block.

When piecing the log cabin, the logs are joined to the block in a circular fashion, starting with shorter logs and working out to the longer ones; with the block being rotated 90° clockwise after each log is joined. The current log being joined is always started on the log that was just joined to the block.

1. Choose your fabrics. They will need to contrast with each other to create the different halves of the block. For example, you may want to use creams or whites for one half, and colors/assorted fabrics for the other.

2. Start by making the centers for all of your blocks. Take one strip of your darker fabric and one strip of contrast, and sew them together down the long side. You’ll get about 16 centers per strip unit, so make as many of these strip units as you’ll need for the desired number of blocks.

3. Press open, and using scissors or a rotary cutter, cut 2.5” segments of your newly sewn strips.

4. Now, using the same contrasting fabric (or a different contrast, if you’re making a scrappy quilt), attach the second “log” to your segment from #3. The easiest way to do it is to “chain piece” your segments, rather than making one whole block at once. So continue
sewing the second “log” onto the rest of your segments. You’ll end up with a bunch of squares that look like this:

5. Next, take your main color, and attach it to the other side of your center square. You’ll end up with your blocks looking like this:

6. Now, flip the block, and go back to your contrasting color. Make sure you’re always attaching contrasting to contrasting, and main to main. It’s that simple!

However many “logs” you want to add to your block is up to you, but I’d recommend at least 3 “logs” on each side of your center square. In this instance, using 2.5” strips, your blocks will finish at 14.5”.

To make a throw that will finish (without borders) at around 55” x 55”, you’ll need at least 40 strips of main color fabric, and 20 strips of your contrast fabric. (You should have enough in scraps to make at least one scrappy border.) 16 blocks total.

To make a full/queen that will finish (without borders) at around 84” x 84”, you will need at least 60 strips of main color fabric, and 45 of contrast fabric. 36 blocks total.
To make a king that will finish (without borders) at around 97” x 97”, you’ll need at least 90 strips of main color fabric, and at least 65 strips of contrast fabric. 49 blocks total.

There are so many design options for how you can lay out your traditional log cabin blocks. If you’re a symmetry freak like I am, always make your blocks in even numbers squared—16, 36, 64, 100— for the most symmetrical design layout results. (If you lay out a quilt 5 blocks by five blocks, “straight furrows” will be the only option for barn raising, star, etc. that doesn’t end up lopsided. Count the blocks in the photos below and you’ll see what I mean.)

Here are a few to get your mind working!

![Red/white/blue Americana color scheme, in the "star" layout... perfect for any patriot!](image)
Diamond within a square. (I made that up, but that’s what it looks like, right?)

Purple against lavender – one of my favorite color combinations, set in straight furrows.
Variations on the Log Cabin Block: Courthouse Steps, Square-in-Square, Spiral Log Cabin, and Bento Box

There are four variations on the log cabin block that can create some impressive results – but they’re no more complicated to make than the original log cabin block! You sew the same number of pieces of fabric together… just in a different order. Are you beginning to see just how many things you can do with those jelly rolls of yours?

Variation 1 – Courthouse Steps
The courthouse steps block is made almost exactly the same way as the traditional block, only in step one where you put together two strips, and then cut a bunch of centers, we will make one important change – you will put together THREE strips – contrast, main, and contrast – to make a center “strip” instead of a center rectangle unit. Once you put together your three strips, and cut them across at 2.5” intervals, you will have a bunch of pieces that look like this:

![Image of pieces](image)

Then, instead of sewing logs onto one side of your block, rotating 90 degrees as you go, for the courthouse steps block, you will sew your contrasting fabrics on opposite sides of each other, like this:

![Image of sewn pieces](image)

Then, just continue in the same fashion, attaching contrast fabric to contrast fabric and main to main, until you have your finished courthouse steps block!

Your finished block will turn out like this one. See the pictures below for layout ideas!
Some gorgeous courthouse steps quilts:
Gorgeous in classic red and white!
Variation 2 – Square-in-Square

So, excited to start your project yet? I love the square in square pattern. It’s so simple and yet the use of color and contrast, like the rest of these simple blocks, can really make some awesome effects! As I’m putting together this e-book for you, I’m getting so inspired to sew. I can’t wait to get my sewing machine out and work on my next project… I’m thinking maybe one just like the one above!

To make this block, as you can probably tell, you’ll be starting with a center square and sewing a new square around it, as many times as you like. Again, I’d recommend at least 3 squares around the center square. To make things
easier on yourself, you’ll start by doing the same little variation as in the courthouse steps – sewing three long strips together, and then slicing them at 2.5” intervals so your center square and the first two “logs” are done for you. Then you’ll sew logs 3 and 4, same fabric as your outer 2 strips in your 3 strip combo, to make your first square, like this:

Then, just continue adding logs 4 at a time to make more squares around the center! Alternating main colors and contrasting colors is a great idea, and will add balance and interest to your quilt.

**Variation 3 – Spiral Log Cabin**

At first glance, this pattern seems complicated! Good! That’s what we want them to think. It’s actually just another variation on the good ole’ log cabin.
You’ll start off just like a traditional log cabin – sewing together two strips of contrasting fabric, and then slicing them at 2.5” intervals to make your center square and first “log.” This time, we’ll be sewing one contrasting fabric and one main color fabric to our first unit, one on each of the long sides.

So you’ll start with this:

And you’ll end up with this:

Then, you’ll attach another contrast and main color strip to your block. The contrast fabric will get attached to the long end that has the least amount of contrast fabric. (When in doubt, LAY IT OUT!)

So next you’ll have this, when you add your contrast:
And then you’ll add another main color fabric piece to the bottom, like this:

See the spiral starting to form? You’ll continue on – next would be a contrast on the right side of the block, and after that a main color on the left side of the block. Again, if you’re not sure, lay it out!
Next will be main color on the top, and contrast on the bottom...

Next is a contrast on the left, and a main color on the right...

Then a contrast on top, a main on bottom...

And finally, one last main color log attached to the left side to complete your square!
Variation 4 – Bento Box

You’re really going to love this one. Of all the log cabin patterns, this one looks like you’d have to spend the most time on it. Surprise! It takes exactly the same amount of time as the others.

What you’ll do for this quilt is make your blocks the same way you did for the square-in-square blocks. Once you have your blocks completed, using a ruler, white pencil and scissors (or a rotary cutter if you’ve got one), you’re going to cut your blocks into quarters... making lots of smaller blocks.

Big thanks to whomever created this photo. I can’t find a credit to give. Boy is this picture handy!
A gorgeous Bento made by quilt artist Margaret Solomon Gunn!

**Last But Not Least... Simple 2.5” Patchwork**

One of my favorite things to do with jelly rolls is simply to create a beautiful patchwork quilt top. Using strip piecing, it’s really easy. Recently I found myself with a lot of different striped fabrics and I wanted to use them all together in something, but there they sat month after month. Finally I decided to just mash them all together and see what happened.

Here is the result on the next page...
I ended up quite liking the finished product! The instructions are quite simple, because this isn’t an exact science. The quilt above used about 20 different fabrics. Cut each strip into 4 pieces just over 10” long, and then attach lengthwise to another 10” long contrasting strip, in a random fashion, making as many different combinations as possible. Slice the new 2-strip segments into 4 pieces, 2.5” each, which creates all the 2-square segments in the top. After that, join 2-square segments to other 2-square segments to create 4-square blocks, setting the contrasting colors across from each other (like a checkerboard).

At this point, it’s a good idea to lay out all your 4-square blocks on the bed or floor to make sure you have a layout that doesn’t pair together two of the same fabric anywhere. That way, you can step back and decide if you like the arrangement and make any changes before you sew. If there is an easier way to do this that still pulls off a haphazard, thrown-together look, I haven’t found it!
Once you’ve got your whole top laid out, you can sew the blocks together one row at a time to keep organized. In the end, you’ll have a gorgeous patchwork!

Using jelly roll strips, I made my stripe-y patchwork in one afternoon.

**The Easy-Peasy Jelly Roll... Why Didn’t Someone Think of This Sooner?**

If this is your first-ever quilt making experience, I hate to be the one to break it to you, but... you’re probably about to become a hard-core quilter for life. Especially when you see how easy it is to create something amazing, in so little time. With the patterns in this e-book alone, you could create unique and beautiful quilt patterns for a lifetime, and never run out of new ideas.

And I’m always around to help, if you need it! If you have any questions about anything you’ve read here, I’d be happy to answer them. You can contact me or one of my staff using the contact form at [https://jellyrollfabric.3dcartstores.com/crm.asp?action=contactus](https://jellyrollfabric.3dcartstores.com/crm.asp?action=contactus) and my store, where you can buy just about every color combination of jelly rolls you think of, is [http://jellyrollfabric.net](http://jellyrollfabric.net).

If you recognize any of the uncredited quilts here, please let me know who the artists are! Most are my own quilts, but a few I’ve snagged for inspiration over the years, and have no idea who their creators are.

**Our Jelly Roll Gallery is Below...**
Click Here to see our color collection jelly rolls!

Click here to visit our ever-changing Jelly Roll Clearance Section!