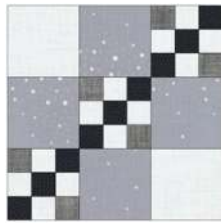
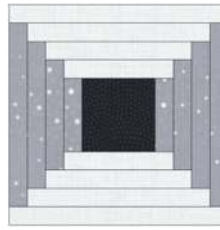


Skill Builder Block Of The Month

Month 3



9-Patch Chain



Courthouse Steps

Skill 6: 9-Patch Blocks

Nine Patch blocks are a fun and easy way to add interest to a quilt and by putting 9-patch blocks within a larger 9-patch block you can create fun movement.

Block 6: 9-Patch Chain Blocks:

For this block we'll make the smaller blocks using strip piecing and then assemble them into the larger 9-patch block. You can also just create all the 9-patch blocks (large and small) by sewing together individual pieces (a great way to use up scraps).



9-patch blocks: Create 12 of these for the 4 larger 9-patch blocks.

Block size: 4 ½" (4" finished)

While you can make this block by cutting 9 squares and sewing them together, we'll use a strip set approach for efficiency.

Strip set A – this will be used for the top and bottom rows in the block.

Cut 2 strips of each of the three fabrics 25" long 1 ⅞" wide.

Alternate: if using Fat Quarters, cut 3 strips of each fabric 18" long, 1 ⅞" wide

Sew together your strip sets remembering to alternate the direction of your stitching left to right/right to left to prevent your strip set curving.

Pressing Direction – press seams away from the center fabric to make nesting easier.

Your strip set should be 4 ½" wide and 25" or 18" long. Do a clean up cut on one end to make sure you have a straight edge before sub cuts (the strip set is a bit longer than needed)



Sub Cut your strip sets into 1 ⅞" pieces – you will need 24 pieces.



Skill Builder Block Of The Month

Strip set B – this will be used for the middle row in the block.

Cut 2 strips of the fabric used for the top & bottom (same as the middle fabric for Strip set A) 24" long 1 7/8" wide.

Cut 1 strip of the fabric used for the middle (same as the top fabric for Strip set A) 24" long 1 7/8" wide.

Alternate: if using Fat Quarters, cut 4 strips of the top/bottom fabric and 2 of the middle fabric 18" long, 1 7/8" wide

Sew together your strip sets remembering to alternate the direction of your stitching left to right/right to left to prevent your strip set curving.

Pressing Direction – press seams toward the center fabric to make nesting easier.

Your strip set should be 4 1/2" wide



Sub Cut your strip sets into 1 7/8" pieces – you will need 12 pieces.

Sew the sub cut pieces together to make the block – sew the top to middle, press (direction of pressing is your choice) making sure to nest the prior seams together. Then sew the bottom sub cut piece to complete the block.

You should have 12 blocks when done each measuring 4 1/2".



9-Patch Chain Blocks – you will be making 4 of these larger blocks

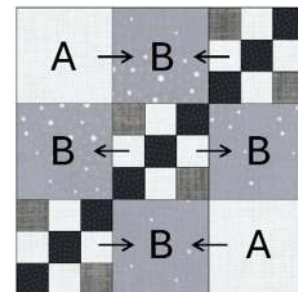
Block size: 12 1/2" (12" finished)

You will use the 12 blocks created above plus the following two fabrics.

Fabric A – cut 8 squares measuring 4 1/2" x 4 1/2" each.

Fabric B – cut 16 cut 8 squares measuring 4 1/2" x 4 1/2" each.

Assemble in rows as shown alternating direction of pressing seams, as shown by arrows, so each row can nest (like the smaller 9-patch blocks).

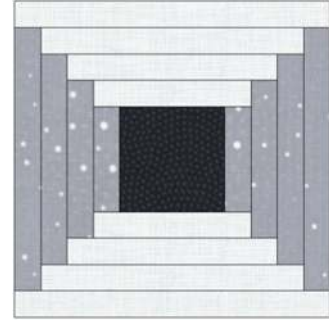


Skill Builder Block Of The Month

Block 7: Courthouse Steps:

The Courthouse Steps block is a traditional block that can be traced back to as early as the 1700's. It can be done as a foundation pieced block (paper or muslin foundations) but we'll be practicing our seam allowance skills with traditional tiny piecing (we'll be dealing with 1" wide strips that finish at ½" – see Alternative below for a version with bigger pieces).

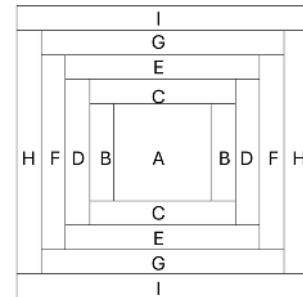
The quilt layout calls for two of these blocks, but you can make more if you want to swap out any other 6" x 6" block for more Courthouse Steps blocks.



Block size: 6 ½" (6" finished)

Fabric Cuts: (number to cut in [])

A:	2 ½" x 2 ½" [1]	F:	4 ½" x 1" [2]
B:	2 ½" x 1" [2]	G:	5 ½" x 1" [2]
C:	3 ½" x 1" [2]	H:	5 ½" x 1" [2]
D:	3 ½" x 1" [2]	I:	6 ½" x 1" [2]
E:	4 ½" x 1" [2]		



Sew together in the following order pressing toward the center:

A – B; B – AB

BAB – C; C – BABC

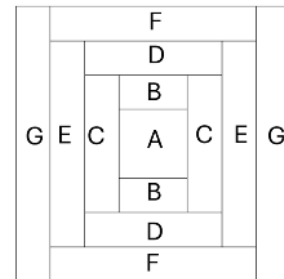
CBABC – D; D – CBABCD

Continue adding in alphabetical order until complete.

Alternate Strip Size:

Fabric Cuts: (number to cut in [])

A:	2" x 2" [1]	E:	5" x 1 ¼" [2]
B:	2" x 1 ¼" [2]	F:	5" x 1 ¼" [2]
C:	3 ½" x 1 ¼" [2]	G:	6 ½" x 1 ¼" [2]
D:	3 ½" x 1 ¼" [2]		



Sew together in the following order pressing toward the center:

A – B; B – AB

BAB – C; C – BABC

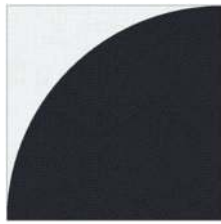
Continue adding in alphabetical order until complete.



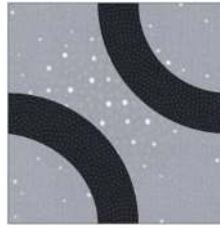
Skill Builder Block Of The Month

Month 4

Curves!



Quarter Circle Block



Snake Trail Block

Skill 7: Curved Piecing

For many quilters the thought of sewing curved pieces can seem scary and something to avoid but it really doesn't have to be an advanced skill with a few tips and tricks and once you are comfortable sewing curves a whole new world of quilt designs opens.

There are lots of different blocks using curves, so you'll have fun playing. Here are some examples of common curved blocks.



Quarter Circle



Drunkards Path



Plain Wedding Ring



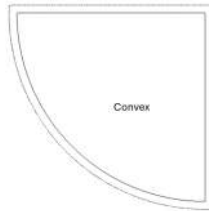
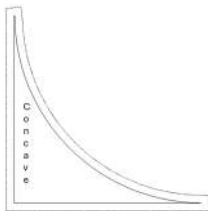
Double Wedding Ring

Parts of a curved block:

There is some basic vocabulary needed to understand how to sew curved pieces that you'll want to be familiar with as they will be used in the instructions.

There are two pieces for the basic curved block...

Concave which looks like an "L" and Convex a quarter circle.



Cutting:

The hardest part of sewing curves is probably cutting the pieces. The easiest method for cutting is to use templates (plastic or paper or a cutting system) so that the parts are more easily cut accurately with the seam allowances included. For your first-time doing curves it is best to start with larger blocks, 6- or 8-inch blocks are ideal.



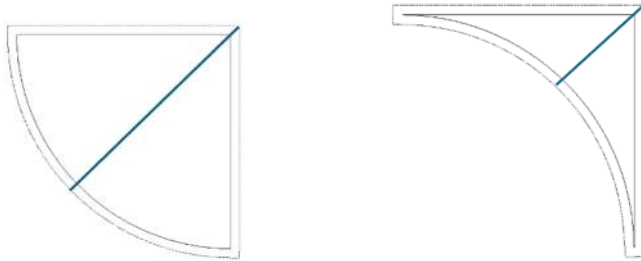
Skill Builder Block Of The Month

Cutting Tips:

- Starch – before cutting starch your fabric with starch (spray starch works great), this keeps the edges from fraying as you work with the curves. Quilting “smoothing sprays” don’t work as well as plain grocery store spray starch for curves.
- When using paper templates, you can trace the templates on the fabric with your preferred marking tool then cut with scissors.
- If using a plastic template, use a smaller diameter rotary cutter to get a smoother curve. My personal preference is to use a 28mm or 18mm cutter when cutting curves.
- Go slow – you’ll see this tip often when doing curved piecing. This is not the time to race, take it slow with cutting curves. There is no prize for going fast.

Aligning the pieces

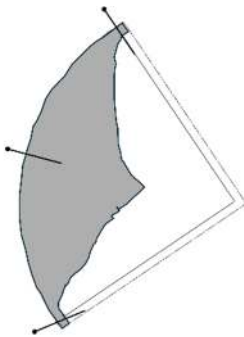
To ensure your Convex and Concave pieces align, fold in half and finger press for a light crease (see line in illustration). To make alignment easier fold one piece in half right sides together and the other wrong sides together so that the creases nest.



Place the two pieces right side together with curved sides together matching the center press fold. You will want the concave (L shape) on top of the quarter circle.

Now the question, to Pin or not to Pin? We’ll first look at the 3-pin approach.

First put a pin in the center, securing both pieces together keeping the curves aligned. Next align one leg of the concave piece with the edge of the quarter circle and pin then repeat with the other leg to the other side of the quarter circle. The pieces will not lay flat together at this point and that is ok.



At this point you can add extra pins if that makes you more comfortable. Remember to keep the curved edge aligned on the two pieces.

Using a quarter inch seam start at one edge and slowly sew the pieces together along the curve using fingers to keep the edges together as you sew.

Tips:

- Go SLOW!
 - If your machine has a needle down setting sew with the needle down and as you sew gradually stopping every few stitches to gently rotate the pieces to sew along the curve.
- Once done, press toward the convex side.



Skill Builder Block Of The Month

Options:

Sew without pins – you can align one leg of the concave side and gradually sew along the curve using your fingers or a stylus to ensure the curved edges stay aligned. This takes some practice to get the feel of how slow to go and turn the pieces as you sew.

Glue – you can use a water-soluble glue to glue baste the curved edges together before sewing. Be sure to test your fabrics with glue before using.

Tips:

Sew with the concave piece on top, if this doesn't feel right for you try sewing with the convex piece on top as there isn't a hard rule.

Puckers and Pleats – if you are getting puckers and pleats when you press out your block, check to make sure you are cutting correctly with the $\frac{1}{4}$ "seam allowance. Also try stopping more often and make sure your layers are laying flat in the area you are about to sew,

Block 8: Quarter Circle Block

Block Size: 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (8" finished)

There are 9 Quarter Circle blocks in the design.



Fabric: For each block using a 10" square as starting point for your template works well, you will get one convex piece from a 10" square and two concave pieces from a 10" square.

Templates: Due to the size of the block, both templates are split over two sheets. Print them out making sure they are the correct scale (check your printer setting to ensure it is scaling at 100%). You will need to tape the two parts together.

Using the process above, after cutting your pieces create the quarter circle block. Try one block first before cutting all the pieces. The end of the legs on the concave piece after being sewn to the convex part should only be $\frac{1}{4}$ " so it disappears when sewn to other blocks.

Make It Yours:

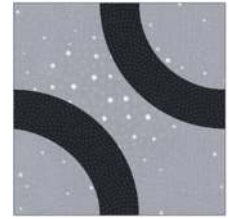
You can play with this block, instead of using one fabric for the convex piece, you can sew together a bunch of random strips to make your piece of fabric to use for the piece.



Skill Builder Block Of The Month

Block 9: Snake Trail Block

The history of the snake trail block is not fully known but examples of quilts using the block can be found back to at least the early 1900's. This is one of those blocks that can make a myriad of quilt designs based on how fabrics are applied and how blocks are rotated creating unique paths through the quilt. This block also makes a great quilt for a child where they can use the snake trail path as a road for their toy cars.

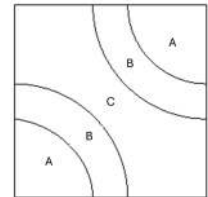


Block Size: 6 ½" (6" finished)

There are 4 Snake Trail blocks in the design.

Templates:

There are three different templates in this block. You need to cut 2 of part A, 2 of part B, and 1 of part C for a single block.

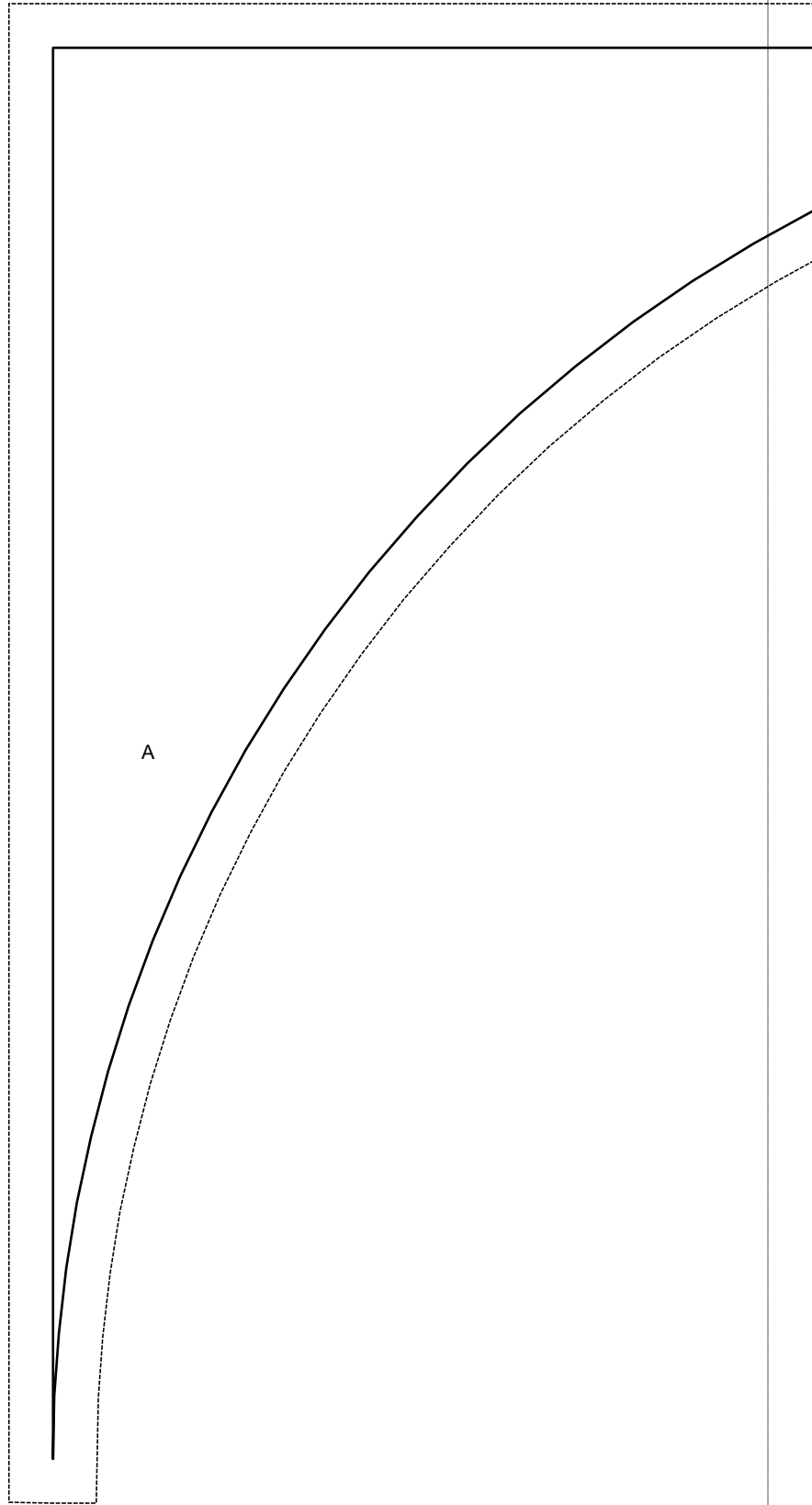


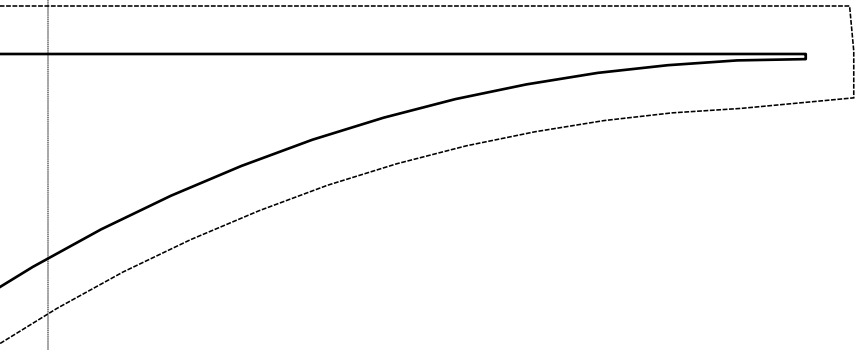
Sewing:

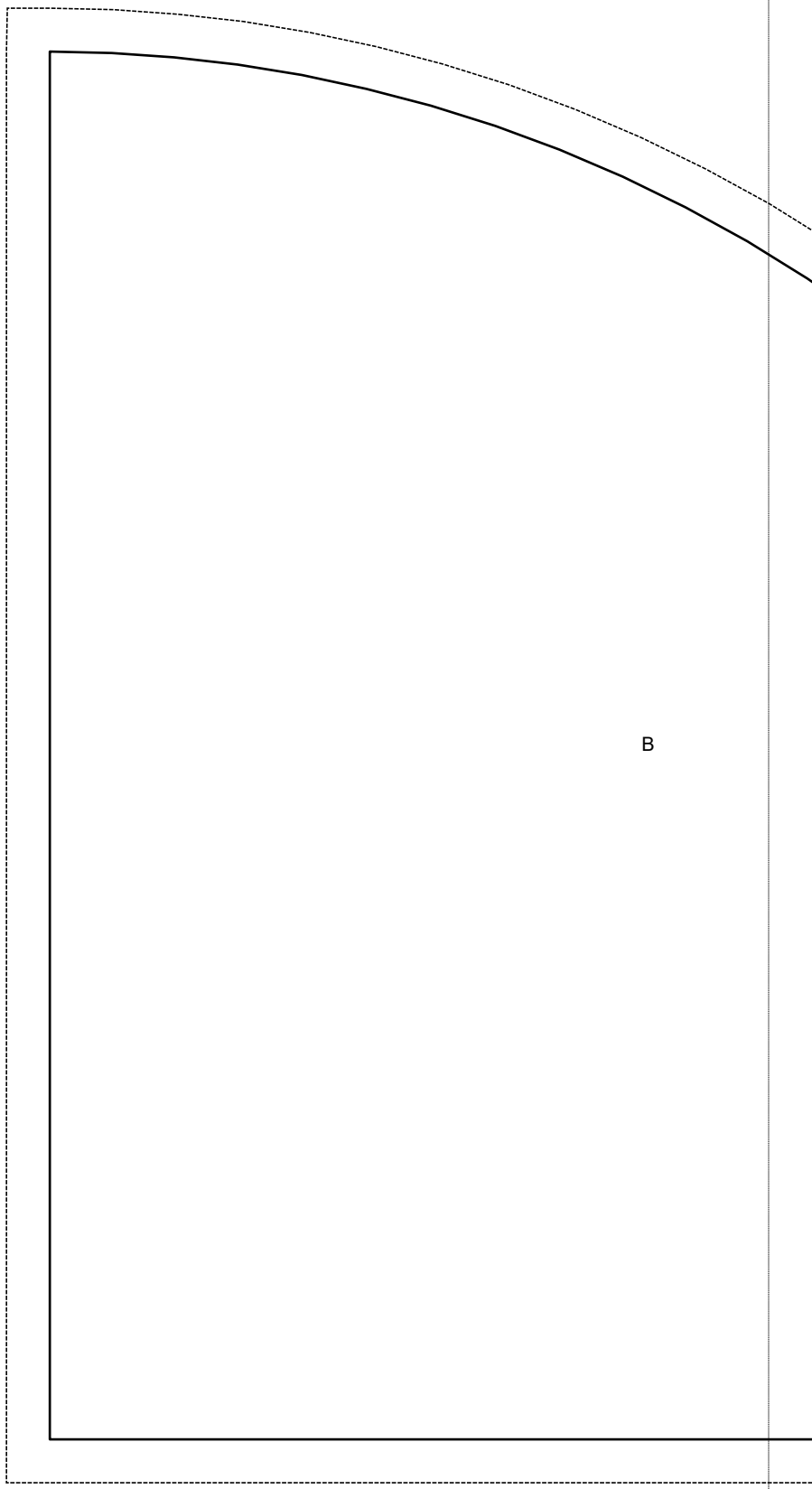
This follows the same process as sewing any curve. Sew part B to part A, then the new part AB to part C. You may find pressing seams open works best for this block when putting multiple snake trail blocks together.



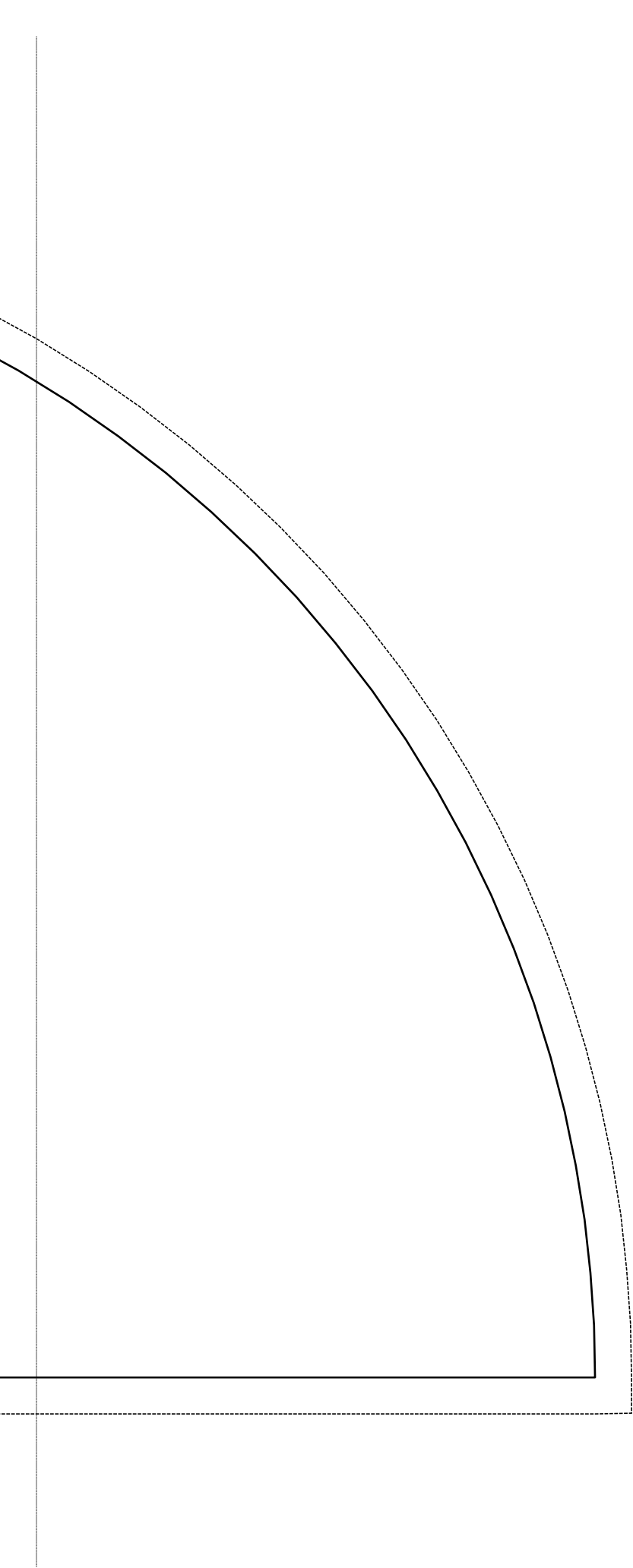
Make sure long edge is 8 1/2" to ensure template is the correct size.

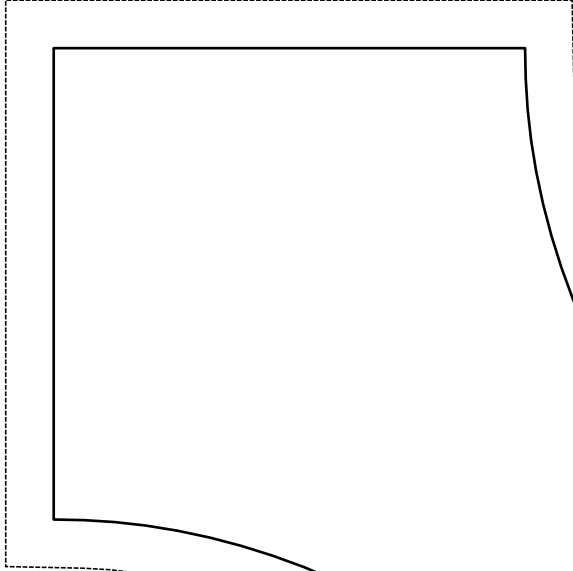




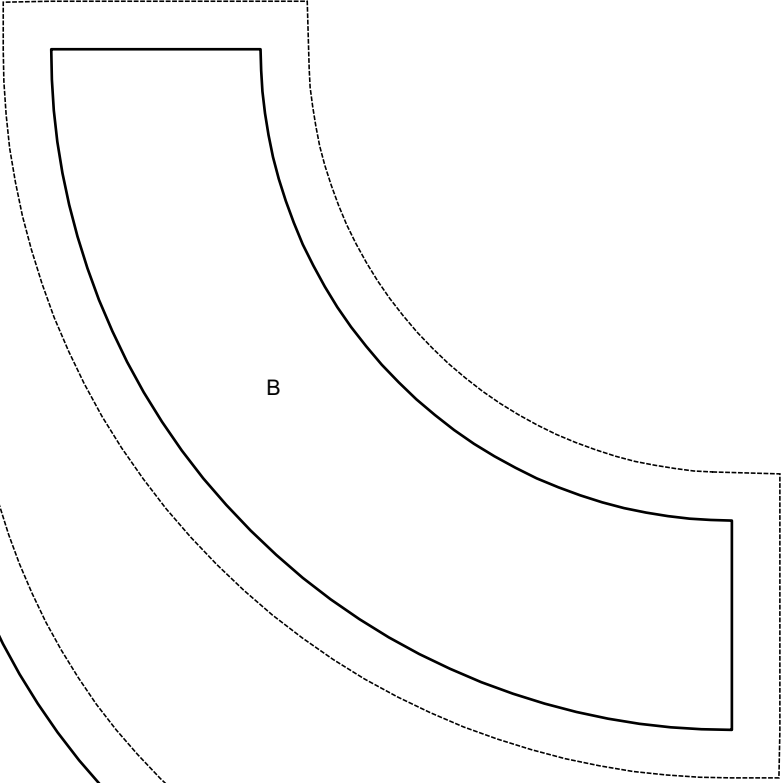


B

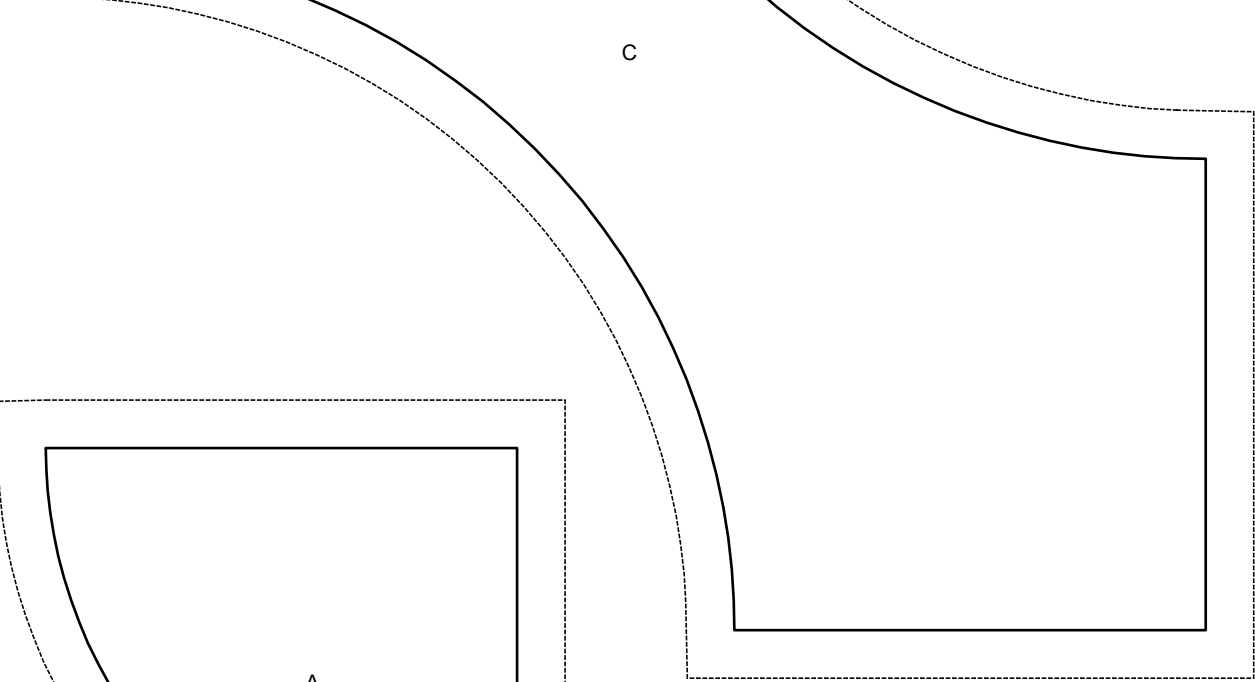




A



B



C

