

Skill Builder Block Of The Month

Month 5

Foundation Paper Piecing (FPP)



Twisted Log Cabin



Sunburst Beauty

Skill 8: Foundation Paper Piecing

Do you ever see a quilt with really sharp points in the piecing or unusual angles and shapes? It is likely that the maker for that use a technique called Foundation Paper Piecing, or FPP for short. FPP helps the maker be very accurate with their patchwork, it allows you to piece all types of unusual or awkward shapes and achieving crisp, clean lines in your patchwork. While there are many variations of FPP using different types of paper and sewing techniques, we'll focus on the basic method.

FPP uses a printed paper piecing template to build up your shape, piece by piece, sewing through the paper piecing template and the fabric underneath, following the order shown on the template.

This means that the finished block will be a mirror image of the printed template. You need to know the order to follow to build up the foundation paper pieced block – templates will normally have numbers on them showing the order. So the first piece is numbered 1, the second piece is numbered 2 etc.

General Foundation Paper Piecing Tips

- Copy or print patterns at 100% or “Actual Size”. If you only have paper copies of the pattern, never use your original—make copies! As for what paper to use – thinner is better! I have found newsprint paper is perfect – while it is often sold in packages specifically for paper piecing, you can get a 500 sheet pack of 8 ½” x 11 for less than the smaller packs marketed to quilters.
- Many FPP patterns have a 1” test box so after printing, always measure the 1” test box on each page to confirm it is exactly one inch. If there isn’t a test box, see if one of the pieces is the full edge of the block and measure that to make sure it is the correct size.
 - ❖ **Make it yours** – It is easy to scale an FPP pattern up or down by enlarging it on a copier, just remember to ignore the outside seam allowance lines and just measure ¼” from the outside piecing line.
- Cut out each piece on the outer, thinner lines (these are the outside seam allowance lines)—a dedicated paper rotary cutter or scissors is perfect for this, I use my old rotary blades from my fabric to replace my paper one. You will need 1 piece of pattern for every block you’re going to make since you’ll be sewing through it and then tearing it off later.



Skill Builder Block Of The Month

- When selecting fabrics, keep in mind that when paper piecing, using solids or batiks that look the same on both sides is easier than using prints.
- I typically cut fabric pieces at least $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1" larger (even bigger if it's a complicated shape) than the area I'm covering. When in doubt, cut larger—it will save your sanity. You will waste fabric (especially in the beginning). I also find cutting as I go to be better than pre-cutting pieces of fabric. Make sure your fabric extends past the edge of the paper so you have your seam allowance (I typically don't trim down the outside until completely done with the block).
- You may find it helpful to use a water-soluble fabric glue stick to attach the fabric to the first section of each piece of paper.
- The back of the paper should face the back of the fabrics – this is important to remember when placing the first piece of fabric behind the #1 section of the pattern.
- Reduce your stitch length to 1.8 or 1.5. This shortened stitch length will make it easier to remove paper at the end.
- I like to match my thread, or select a neutral, to one of the colors of the fabrics that I am sewing. I also find that a thinner weight poly-cotton blend thread helps when tearing out paper and keeping the seams flatter.
- A locking stitch or reverse a stitch or two at the beginning and end is important when adding pieces who's seams don't extend to the end of the pattern.
- After adding each piece, trim seam allowance to $\frac{1}{4}$ " (there are rulers called "Add a Quarter" that are handy for this) and press seams before adding the next piece.
- For pressing seams, a small seam roller is a handy tool to use. If using an iron, never press on the paper side of the pattern as the ink from printing may come off on your iron, and do not use steam.
- Have your seam ripper handy and be prepared to use it to pick out stitches! Even the most experienced will need it at times.
- A pair of tweezers makes it easier to get to the smaller pieces of paper when you're ready to remove. Once all the paper is removed, give all the seams a good press.
- When you're done foundation paper piecing, don't forget to change the needle on your sewing machine so that you're ready for quilting or your next project—sewing through paper dulls your needle.



Skill Builder Block Of The Month

Block 10: Twisted Log Cabin (Wonky Log Cabin)

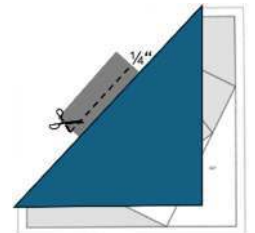
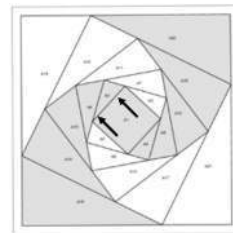
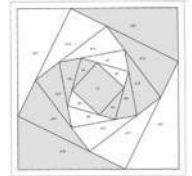
The Twisted or Wonky Log Cabin block puts a spin on the traditional log cabin. For this 8" block there are 5 paper piece sections to allow it to print on letter size paper.

You can piece all 5 sections then sew them together with the paper still on. Remove the paper from the back of the completed block and give it a final press.



After cutting out the paper pieces, start with section A.

1. Cut a piece of fabric for section A1 larger than the shape (you want at least an extra $\frac{1}{4}$ " all the way around but I like a bit more to ensure I completely cover the section).
2. Place the fabric wrong side to the wrong (unprinted) side of the paper. This is where a little bit of water soluble glue from a glue stick is handy. Make sure that the piece extends past the marked lines on the paper (a light box or holding up to a light or window can help).
3. Fold the paper back along the line between section A1 and A2 (a piece of cardstock paper, old credit card or hotel room key helps with the folding). You can now see part of the first fabric piece showing.
4. Use your rotary cutter and trim the fabric to $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the folded edge (use your normal rulers or an "Add a Quarter" ruler). This gives you a good edge to line up the fabric for piece A2.



Note: Some FPP methods have you trimming to $\frac{1}{4}$ " after sewing but I have found doing it in this order made placing the next fabric easier for me.

5. Fold the paper back.
6. Cut a piece of fabric for section A2 making sure it is large enough to cover the space and allow seam allowance all the way around. Use a good size rectangle piece of fabric.
7. Line up the edge of the A1 fabric (what you trimmed in step 4) with the edge of the A2 fabric with right sides of the fabrics together. Some people like to pin the two to keep from shifting making sure your pin is well away from the edge to be sewn.
8. With the paper facing up and the fabrics underneath, sew along the marked line between A1 and A2 being sure to do a lock stitch or back stitch at each end.
9. Flip paper over and press A1 and A2 out (paper piecing seam pressing is always to the higher number side). This is a great opportunity to use a seam roller instead of an iron.

You will repeat these steps adding piece by piece in order. After sewing all the pieces on you will have fabric extending beyond the edge of the paper. Trim to the outside of the paper to ensure you are keeping your seam allowance.

Repeat to create sections B, C, D, and E.

Place section B with section A, fabric sides together. You can use a pin straight through the corner of the sewing line to ensure the pieces line up then sew along the line on the paper.



Skill Builder Block Of The Month

Repeat attaching C, D, and E.

Carefully remove the papers from the back of the block (this is where having the short stitch length and light weight paper comes in handy) the press block.

Block 11: Sunburst Beauty Block

There are many variations of the Beauty block that has been around since the 1850s. This block is often referred to as the New York Beauty block as it resembles the top of the Chrysler building or the crown of the Statue of Liberty. The Sunburst Beauty is a simplified version of the Beauty blocks but like all the variations it includes both Foundation Paper Piecing and curved piecing making a fancy quarter circle block.



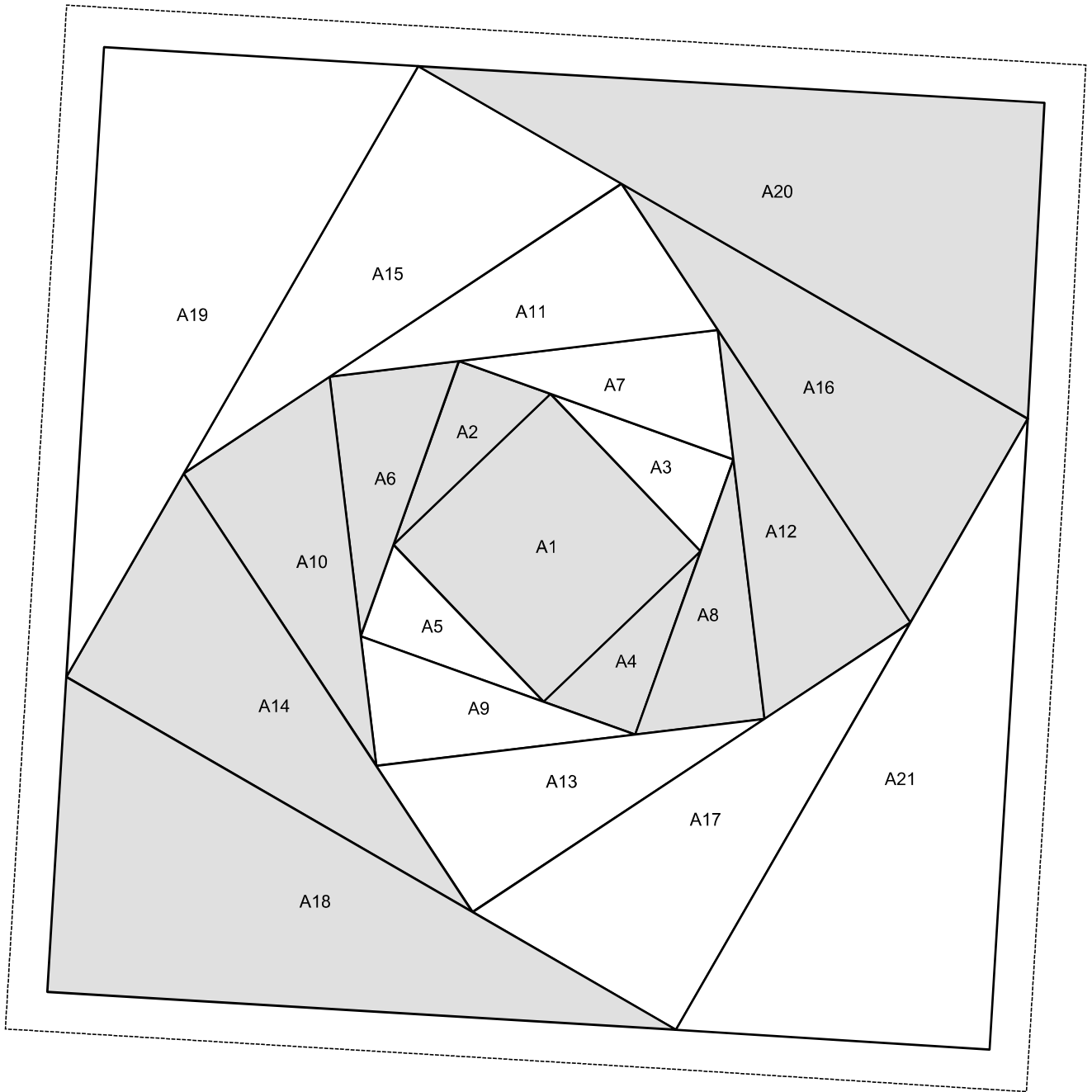
The block pattern includes the paper piecing section and 5 curved piecing templates for this 8" block.

To make the paper pieced section with the spikes, follow the same procedure as used for the Twisted Log Cabin block.

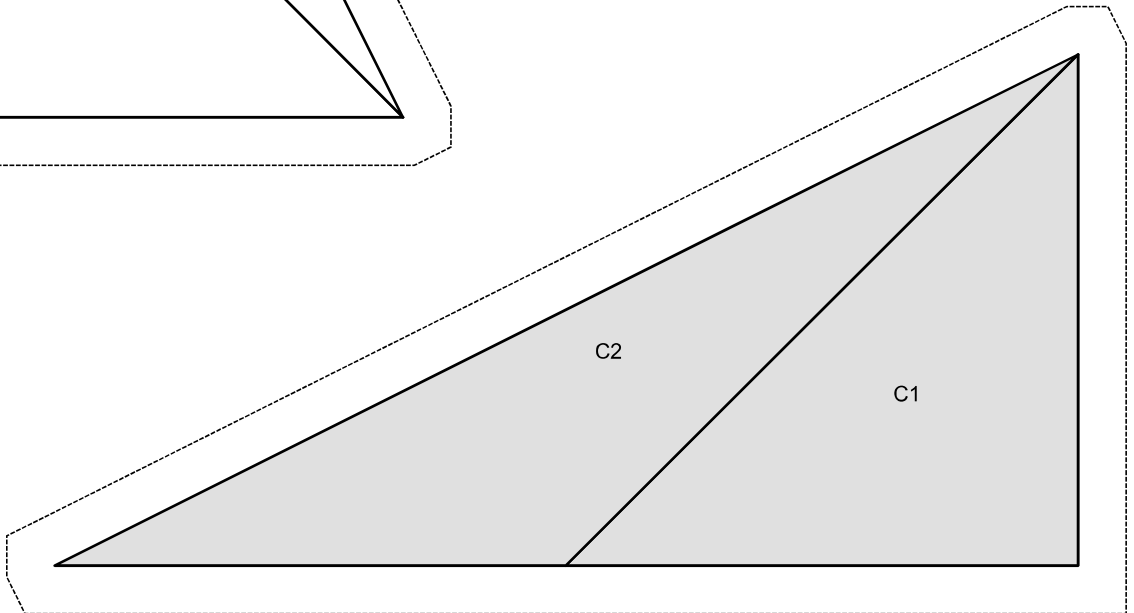
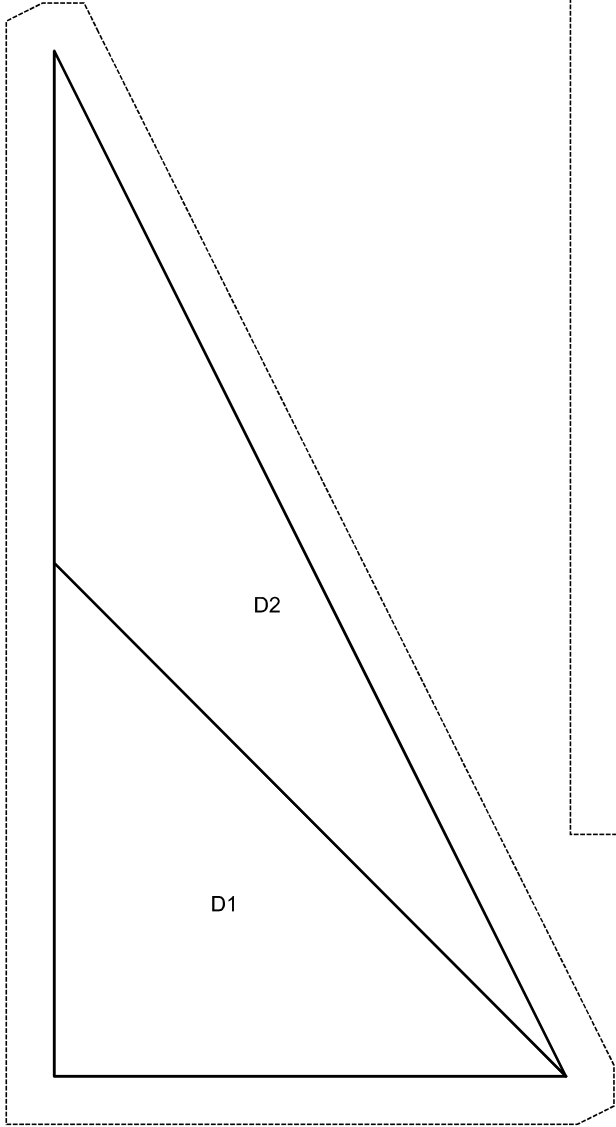
To assemble the entire block, start from the small quarter circle and work out following the process from month 4 on circles.



Twisted Log Cabin



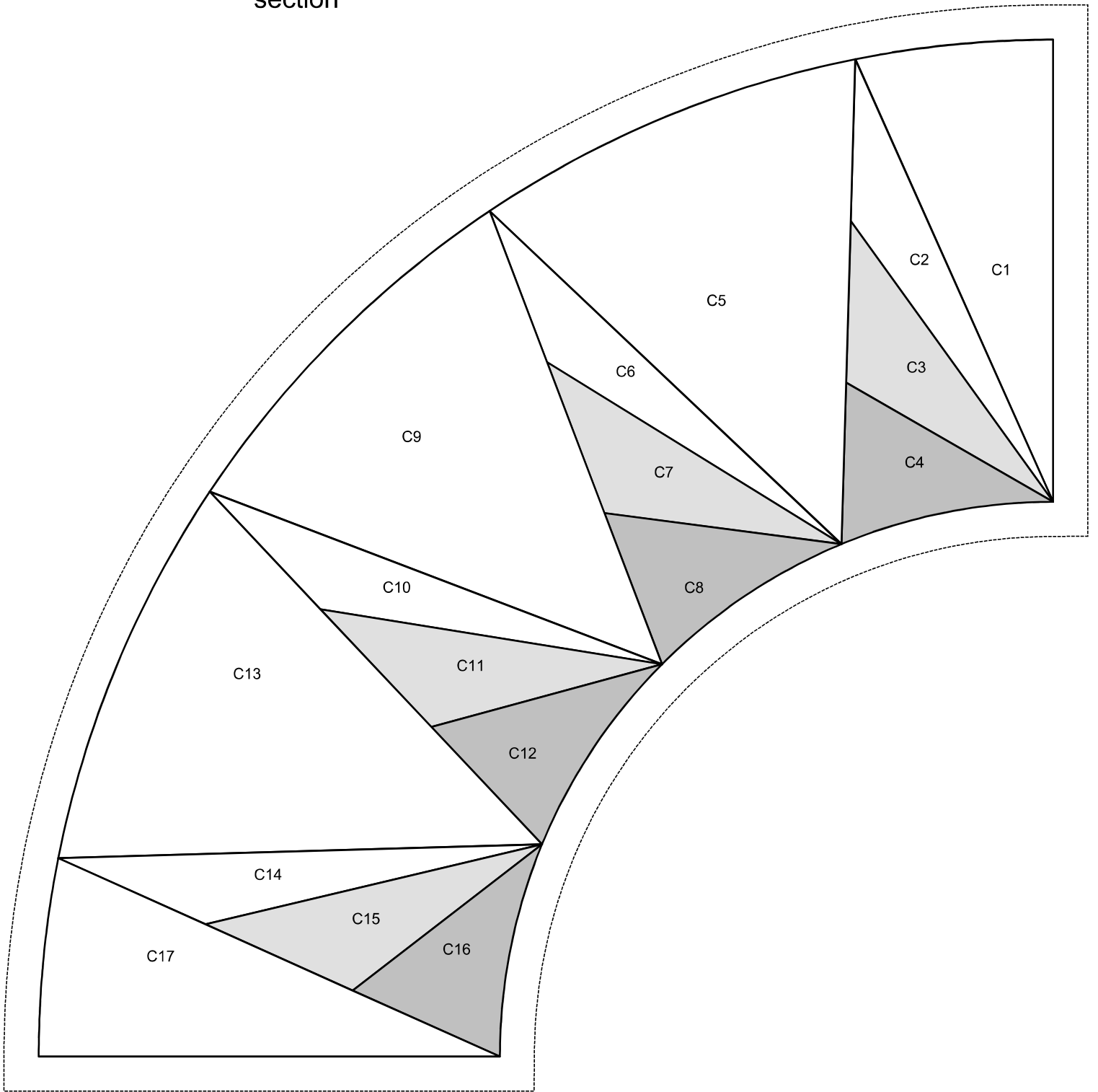
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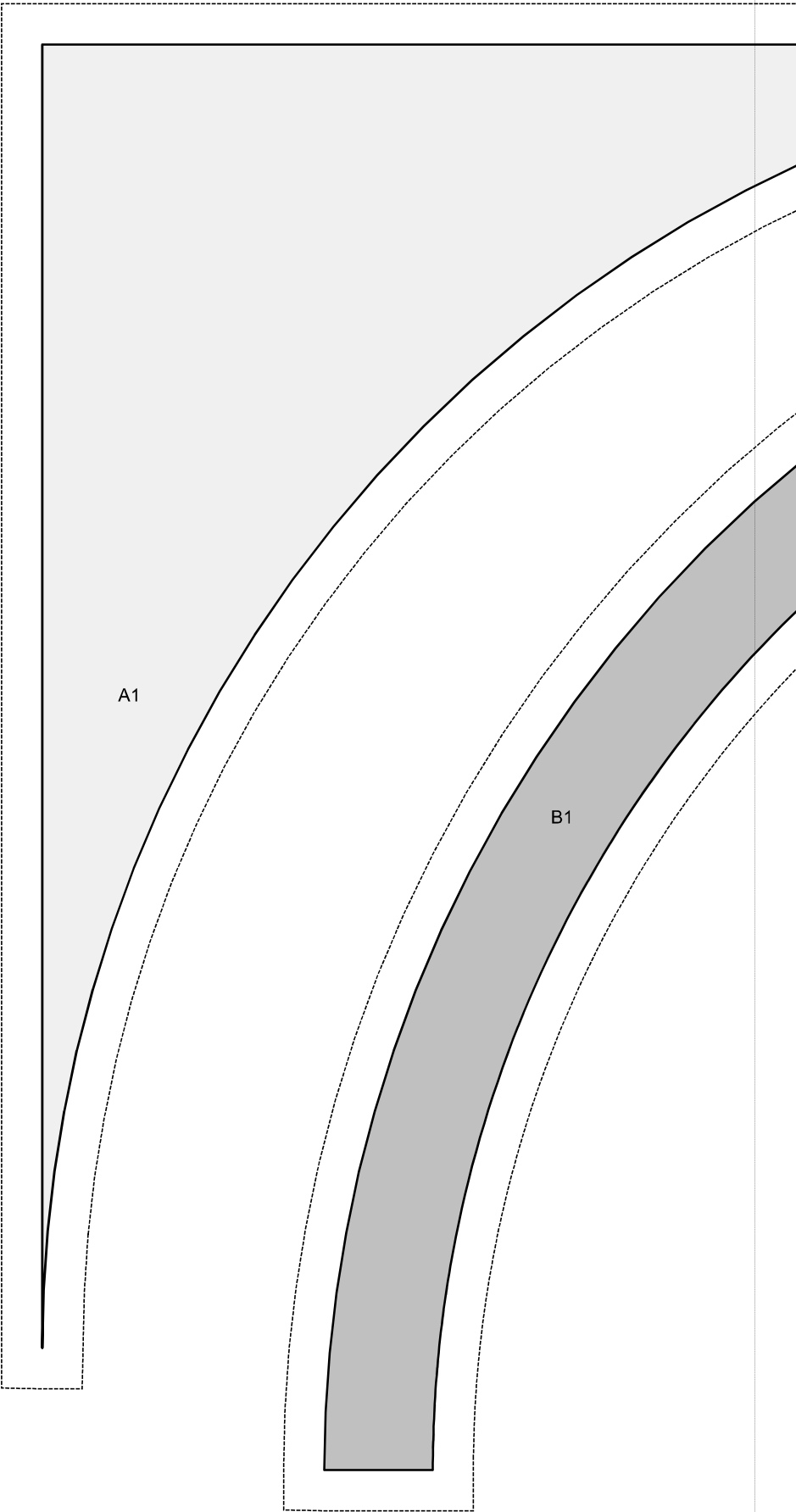
Sunburst Beauty

Foundation Paper Piecing
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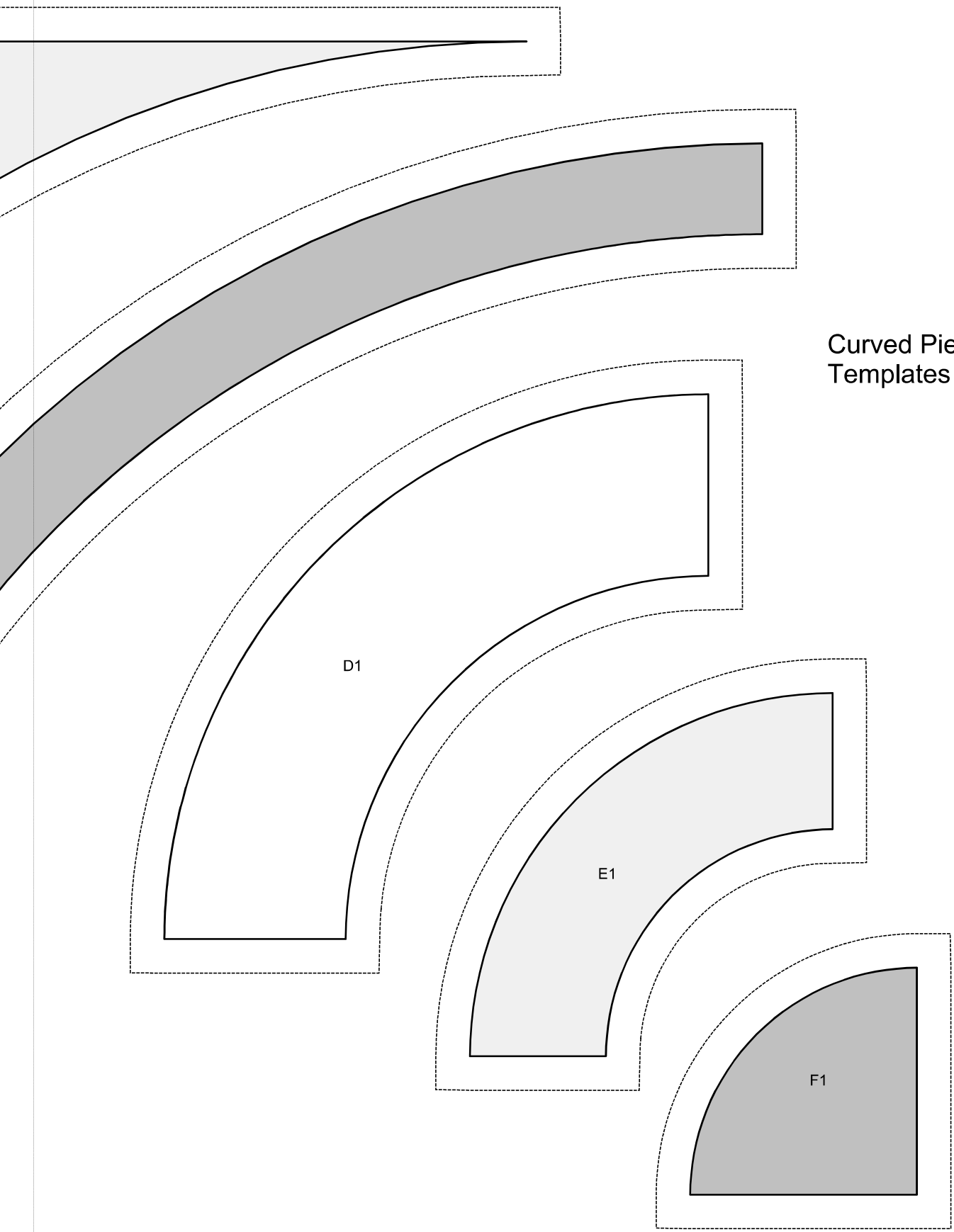


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Curved Piecing Templates



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Curved Piecing
Templates

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