Single Block Projects: Quilt Block Pillow with Ashley Nickels

Chapter 1 - Quilt Block Pillow

Overview

(gentle music) ^- Hi, I'm Ashley Nickels. ^I'm a modern quilter, and a sewing and quilting instructor. As a teacher, I make a lot of individual blocks, and sometimes they get turned into a quilt, and sometimes I like to find other projects for them, and I really was inspired by Carolyn Friedlander's polk block, and I took four of those blocks, and I sewed them together, and today I'm gonna show you how to make a really simple pillow using these blocks. I'm gonna show you how to grow the block using strip piecing, and I'll show you a really easy way to add a hidden zipper. Sometimes people can be intimidated by installing zippers, but I assure you, that this project is a very simple way of starting, and it'll get you on the path to making pillows for your home.

Materials

- For materials, you're gonna need, four Polk Blocks and the single Polk Block looks like this and I chosen to orient them with the colors in the center, but you can really arrange them however you want. But, you'll need four of them. You'll also need three and a half inch strips of fabric to create some sashing around your Polk Blocks. Then you'll need a 20 inch square piece of fabric for the back of your pillow. You'll need some pins, a zipper foot, a pair of sharp scissors, your rotary cutter, and your cutting mat and a straight edge. You'll need a seam ripper, you'll need a 16 inch zipper, you'll need a sewing machine and coordinating thread, you'll need an iron and an ironing surface and of course, since we're making a 19 inch pillow, you'll need a 19 inch pillow form.

Making the Pillow

Add sashing and zipper

- You'll wanna start with your four Polk blocks already sewn together, and I have used a quarter inch seam allowance to sew mine together. We're gonna take our three and a half inch strips to start growing out our block for our pillow. To do that I'm gonna take one of my strips along one of the edges of my four blocks that are sewn together, lining up the top, and I'm gonna take it over to the machine and sew a quarter inch seam. I'm using a quarter inch foot that way it's really easy to get my quarter inch seam allowance. So I just line up the edge of my fabric with the edge of my foot. (sews fabric) And I use my fingers to kinda keep the fabric in place, but you could also use a pin or two if you felt more comfortable. (sews fabric) Just sew all the way down. (sews fabric) Now we are gonna cut off this extra tail using my straight edge and my rotary cutter, and it's really easy to just line the straight edge up with the edge of the Polk blocks to cut off that extra tail. We're gonna use that extra fabric so hold on to it. And now we'll take our Polk blocks over to the iron and press it. I like to press my seams out, meaning out from the center, and some people would say that when you're using white fabric you shouldn't iron out towards the white fabric, and so if that bothers you, or if you're using white fabric like me, then you could keep that in mind. Now we are ready to add our second strip of fabric, and if you made the log cabin with me, this is a very similar process. So what we do is take our next strip and now we line up along this top edge and we're ready to sew another quarter inch seam. I'm gonna line up my fabrics again with the edge of my quarter inch foot

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so that we can get that nice perfect quarter inch seam allowance. (sews fabric) And we're just gonna make sure that our fabric is lined up, and again, you can use a pin if that feels more safe. (sews fabric) Okay, let's trim this tail. Again, lining up my straight edge with the edge of my Polk blocks. Now we're gonna take this over and press it, and you'll continue to sew two more strips on in the same fashion with a quarter inch seam until you've got a 20-inch square. Once you've sewn on all four strips and pressed them, we're ready to start installing our zipper. To do that I'm gonna take my backing fabric, and if you're using a print, make sure you've got the right side down, okay. Now let's line up one of the edges and we are gonna sew a basting stitch which means that you're set your sewing machine stitch length to the largest possible option. I've changed my stitch length to a five and I'm ready to sew a quarter inch seam. Again, I use the edge of my quarter inch foot as a guide. (sews fabric) Okay, our next step is going to be to bring in our zipper and I'm gonna line it up in the middle, and as you can see my zipper is shorter than the length of my pillow form, and using my pin I'll mark where my zipper starts and ends on one end, and do the same on the other end. And once I've done that I'm ready to finish from the pin to the edge with a regular length stitch length. So I've put my stitch length back to the normal length and I'm gonna start right where that pin is, but I'll take it out and the first thing I'll do is do a backstitch. And that's just to secure that seam. (sews fabric) And I'll do the same thing on the other side. Take out the pin and I'll start with a backstitch. (sews fabric) Okay. I'm gonna press my seam open starting at one end. You need to use your fingers probably. Now that we've pressed our seam open we're ready to pin in our zipper. To find where we center our zipper, remember we just secured this seam so we have this thread to remind us. I'm gonna place my zipper right there, slightly below that string and I'm gonna use a pin to secure it. Make sure that your zipper is face down when you start pinning and we're gonna start pinning from the back, but then we're gonna flip over and finish pinning the zipper down from the front, and the reason for that is that we're gonna sew our seam from the front. I'm gonna put a total of three pins on the back before I flip over to the front just to secure my zipper down so it doesn't move. One at all three, and just make sure it's staying centered. And now I'm going to flip over to the front and continue pinning. I'm gonna try to pin close to where I've already put the pins from the back, but again, I'm gonna take them off from the back when I start sewing. And you can feel with your finger too to just make sure that the actual zipper is centered. Make sure you put more than three pins in. I've used probably about six pins and then you're gonna flip it over to the back and remove the pins that you placed on the back side. Once you have your zipper foot on make sure you've adjusted your needle position. I've moved mine all the way to the left, and now we're ready to sew along the zipper edge. I'm starting on this side so my zipper foot is to the right of my seam, and I'm just gonna sew all the way down removing the pins as I go. (sews fabric) You might need to roll this up, and go slowly and keep adjusting. And remove these pins as you go. Using your finger just make sure you're getting close enough to the zipper and that you're sewing over the zipper from the back of course. (sews fabric) Removing pin of course. (sews fabric) Adjusting as you go, making sure your seam stays straight. (sews fabric) And towards this end of the zipper where the zipper pull is it might get a little fussy and you might have to go a little bit wider but that's okay, and then finish all the way to the edge. I'm gonna rotate it, and I'm gonna do the exact same thing on the other side so no need to change your needle position. Again, you probably need to roll this up a little, and starting from the edge, so it looks very finished, we'll go straight down, and just make sure, as you're approaching your zipper that it's flat from the back since you've taken all the pins out. Now comes the fun part. You get to rip out your basting stitch and expose the zipper. You can feel where the metal part of that zipper is and we'll just start using our seam ripper and you can see

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how it just starts exposing that. (rips seam) Okay. And there it is. There's that zipper. Make sure you pull out all of those little loose threads that you just cut from that basting stitch, and we're ready to assemble our pillow.

Assemble the pillow
- This pillow comes together in just three seams. In order to do that, the first thing you're gonna wanna do is make sure your zipper is open, otherwise you won't be able to get it open once you've closed those three seams. So I'm gonna open my zipper and then right sides together. I'm gonna pin along the three edges before I sew. Before you pin, make sure that your seam is lined up. You don't need to use too many pins, maybe two or three on each edge. Starting at the top on one of the sides you're going to sew a quarter inch seam on all three sides. I'm gonna sew a quarter inch seam. And when you go over one of your seams here just make sure that you hold the seam down so it doesn't get bunched. I'm noticing that I have a little bit- that it's not totally lined up on this side so I'm gonna move my seam over just a little. That's okay. Take the pins out as you go. I'm gonna pivot at the corner. Again, my seams aren't totally lined up but that's also okay. We'll double check at the end that we've got everything sewn and there aren't any holes. Now it's our last edge. Okay. Now we're just going to double check that all of our seams are finished and there are no holes. It looks pretty good. Now we're ready to turn our pillow right side out. It's always very exciting. I'm just going to use my fingers and poke the corners out. It looks really good. I have a few loose threads here. We're ready to put our pillow form inside. Depending on how bulky your pillow is too, you might need to squish it down to get it through. This one looks pretty good. â™« Da da da da Alright. Then we can- We can hide our zipper pull just like that. So we can hardly see that zipper which is really cool. It looks awesome. You can do this similar technique with any of the block of the month quilt blocks. I have here a smaller pillow that I made with Heather Jones' Ohio Star block. I also added some sashing on the outside to and used a slightly smaller pillow form. You can really play around with these blocks and with the different sizes of pillows. I like that with this project you get the satisfaction of practicing piecing a quilting block and you get to make something functional for your home.

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