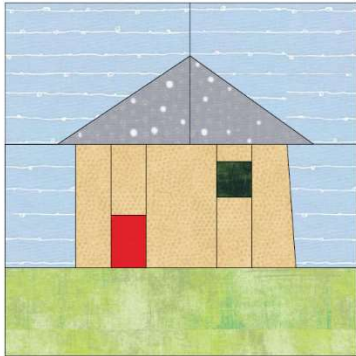




Improv House Block

Try to finish to about 8.5 inches.



Very short instructions for experienced sewists: Look at this picture and construct it like this and size it so that it can be trimmed to 8.5 inches. It doesn't matter which side your door is on, how many windows you have, whether your yard is flat or hilly, etc. Improvise if you enjoy it.

More detailed instructions:

This house doesn't need to look square, have parallel lines, be centered or be made just like this. Once you understand the process, you can add chimneys, sidewalks, more windows, landscaping and anything else you dream up. This is the easiest version and an easy way to make your first house. There are quite a few seams but not much fussiness.

Find your fabrics:

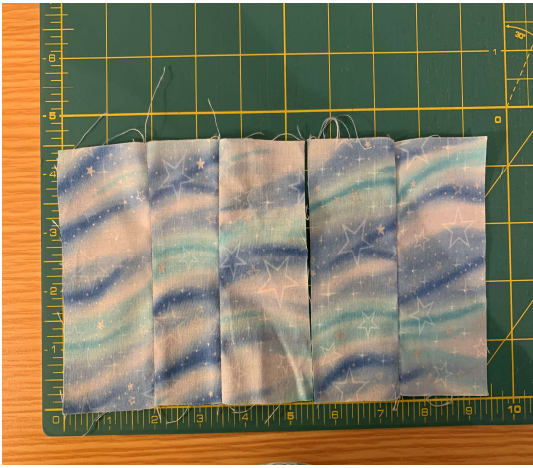
Improv sewing tends to waste more fabric. I use scraps because otherwise the waste stresses me out and this is meant to be a playful, fun experience. ALL of the rules can be broken, but the instructions for this easy version explain the simplest way to start.

I used evenly sized strips cut from scraps and this example is pretty square, straight and regular, but it doesn't have to be that way. **If you like wonky, slanted seams, you need to allow more fabric because your edges will come out more uneven.**

Aim for a block that can be trimmed to 8.5 inches square, but give it to us untrimmed in case we need to improvise when setting. We can probably use it even if you end up over or under 8.5 inches, but the goal is to have the scale of houses look good next to each other and to make it easy to set them together.

Make it in three horizontal strips:

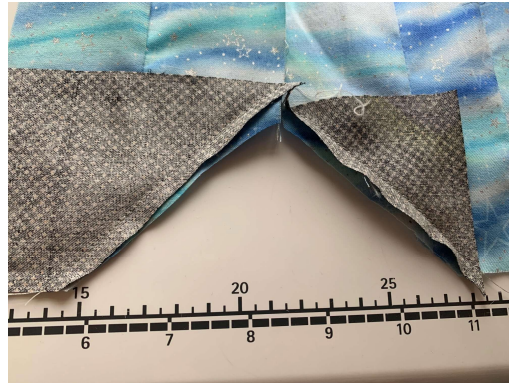
1. Sky and roof,
2. Body of house with sky on both sides, and
3. Grass or ground



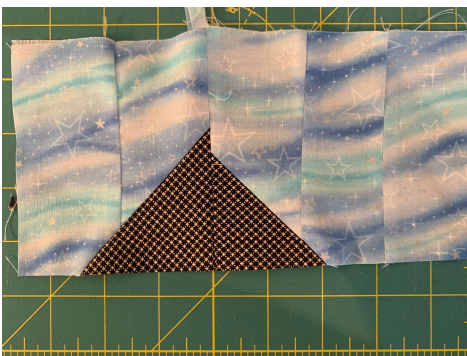
Start with the sky. You need two pieces of fabric that together are over 9 inches wide and somewhere around 4 inches tall. The break between them will be where the peak of your roof is. In the example I seamed 3 strips together on the left and 2 on the right to make the two pieces.



Choose your 2 roof pieces. For your first house, choose rectangles or squares and sew them on to the lower middle corner of each sky piece at an angle. This is similar to the way snowball blocks are sewn. Trim the seam allowances.



Press and sew your two sky with roof pieces together. Trim to make the lower edge a straight line. It doesn't have to be a symmetrical roof. If it looks like a roof, you did it right. When you trim, the roof doesn't have to be level, but remember that wonky seams will make the usable width of your block narrower.



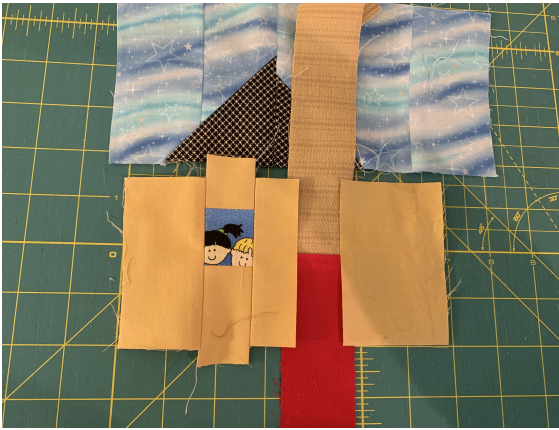
Body of House:



Choose or cut two rectangular pieces that together are about twice as wide as the roof.

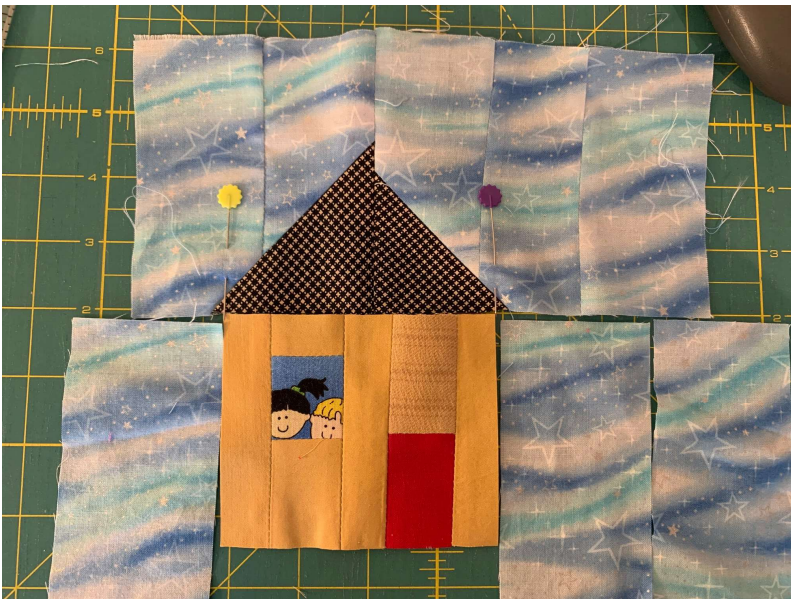
Window: create a strip to fit between the two pieces. It should have a small rectangle “window” with house fabric above and below it. You may have enough width to cut a strip off your house rectangles to use for the house fabric. Any person, animal, thing, or a solid fabric can be in the window. My strip was about 1.5 inches wide. Yours can vary.

Sew the window strip between the two rectangular pieces of house fabric.



Door. Create another strip with the door at the bottom and house fabric at the top. Cut a vertical line to insert it into your house. Be mindful of spacing seam lines at least $\frac{3}{4}$ inch apart to control bulk and plan so that both window and door will be narrow enough to fit under the roof when choosing a spot. I laid it out like this to judge and put a bit of “siding” above the door. The house pieces are still wider than I need so that I will have enough after trimming them.

Before I trimmed the house to the right width, I looked at the point where the roof will hit the seam line. Because it is a triangle, seaming will make the roof narrower, and seaming will also make the house narrower. There are pins in this picture to mark the finished width of the roof. Then, when I could see that, I cut the house just about the width of the finished roof. I put enough sky fabric on each side of the house to make it as wide as the strip above it.





Sew strips of sky fabric to the sides of the house and trim top and bottom into straight lines. They don't have to be parallel. You don't have to use a ruler but straight lines will be easier to sew.



Put your house strip on the table so it fits under your roof strip and position it so the house is under the roof. Sew the roof strip to the house strip.



Grass or Ground. The simplest solution is a strip across the bottom that is wide enough to make your block a little over 8.5 inches at the narrowest point. All you have to do is sew it on.



Don't trim the block to size but cut off long pieces. It will be easier for us to set the blocks if you don't trim to a square but don't worry if you did it already. If your block is under 8 ½ inches or you built an over-size mansion, don't worry, we can probably use it anyway. The goal is to try to have some unity of scale.

Go forth and be creative!