

Salvaging Your Selvages

Fabric selvage is the tightly woven edge that runs along each side of a piece of fabric's lengthwise grain, which is also called the fabric's warp.

Selvage edges occur when crosswise grain threads, called the weft threads, turn back and forth as they are woven along the length of weft threads, which stay in place (secured at their ends) during the weaving process. Tiny loops are formed where the weft threads make each turn, and it is the little loops that keep the fabric's edges intact.

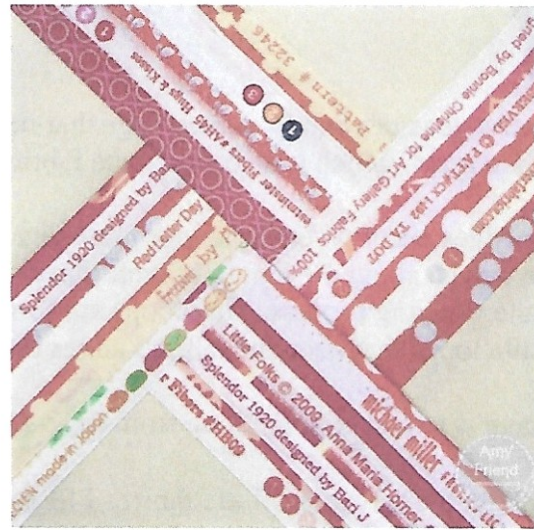
To salvage is to rescue something from loss. Let's rescue our selvages!

- Trim the selvages off the fabric. I like to cut mine 1 1/2" in order to have a strip of colored fabric to see also.
- An easy way to get your selvages sew-ready is to starch and press. Otherwise, your selvages can be pretty wavy and tricky to work with.
- No matter how many selvages you have, you're going to need fabric for the block's base. This allows the woven edge to remain fully exposed while keeping the selvage strips from becoming distorted. Muslin is a great fabric for this, but you can use quilting cotton too. I have also seen some people use fusible interfacing, although it would be more costly.
- When cut off or heated, some selvages warp. When this happens, they are best used as short pieces. However, some are so distorted that they are unusable.
- I like to mark lines incrementally across my foundation or lay out the block on a cutting mat using the ruler lines to help keep my selvages straight.
- You can either use pins or a glue stick to hold your selvages in place before topstitching. I prefer using a glue stick because I can prepare an entire piece and then sew it all at once. By doing this, the fabrics don't shift.
- You should overlap each selvage about 1/4 inch in order to ensure catching the raw edge underneath your top stitch line.
- If you don't like the shaggy frayed edge that some selvages have, you can trim it off or sew the frayed edge to the cut edge of another selvage (right sides together) and flip them open.

You can substitute a selvage block for nearly any block in a pattern. Just sew selvages to fabric and cut it to the size and shape needed for your project. They can even be used for sewing clothing items. Trace your pattern onto muslin and draw some parallel lines as guides. Start on one side and sew selvages all the way across to cover the entire pattern. Once it's covered with selvages, trim off to the size of your pattern.

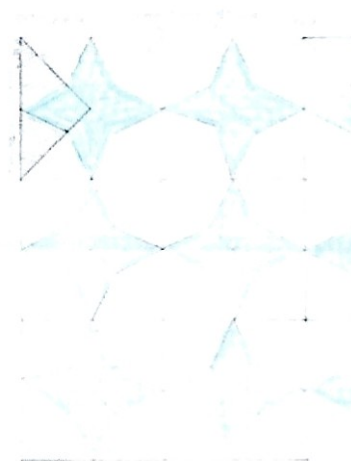
Resources

Moda Scrap Bag (.5 lb): Green Fairy Quilts (best price), Fat Quarter Shop



Selvage Whirlwind – Amy Friend (During Quiet Time)

<https://duringquiettime.com/2019/04/selvage-whirlwind-block-pattern.html>



Spiderweb Quilt – RunandSew Quilts

<https://runandsewuilts.wordpress.com/2016/03/19/selvage-quilt-tutorial/>



Twig and Tale – Forester Coat

