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## Barn Star Throw Pillow Cover Featuring Easy Zippered Closure



# SIY-Sew It Yourself™ Project

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## Barn Star Throw Pillow Cover Featuring Easy Zippered Closure

**Featuring:** Studio E Fabrics Shade Garden by Chelsea DesignWorks

**Pattern by:** Amy Simmonds

**Sewn by:** Amy Simmonds



Many “so-called” home professionals will tell you that the cheapest way to refresh your home is with a fresh coat of paint; but I have bought paint before, and I will tell you right now that is a lie. In truth, the cheapest and fastest way to give your home a refresh is by updating your throw pillows. Now don’t go getting the wrong idea here, you certainly don’t need to go out and buy new pillows. Odds are you already have some in your home and they just need a Fresh Cover.

Those pillows that came with your couch- Re-Cover them. Those pillows gathering dust on your patio furniture- Re-Cover them. The holiday pillows that only come out once a year... give them a year-round life with easy-to-make, easy-to-swap-out, and easy-to-clean covers.

As for me, I recently refreshed my living room using Shade Garden by Chelsea DesignWorks, bringing spring and summer garden vibes into my home while there is still two feet of snow outside my windows. These new throw pillows are bringing much-needed color and cheer as we anxiously await the return of warmer weather.

**Skills Learned:** Piecing, Easy Zipper Installation, Half Square Triangles – the no-waste way.

**Skill Level:** Advanced Beginner

**Finished Size:** Instructions are included to create any size throw pillow  
12×12” (30.48×30.48cm) or larger.

### **Fabric Requirements:**

- 3-4 fat quarters per pillow cover for pillows up to 16” (For pillows larger than 16”, refer to calculations described in Step 1.)

**Pro Tip:** Selecting high-contrast fabrics will ensure your finished cover really pops.

Easy contrast options: Light & Dark, or Warm & Cool\*

\*Warm colors are reds, oranges, yellow. Cool colors are most greens, blues, and purples.



This is what I used for each pillow design, choose one or make them all!:

2 Fat Quarters or ½ Yard (.46m) – 6939-92 Hydrangea Mix

1 Fat Quarter (.23m) – 6939-56 Berry Smoothie

1 Fat Quarter (.23m) – 6939-71 Wild Indigo



2 Fat Quarters or ½ Yd (.46m) – 6939-43 Sunflower

1 Fat Quarter (.23m) – 6939-76 Electric Lime

1 Fat Quarter (.23m) – 6939-38 Tequila Sunrise



2 Fat Quarters or ½ yd (.46m) – 6939-71 Wild Indigo

1 Fat Quarter (.23m) – 6939-83 Fire Dragon Red



2 Fat Quarters or ½ yd (.46m) – 6939-96 Pastel Begonias

1 Fat Quarter (.23m) – 6939-56 Berry Smoothie

#### **Additional Supplies & Equipment Needed:**

1 Zipper (length to be determined by the size of the pillow, see Step 1)

1 piece of ¼" thick cotton quilt batting (the size of the front of your pillow + 1")

Sewing Machine with standard sewing foot

Zipper Foot (this isn't required, but it does make the job easier)

Iron and Ironing Surface, such as an ironing board or wool pressing mat

Rotary Cutter and Cutting Mat

Clear Quilters Ruler

Thread (neutral color or color to match fabrics)

Seam Ripper

Scissors, such as embroidery scissors

Tweezers

Pins or Sewing Clips

Pencil or preferred marking tool (chalk, heat erasable pen, etc)

Basting Spray or Safety Pins (optional)



I recommend reading the instructions completely, before starting your project.

### Instructions:

Note: Seam allowances are  $\frac{1}{4}$ " , unless otherwise noted.

### Step 1: Measuring your pillow

Measure the pillow you want to cover in order to determine fabric needs and zipper length.

Zipper Length is calculated as follows: Pillow width minus 2 inches.

For example, a 16" pillow will need a 14" zipper.

Fabric is calculated as follows:

- For pillows up to 16", 3 to 4 fat quarters will be plenty of fabric.
- Choose 2 to 3 fabrics to create the front star design, and 1 fabric for the back of the cover.
- For pillows over 16" you will need yardage and 2 to 3 fat quarters.
- The fat quarters will be used to create the star block on the front of the cover. Yardage will be used for the back of the cover and for any borders needed on the front.

Yardage calculation\*: Pillow height + 2 inches

For example: a 20" square pillow will need 22" of yardage (approx. 1/3 yard) \*This calculation assumes your pillow is square in shape.

Cotton Batting is calculated as follows:

(Pillow Height + 1 inch) x (Pillow Width + 1 inch)

For example, a 16" pillow will need 17x17" piece of cotton batting



### Step 2: Gather fabrics and supplies

### Step 3: Pre-wash and iron your fabrics (Optional)

Whether or not you prewash your fabrics won't necessarily change the outcome of your project, however I choose to pre-wash fabrics for 3 reasons. 1) To identify any possible color bleeding, 2) to handle any possible shrinkage ahead of time, and 3) to eliminate the manufacturer's creases.

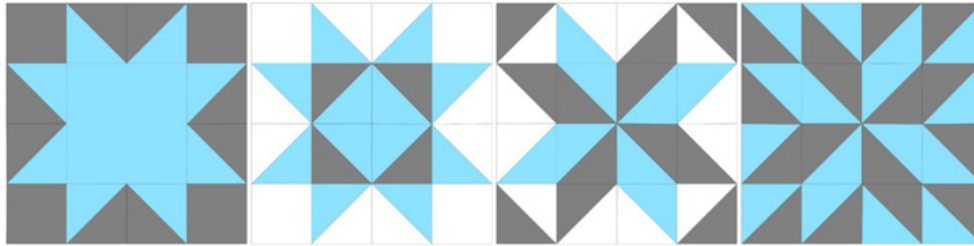
Tip: A color catcher (such as the one pictured) will help save your fabrics if any bleeding does occur.





## Step 4: Choose your pillow front design

The four designs below were specifically because they are created using the same technique, with only squares and HSTs (Half Square Triangles). Once you learn the basic technique for creating HSTs and piecing, any of these 4 designs can be easily created!



**Sawtooth Star 1      Sawtooth Star 2      Sawtooth Star 3      Sawtooth Star 4**

## Step 5: Cutting Fabric & Batting

Based on the star you choose; you will have 3-4 fabrics to cut.

Fabric 1 is represented by the blue in the above graphics.

Fabric 2 is represented by the gray.

Fabric 3 (background fabric) is represented by white

Fabric 4 is the fabric used for the back of the pillow cover (not shown above)

Cutting Fabrics 1-3: Using your fat quarters, cut as follows:

	<b>Sawtooth Star 1</b>	<b>Sawtooth Star 2</b>	<b>Sawtooth Star 3</b>	<b>Sawtooth Star 4</b>
Fabric 1	1 - 6 1/2" square 4 - 3 7/8" squares*	6 - 3 7/8" squares*	4 - 3 7/8" squares*	8 - 3 7/8" squares*
Fabric 2	4 - 3 1/2" squares 4 - 3 7/8" squares*	2 - 3 7/8" squares *	6 - 3 7/8" squares*	8 - 3 7/8" squares*
Fabric 3		4 - 3 1/2" squares 4 - 3 7/8" squares *	6 - 3 7/8" squares*	

\* Indicates for use in HST

Cutting Fabric 4: From the fabric selected for the back of the pillow cover, cut as follows

Cut 1 – (Width of Pillow + 1") by 4" (for bottom of cover back)

For example: a 16" square pillow will be cut 17" x 4"

Cut 1 – (Width of pillow + 1") x (Height of pillow – 2") (for top of cover back)

For example: a 16" square pillow will be cut as 17" x 14"

Cutting Cotton Batting:

Cut 1 – (Pillow Height + 1 inch) x (Pillow Width + 1 inch)

For example, a 16" pillow will need 17x17" piece of cotton batting

Cutting Borders: using any of your leftover fabrics (background, or backing would normally be my choice) cut as follows

Vertical Borders:

Cut 2 – 12 1/2" x (width of pillow minus 10 1/2", then divided by 2)

For example: a 16" pillow will be cut 12 1/2" x 2 3/4" (visual math: 16 – 10.5 = 5.5, then 5.5 / 2 = 2.75)

Horizontal Borders:

Cut 2 – (Width of pillow + 1") x (Height of pillow minus 10 1/2", then divided by 2)

For example: a 16" pillow will be cut 17" x 2 3/4" (visual math: 16 – 10.5" = 5.5, then 5.5 / 2 = 2.75)

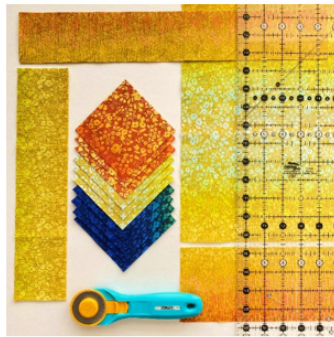
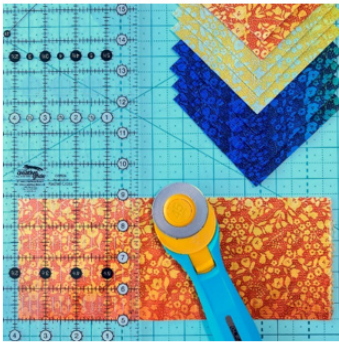
For the math curious, who want to know where the 10.5" came from, here's my best attempt at explaining:

12" of the pillow front will be taken up by the star block, that amount needs to be subtracted from the total size of the pillow.

The border pieces need seam allowances. .75" per border (a total of 1.5" for the 2 borders) will be added (.75" includes .25" seam allowance for piecing the border to the star block, and a .5" seam allowance for the perimeter of the pillow)

So, rather than having you subtract the 12" and then having you add the seam allowances, I combined the two actions into simply subtracting 10.5"

So, the pillow's size, minus 10.5" is the exact amount needed for both border pieces combined, which is why we then divide in half – to separate it into 2 equal border pieces.



## Step 6: HST Assembly

**Gather:** First identify and gather all of the pieces needed to create HST (marked with \* on the cutting chart).

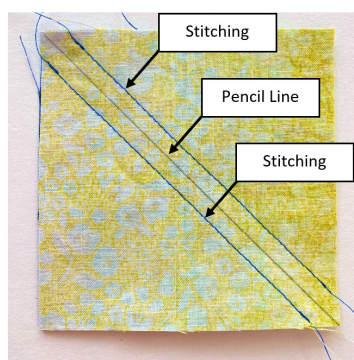
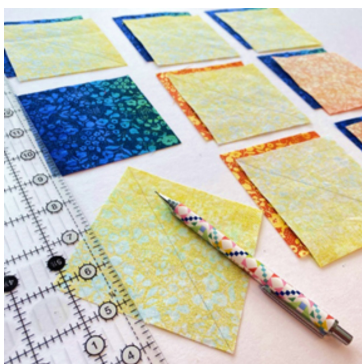
**Pairing:** Using the chart below, separate the pieces into their appropriate combinations. The number indicates how many pairings you should have using each combination.

		Sawtooth Star 1	Sawtooth Star 2	Sawtooth Star 3	Sawtooth Star 4
Fabric 1	+ Fabric 2	4	2	2	8
Fabric 1	+ Fabric 3		4	2	
Fabric 2	+ Fabric 3			4	

**Marking:** For each pair of fabrics, draw a diagonal line from corner to corner on the wrong side of the lighter of the two fabrics.

**Sewing:** With the fabric pairs right side together, sew 1/4" away from, and parallel to, the diagonal line on both sides.

**Cutting:** Using the clear quilter's ruler and rotary cutter, carefully cut along the diagonal marking. These two sections are now 2 HST blocks!



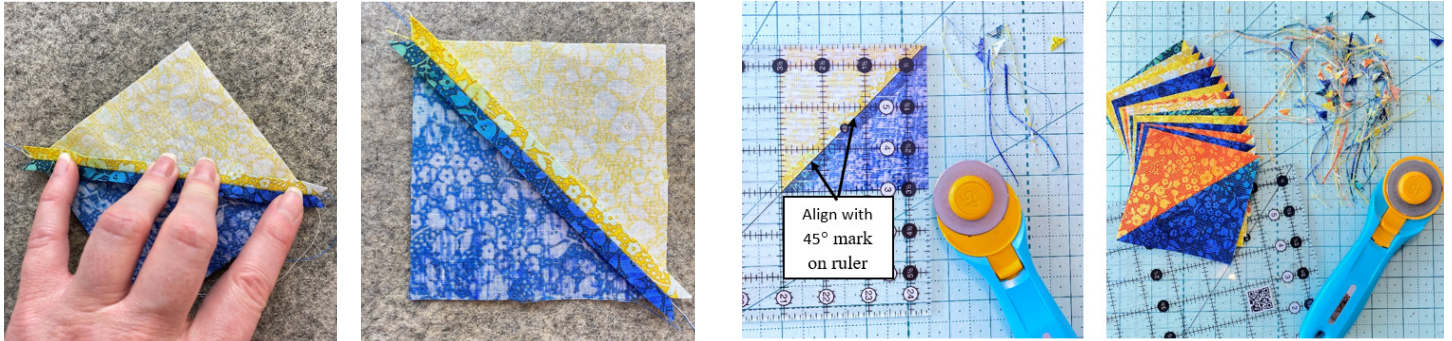


**Pressing:** Laying the HST on a heat safe surface, finger press the seam open, then lay a hot iron onto the open seam for 5-6 seconds to set.

**Tip:** Be careful not to push or pull the fabric as this can cause unwanted stretching or warping.

**Trimming:** After pressing all of the HST seams open, use your rotary cutter and clear quilters ruler to trim your HST to size, which in this case is 3 1/2" square. This may seem like a silly step, because you'll be trimming off very little, but those little bits add up and can haunt you later.

**Tip:** To trim precisely, line the 45-degree marking on your ruler with the seam on your block, while centering the ruler's 3 1/2" markings inside the perimeter of the HST.

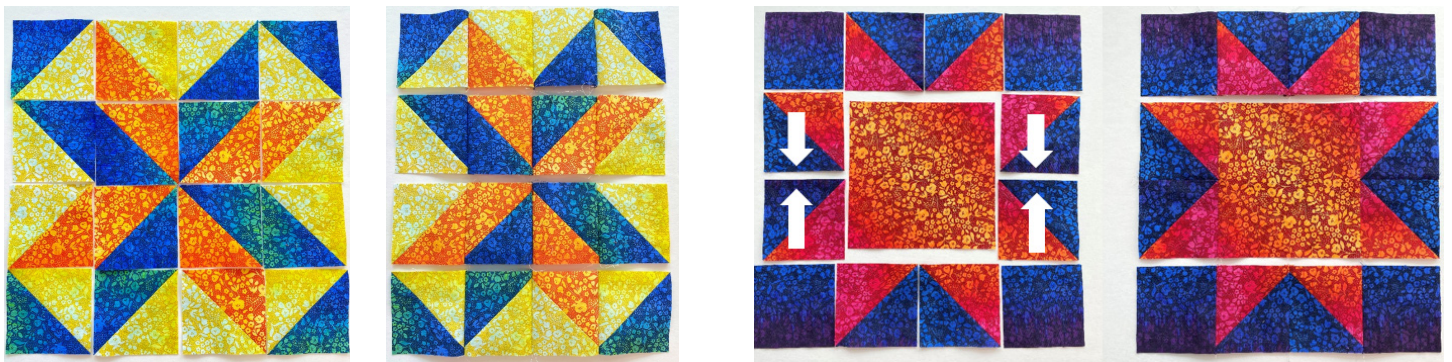


### Step 7: Assemble Star Block

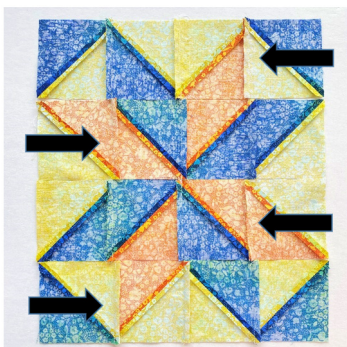
**Layout:** Once all HSTs are finished, layout your pieces in the correct order needed to create your block.

**Sew Rows:** Using a 1/4" seam allowance, sew pieces right sides together to create rows. I find it simplest to start on the left and add pieces working my way to the right.

**Note:** For Sawtooth Star 1, you will first create two columns which then will be added to the larger center block, to form one wide row, as shown below.



**Pressing:** For rows, I prefer to press seams to one side, alternating the direction of the seams pressed per row. This allows the seams to nest. (Pressing these seams open is also acceptable if that is your preference.)





Combine Rows: Once all rows have been pressed, align rows right sides together, pinning at the nested seams in order to prevent misalignment as you sew.

Safety Tip: Do not sew over pins, this can damage your machine or cause injury if a needle breaks.

Combine rows in the following order:

Row 1 + Row 2 | Row 3 + Row 4 | Row 1&2 + Row 3&4

Pressing: Press seams open.



### Step 8: Adding Borders

The Sawtooth Star block will be 12" finished. If your pillow is larger or smaller than 12", the borders can be altered to achieve the proper size for your pillow.

Attach Vertical Borders: With right sides together, sew vertical borders the right and left sides of the star block. Press seams open.

Attach Horizontal Borders: With right sides together, sew border pieces onto the top and bottom edges of the star block. Press seams open.



### Step 9: Quilting

At this point, lay your pillow front, right side up, on top of the cotton batting and quilt as desired.

Pro Tip: I use a basting spray to secure the layers; basting with pins is another great option.





## Step 10: Creating the back of the pillow cover, with zipper closure

Gathering: Collect the two fabric pieces cut to create the back of the pillow cover and the zipper.

Marking: On the 4" piece of fabric, use a marking pencil to mark (on the wrong side) 1" away from each end along the length.

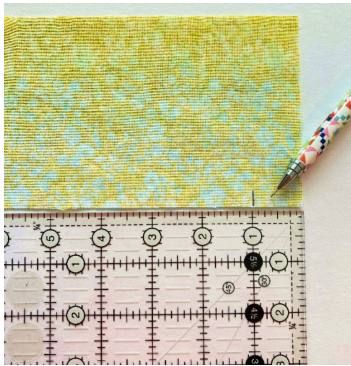
Sewing with different stitch lengths: Align the 4" backing piece along the bottom edge of the larger backing piece, right sides together.

Using a 1/2" seam allowance, stitch until the mark you made at 1"; Backstitch.

Adjust stitch length to basting length (the longest stitch length), stitch using the basting length until you reach the next 1" marking.

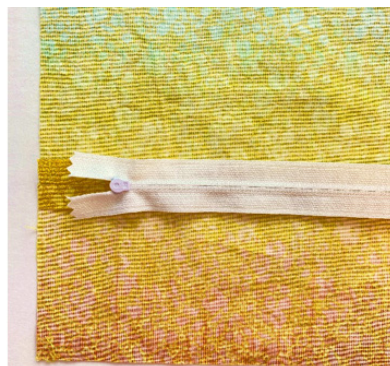
Return stitch length to default, backstitch and sew the remaining one inch.

Pressing: Press this seam open.



Placing the Zipper: On the wrong side of the pillow back, lay your zipper Face Down atop the seam you just pressed. It needs to be straight along the seam itself, centered between the backstitching (1" away from each edge).

Securing the Zipper: Pin the zipper in place.



Sewing: Place a Zipper Foot on your sewing machine and adjust needle position if needed on your machine. Starting at the zipper pull end of the zipper, backstitch a few stitches, then stitch along the length of the zipper 1/8-1/4" away from edge of the zipper tape. You may need to move the zipper pull out of the way to get started, but once an inch or two is stitched, you can return the zipper pull to its original position. Stitch to the bottom of the zipper. Pivot 1/4" past the zipper stop, stitch to the other side, pivot upward and resume stitching along the length of the opposite side of the zipper. Be sure to backstitch each time you change directions.

Pro Tip: To Pivot, stop sewing and lower the needle into the down position. Lift the presser foot, rotate the fabric to the new direction you wish to sew, lower the presser foot again and resume sewing.



Exposing the Zipper: When you near the zipper pull, stop, backstitch to secure, and remove from the sewing machine. You will need to access the zipper pull to move it out of the way in order to finish sewing around the zipper. Turn the back of the pillow to the right side, revealing the closed seam that covers the zipper. Use your seam ripper to remove the full length of the basting stitches, being very careful to not cut the backstitching securing the outer 1" seam.

Resume Sewing: Once the zipper pull is accessible, unzip the zipper a few inches, so it will not hinder the presser foot as you sew the remaining distance around the zipper. Resume stitching where you previously backstitched, pivot ¼" past the zipper pull, and backstitch to secure once you reach your original starting point.

Tidying Up: Using a seam ripper to expose the zipper will result in a lot of thread bits, these can easily be removed using a pair of tweezers.



### **Step 11: Finishing the throw pillow**

Open the Zipper: Partially open the zipper on the back side of the cover. This allows you to easily reach inside the pillow for turning.

Sewing: Align the pillow front, right sides together, with the pillow back. Using a ½" seam allowance, stitch around the entire perimeter of the pillow, backstitching where stitch lines intersect at the corners.



Finishing Details: Once the perimeter is secure, it's ideal to trim the bulk from the corners (not too close to the stitching) Option: zig-zag stitch along the raw edges, this will help prevent any fraying when the pillow cover is washed.





Turn the Pillow Cover: Reach inside the pillow cover through the zipper opening, turning the cover right side out.

Pop the Corners: Using your finger, or other rounded object (a chopstick works great) reach inside the pillow cover to poke the corners out so they look even. The goal isn't to poke it out entirely, which could cause the seams to rip open, but simply to make the corner smooth and taught.



### **Step 12: Pillow Cover is Ready to Use.**

Insert the throw pillow into your Lovely New Pillow Cover and toss it into place.



**Washing and Care:** Since the pieced block is backed with cotton batting and quilted, these pillow covers are machine washable without any risk of damage. If your pillow encounters pizza sauce, naptime drool or bird poop (in the case of outdoor patio furniture), it's not a problem. Simply wash, dry, give it a quick iron and it'll be good as new.

**Happy Sewing!**



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