

## Got Scraps?

All quilters make scraps! Every time we cut out a new quilt project, we make more scraps. The more you quilt the more piles of scraps you accumulate and it can quickly multiply and get out of control!

Most of us love scraps because we see so much potential in them. We also recognize the investment in all that fabric and we don't want to waste any of it. However, our time is also valuable. What do you do with your scraps? Do you throw them into a bin, never to be seen again? Do you bag them up thinking "someday" I will use them. Or do you just toss them? How can we organize and prepare our scraps so they will be easily accessible and useable? This is where a **Scrap Management System** comes into play.

Creating and maintaining a scrap stash takes time and effort but so worth it. Wouldn't it be nice to shop from our own pre-cut stash? For example, you want to make a little girl's quilt, go to your pre-cut stash and pull out all the pink prints and solids to make a beautiful scrappy quilt? Or make a scrappy binding using 2 ½" strips? These pre-cuts are starched, cut and ready to be used. Scraps make beautiful bonus quilts and saves you money.

When planning your scrap management system, **keep it simple**. Design your system to fit the way you quilt. Think about what quilts you want to make and what pre-cuts you typically use (such as charm squares, strips, and rectangles). If you don't want to work with 1 ½ inch strips or 2-inch squares, don't make them.

Maintaining your **Scrap Management System** is not a once and done project. But you can manage your scrap stash by setting up a weekly time to work on your scraps. Set a timer for 15-30 minutes and when timer goes off, put it away for another day. Pick up and clean up as you go, so you will be ready for the next time you work on your scraps. Once your Scrap Management System is set up and ready to use... your scraps will flow through your pre-cut stash and into new quilts.

### How to create a Scrap Management System you will actually use.

**Step 1 – Start saving and gathering all your scraps.** Go through your yardage and pull out anything smaller than a fat eighth and add to your scrap bin. Keep a bag or bin by your cutting area and as you work on a quilting project toss the leftover pieces in it. Save all your scraps, even the small pieces. When the bin is full, it is time to do some scrap busting. Tip: When you finish a quilt project, keep all the scraps from that quilt together. You picked the fabrics and already know they go together so why not make a bonus lap quilt out of those scraps.

**Step 2 – Set up your scrap busting area.** Have an area set up to sort, iron, and cut your scraps. Supplies you will need for scrap busting are scraps, spray starch, iron and ironing mat, scissors, cutting mat and rotary cutter (with new blade), rulers (10 x 10 or 12 x 12 square and 3 x 12), storage bins, baskets, or Ziplock bags, Post-its or paper to label the precuts stacks, and a lint roller.

**Step 3 – Sort your scraps by color.** When your scrap bin is full, it is time to go through your scraps. What works best for me is to sort scraps by color (keeping prints and solids together).

- Dump out your bin of scraps. This will look overwhelming, but take it a step at a time. Don't spend too much time on each scrap, this is a quick sort.
- Pull out all fabric that is at least ½ yard, keep as yardage. Anything less than a ½ yard can be considered a scrap. Also pull out the scraps that are already in pre-cut sizes such as charm squares, fat quarters, triangles, extra premade blocks, etc. and set aside.
- For the remaining scraps, don't worry about the size or shape of the scrap. Look at each scrap and decide if you want to keep it (maybe it is a fabric you no longer like or the piece is just too small). With the scraps you do want to keep, sort into piles by the main color.
- Store the sorted piles by color into labeled Ziplock bags or bins.

**Step 4 – Sort your bag/bin of colored scraps by size.** When you have a full bag of colored scraps, it is time to sort by size. Dump out the bag/bin of colored scraps. Look at each piece and decide which of the 3 main piles it should go in.

- Larger scraps (wider than 10 x 10, but less than a ½ yard).
- Medium scraps (smaller than 10 x 10, but larger than 5 inches).
- Small scraps (wider than 1 ½ inches, but smaller than 5 inches).

Put the even smaller scraps off to the side for now. These can be strips or strings (1-2 inches wide) and tiny crumbs (less than 2 x 2 square or less 2 x 4 rectangle). These tiny pieces can be used for starters and enders, crumb quilts, postage stamp quilts or filler for dog beds or other projects.

## **Step 5 – Prepare and cut your scraps into useable pre-cut sizes.**

Standard precut sizes:

One yard (36" x 42" WOF).

Half yard (18" x WOF). Store folded into fourths.

Fat quarter (18" x 22"). Store folded into fourths.

Fat eighth (9" x 22").

Layer cake (10" x 10").

Charm square (5" x 5").

Squares 2 ½ x 2 ½ and 3 ½ x 3 ½ squares.

Rectangles

Strips (2 ½ - 5 inches wide). Can be cut into squares later if desired. Store with a soft fold and clip.

Start with the stack of **larger size scraps** (wider than 10 x 10). You will cut this stack into the largest pre-cut size first (layer cake). You will want to get the largest number of pre-cuts out of the stack as possible.

- Starch, iron and layer each scrap on top of each other (about 4-6 pieces). All pieces should line up with the bottom right corner. Don't worry if they don't all line up at the other side. Stacking up the layers speeds up the cutting process.
- Using a rotary cutter, trim bottom and right side edges to get straight edges to work with.
- Make your first 10-inch slice. Flip through and make sure no little pieces are left or missed. Turn the cut slice and make another 10-inch cut (to make a 10" x 10" square). Label and set the stack aside.
- Continue until you get as many 10-inch squares as possible out of the stack.
- Decide on the next largest pre-cut size you can get out the remaining pieces in the stack (such as a 5-inch strip or a charm square) and make the next cut. Label and set the stack aside.
- Continue cutting this stack until you only have small pieces left. Add to the next smaller pile of scraps.
- Repeat the process with another stack of your largest scraps until that pile is finished.

Next, take the **medium size scraps** and prepare the same as the larger scraps (starch, iron, stack, and trim bottom and right edges). The right side should be at least 5 inches wide. This stack will make 5 x 5 squares.

- Make the first 5-inch slice. Turn the stack and cut another 5-inch slice (to make 5 x 5 squares).
- Continue cutting the entire stack until you can't cut any more 5-inch slices. Label and set the stack of charm squares aside. Put the smaller leftover scraps to a bag to decide on later.
- Repeat the process with another stack of your medium size scraps until that pile is finished. Move the leftover small scraps to the side.

Lastly, take the **smaller scraps** (wider than 1 ½ inch, but not 5 inches wide). Prepare as you did with the large and medium size scraps. This stack can be sliced into strips, smaller squares or rectangles.

## **Step 6 – Storing your new ready to use pre-cut stash.**

There many ways to store your new pre-cuts. You can use clear plastic bins, baskets, Ziplock bags, etc. Be sure to label the containers with the size and/or color. You can stack up your piles of pre-cuts by size (layer cakes, charm squares, etc.) and by color (use rainbow or color wheel as an example). When you make more pre-cuts, add to your prior cut stacks. Tips: Try not to put a hard fold in your prepared scraps. Store strips by width, lightly fold over itself and clip.

## **Step 7 – USE Your Scraps!**

**Check out some of my favorite YouTube videos for scrap busting ideas.**

- Tiny Orchard Quilts – Megan (excellent).
- Joyful & Merry, The Ultimate Scrap System. Mary B.
- Sew The Distance, Chris O'Neal.
- Just Get It Done Quilts, Karen Brown.
- Amy Dement.