

MARY MARCOTTE
WRITER. QUILTER. ARTIST.

A Playful, Intuitive Approach to Improv Quilting
BEGINNER TO INTERMEDIATE

MARY MARCOTTE

info@marymarcotte.com

mary.marcotte@gmail.com

318.240.4399

marymarcotte.com

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Welcome to Improv Quilting

Improv quilting is the art of trusting your hands, responding to what's in front of you, and letting the quilt grow one decision at a time. There are no patterns to follow and no mistakes to fear. Instead, you'll learn to work with what you have, stay curious, and enjoy the rhythm of sewing.

What You'll Learn

You'll build both **skills** and **ideas** as you sew:

SKILLS

- Sorting and preparing scraps
- Building improv units from crumbs, swatches, cabbages, and strips
- Trimming with intention
- Combining units into larger compositions
- Using strips to solve layout challenges

CONCEPTS

- How color, value, and proportion shape your quilt
- Why variation creates interest
- How repetition builds your personal style
- How to "read" your quilt as it grows
- How to trust your instincts and enjoy the process

Supply List

- A variety of scraps in several sizes
- A few pieces of yardage (optional)
- Rotary cutter, mat, and rulers
- Iron and pressing surface
- Sewing machine with a $\frac{1}{4}$ " foot
- Design wall or a large flat surface

The Improv Mindset

Think of improv quilting as a conversation between you and your fabric.

- **Stay open.** Let the quilt tell you what it wants next.
- **Stay curious.** Try combinations you wouldn't normally choose.
- **Stay relaxed.** There's no wrong move — only the next move.
- **Stay playful.** This is sewing as exploration, not perfection.

Improv is for everyone. If you can sew two pieces of fabric together, you can improv quilt.

TRUST YOUR HANDS. FOLLOW YOUR CURIOSITY. MAKE SOMETHING ONLY YOU CAN MAKE

COLOR PLAY PROMPTS

Use these when you want to stretch your creativity.

- **MONOCHROME MAGIC:** Choose one color and explore its full value range.
- **OPPOSITES ATTRACT:** Pick two opposite colors on the color wheel.
- **NEUTRALS + ONE:** Use neutrals with one bold accent color.
- **WARM VS. COOL:** Let temperature guide your choices.
- **UNEXPECTED FRIENDSHIPS:** Pair colors you've never used together.
- **FOCUS FABRIC FIRST:** Let one print lead the whole palette.

COMMON IMPROV PITFALLS

PITFALL 1 — EVERYTHING IS THE SAME SIZE

Fix: Add crumbs or cabbages to shift scale.

PITFALL 2 — COLORS FEEL MUDDY

Fix: Add a strong light or dark for contrast.

PITFALL 3 — QUILT FEELS CHAOTIC

Fix: Insert calm swatches or neutral strips.

PITFALL 4 — UNITS WON'T FIT TOGETHER

Fix: Use strips as coping strips.

PITFALL 5 — FEELING STUCK

Fix:

- Step back
- Take a photo
- Rotate the quilt
- Add one unexpected piece

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook follows the class video lessons and is your companion as you watch the class videos. Use it to follow along, take notes, and return to the techniques whenever you need a refresher.

- Watch the video lesson, pausing when you need to
- If a part of the video is confusing, read the steps in that section of the book
- Use the visuals and definitions as quick references
- Keep notes in the margins — this is your creative space
- Check off the lessons as you go

Before You Begin

Take a deep breath. Look at your scraps. Let go of the idea that they need to match or behave. You're about to create something that could only come from **your hands, your eye, and your sense of play.**

Let's begin.

LESSON ONE — FABRIC MATTERS

WHY FABRIC CHOICE MATTERS IN IMPROV

Fabric is your starting point — not a pattern, not a plan. Your scraps and colors will guide the rhythm, scale, and personality of your quilt. This lesson helps you gather what you need without overthinking it.

Improv begins with what you already have. You don't need a perfect stash — you just need a place to start.

Three Simple Ways to Choose Your Fabrics

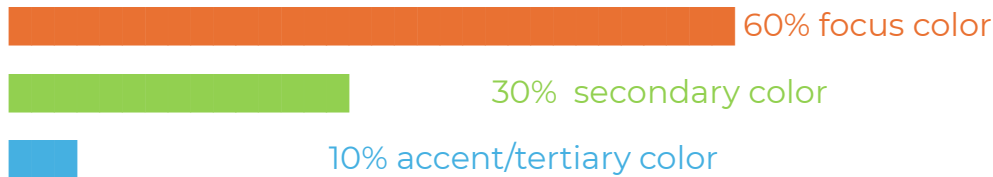
Use whichever option fits your stash and your mood. All three lead to beautiful improv results.

OPTION 1 — SCRAPS ALL IN

Perfect for scrap lovers

Choose:

- Use the **60-30-10 rule** to pull three colors from your scrap bins



WHY IT WORKS: This ratio creates natural balance and movement without needing a plan.

OPTION 2 — START WITH ONE GORGEOUS FABRIC

When a single fabric is calling your name

Choose:

- One piece of yardage as your **focus fabric**
- Add **three colors** from your scrap bins that appear in or complement it

WHY IT WORKS: The focus fabric sets the mood; the scraps create variation and surprise.

[Focus Fabric] → pulls in → [Scrap Color A] [Scrap Color B]
[Scrap Color C]

OPTION 3 — “I DON’T HAVE MANY SCRAPS” APPROACH (FOR BEGINNERS OR MINIMAL STASHES)

Choose:

- One color from your scraps
- One or two coordinating pieces of yardage
- Use the **60–30–10 rule** to pull three colors from your scrap bins


60% focus color

 30% secondary
color

 10% accent/tertiary color

WHY IT WORKS: You get the improv look without needing a huge scrap collection.

A NOTE ABOUT COLOR & VALUE

Improv quilts thrive on **contrast**. If everything is the same value, your quilt will feel flat. Try to include lights, mediums and darks. Even within a single-color family, value variation creates movement.

Encouragement: This is *your* quilt. If a fabric makes you happy, use it. If a color feels wrong, set it aside. If you want to break every rule, go for it.

Improv is permission. Follow what feels like you.

WHY 60–30–10 WORKS

This ratio is used in interior design, painting, and photography because it creates:

- A clear visual hierarchy
- A sense of balance
- A natural focal point
- Enough variation to stay interesting

In improv quilting, it keeps your quilt from feeling chaotic while still allowing play.

LESSON TWO — PRESSING & SORTING SCRAPS

PREPARING FABRIC SO IMPROV FEELS EFFORTLESS

WHY THIS STEP MATTERS

Before we start sewing, we need to get your scraps into a state where they're easy to grab, easy to combine, and easy to build with.

This saves time later, reduces frustration, and helps you stay in your sewing flow.

Think of this as setting the table before the feast. A little preparation makes everything more joyful.

I have broken this into steps but, in reality, I do all of it at the same time. Read through the class section to determine if you prefer three steps or an all-together approach.

Quick Checklist

- I chose 3–4 colors
- I have a mix of scraps and/or yardage
- I included at least one light, medium, and dark
- I'm not overthinking it
- I'm excited to begin

Step 1 — Press Your Scraps

You don't need perfection — just smooth, flat pieces that are pleasant to work with.

PRESSING TIPS

- Press both sides if the fabric is especially wrinkled
- Use a spray water bottle to add steam if you need steam
- Don't worry about perfectly straight edges — we'll trim later
- Enjoy the rhythm of it

Zen Note: Pressing is a quiet moment. Let your mind settle. Let the fabric warm your hands.

Step 2 — Sort into Swatch Stacks

- As you press, sort your scraps into simple size categories. These will become your building blocks in later lessons. Think of these stacks as your **palette**. You'll dip into them again and again as your quilt grows.

Note: The categories below depend on the size of the piece and can be one big piece or many smaller pieces sewn together.

YOUR SWATCH STACKS

CRUMBS

- 2"–4"
- Tiny squares, rectangles, triangles
- Great for early improv play
- Playful, surprising, energetic personality

Great for:

- Early improv warm-ups
- Adding sparkle and texture
- Creating unexpected color moments

SWATCHES

- 5"–8"
- Medium squares or rectangles that help grow your units
- Steady, grounding, versatile personality

Great for:

- Growing your crumb units
- Adding breathing room
- Shifting scale in your quilt

CABBAGES

- 10"–16"
- Large chunks — either single pieces or pieced sections
- Bold, structural, expressive personality

Great for:

- Creating focal areas
- Adding drama or calm
- Building large units quickly

Why Sort This Way

Sorting by size helps you:

- Build units quickly
- Find pieces that naturally fit together
- Avoid constant digging in bins
- Stay in your sewing rhythm
- Make decisions with ease
- This is the foundation of improv fluency.

- Perfect for bold moments

STRIPS

- Any width, up to 18" long
- Saved for later (they're magic, trust me)

Flexible, connective, problem-solving personality

Great for:

- Filling gaps
- Adjusting proportions
- Adding rhythm and movement

LONG STRIPS

- Up to 44"
- These become coping strips in the final assembly
- Structural, stabilizing personality

Great for:

- Coping strips
- Joining large units
- Creating pathways across the quilt

Tips for Sorting

- Don't overthink it — go by size
- Odd shapes are welcome
- If a piece could fit two categories, choose the smaller one
- Keep your stacks visible and easy to reach

Quick Checklist

- Scraps pressed
- Crumbs sorted
- Swatches sorted
- Cabbages sorted
- Strips and long strips set aside
- Tiny pieces tossed
- Ready to sew feeling

Step 3 — Deciding What to Keep

Some scraps are simply too small to be useful.

Mary's Practical Rule: If it's 2" × 2" or smaller, toss it. Why?

- Tiny pieces disappear visually
- They add bulk to seams
- They slow you down
- They rarely contribute meaningfully to the composition
- Letting them go now saves you from debating with yourself later.

Step 4 — Think Ahead While You Sort

As you handle each piece, ask yourself:

- *How much of this will show after seams?*
- *Is this big enough to be a skinny?*
- *Does this piece excite me?*
- *Does it belong in crumbs, swatches, or cabbages?*

This is where your eye begins to warm up.

Encouragement: Pressing and sorting scraps is a **Zen activity**. It's quiet, tactile, and grounding. Let yourself enjoy the simplicity of it. You're not just organizing fabric — you're preparing your creative playground.

WHY THESE CATEGORIES WORK

These sizes aren't arbitrary — they're practical.

- **Crumbs** spark creativity
- **Swatches** help you grow
- **Cabbages** give you scale
- **Strips** solve problems
- **Long strips** bring it all together

This system keeps your improv flowing without feeling chaotic.

Encouragement: This is your quilt. If you want more categories, make them. If you want fewer, simplify. If you want a stack called “weird little friends,” go for it. **IMPROV THRIVES WHEN YOU TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS.**

LESSON THREE — START SEWING WITH CRUMBS

YOUR FIRST STEPS INTO IMPROV SEWING

Why Start With Crumbs?

Crumbs are tiny, irregular, surprising — and they're the perfect way to warm up your improv muscles. They help you loosen your expectations, trust your hands, and start building without pressure.

Crumbs teach you to respond instead of plan. This is the heart of improv.

Step 1 — Gather Your Crumbs

Pull out the smallest pieces from your scrap stacks (2"–4"). Don't worry about matching sizes or shapes — mismatched edges are part of the fun. If you're like me, this will be a large stack. I take only the crumbs to the sewing machine. Keeping them corralled is easier when they start out in a basket.

Step 2 — Chain Piece Your Crumbs

Chain piecing is the fastest, easiest way to sew lots of small pieces together.

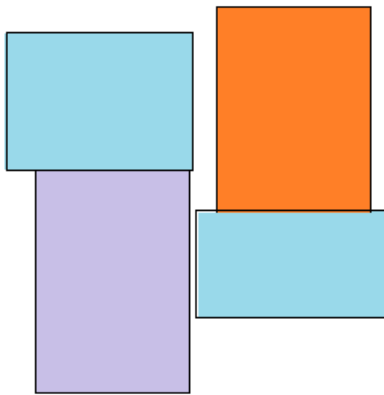
HOW TO CHAIN PIECE

1. Pick up two crumbs.
2. Sew them together.
3. Without cutting the thread, feed the next pair through.
4. Keep going until you have a long chain of crumb pairs.

You'll end up with a cheerful little garland of fabric.

WHY QUILTERS LOVE CHAIN PIECING

- Saves time
- Saves thread
- Keeps your rhythm steady
- Helps you stay in the flow

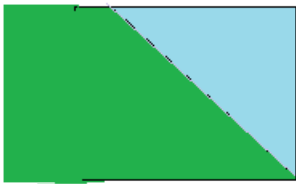


STEP 3 — DON'T WORRY ABOUT MATCHING EDGES

Some crumbs won't line up. Some will be crooked. Some will look like they're arguing with each other. That's normal — and perfect.

We'll fix everything in the next lesson.

Improv isn't about matching — it's about responding.



STEP 4 — A NOTE ABOUT PRESSING

Most quilters want to press right away. In improv, pressing is more flexible.

Mary's Improv Pressing Philosophy

I keep the traditional rules in mind because they make sense, but I don't let them slow me down.

MY GUIDING RULES:

1. Press toward the dark
2. Press away from crossing seams
3. Press skinnies inward when possible
4. Count crossing seams — press toward the side with fewer
5. Press as needed, not constantly

I often sew in marathon fashion and press when I feel distortion starting.

ZEN NOTE: Pressing is a quiet moment. Let it be a pause, not a chore.

ENCOURAGEMENT: This is a time to relax and enjoy the process. Let the crumbs surprise you. Let the mismatches delight you. Let your hands lead the way. You're not trying to make something perfect — you're trying to make something alive.

LESSON FOUR — DOUBLING UP

GROWING YOUR CRUMB PAIRS INTO LARGER IMPROV UNITS

WHY THIS STEP MATTERS

You've warmed up with crumbs. Now it's time to start building momentum. Doubling up is where your improv begins to take shape — small pairs become larger units, and your quilt starts to develop its own rhythm.

This is where your quilt starts talking back. You'll respond, adjust, and follow where it leads.

Step 1 — Snip & Finger Press

Take your chain-pieced crumb pairs from Lesson Four.

- Snip the thread bridges
- Toss them back into the basket

Step 2 — Find Pairs That “Match”

“Match” doesn't mean identical. It means they share *something* — color, value, shape, energy.

Ways Two Pieces Might Match

- Similar value
- Similar color family
- Similar shape or angle
- A pleasing contrast
- A feeling you like

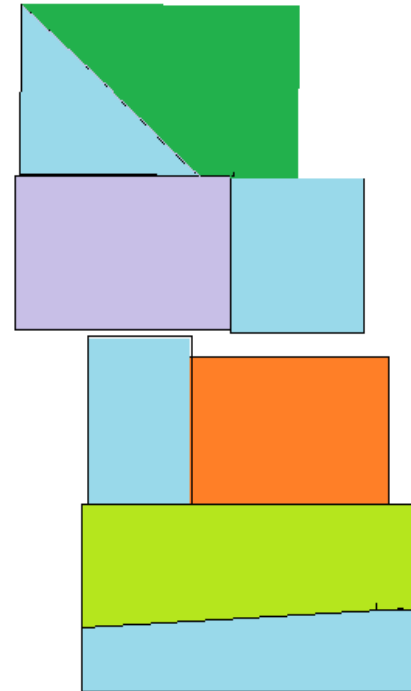
Trust your eye. If two pieces feel like they want to be together, they do. Once you've a pair, finger press them open and stitch.

Step 3 — Sew the Pairs Together

Chain-piece your pairs together to create:

- Strips
- Squares
- Odd shapes
- Anything that feels fun

There is no wrong direction here: improv grows in the direction of your curiosity.



Step 4 — Trim as You Go

At this stage, trimming is light and intuitive.

MARY'S TRIMMING TIPS

- Even edges just before sewing
- Use scissors for quick trims at the sewing machine
- Save rotary trimming for later
- Trim only what you need to keep sewing
- Don't worry about squaring up anything yet

You're shaping, not perfecting.

Step 5 — Press When Needed

I don't press every seam during this stage. Pressing is a tool, not a rule.

I press when:

- A unit starts to distort
- I'm about to add a larger piece
- I need clarity before trimming

- I have a stack of pieces that all need to be pressed

Step 6 — Celebrate Your Growing Units

If your crumbs have grown into swatch-sized units, take a moment to appreciate it. You're building the foundation of your quilt. Press and trim units so you have a clean edge to work with.

Put your largest pieces on the design wall.

- Step back
- Notice patterns
- Notice surprises
- Notice what excites you

This is your quilt beginning to emerge.

Celebrate every stage — improv is built from small victories.

ZEN NOTES

LET THE FABRIC LEAD. You don't have to know the whole path — just decide the next step.

PRESSING IS A PAUSE. Use it to breathe, reset, and see your work with fresh eyes.

VARIATION IS THE POINT. If everything matches, it won't be improv.

TRUST YOUR HANDS. They know more than your brain does. Really.

LET GO OF PERFECT. Perfect is filled with stress. Improv allows you time, space, and play.

TRUST YOUR HANDS. FOLLOW YOUR CURIOSITY. MAKE SOMETHING ONLY YOU CAN MAKE

LESSON FIVE — BRING IN THE SWATCHES

SHIFTING SCALE AND ADDING STRUCTURE TO YOUR IMPROV UNITS

WHY THIS STEP MATTERS

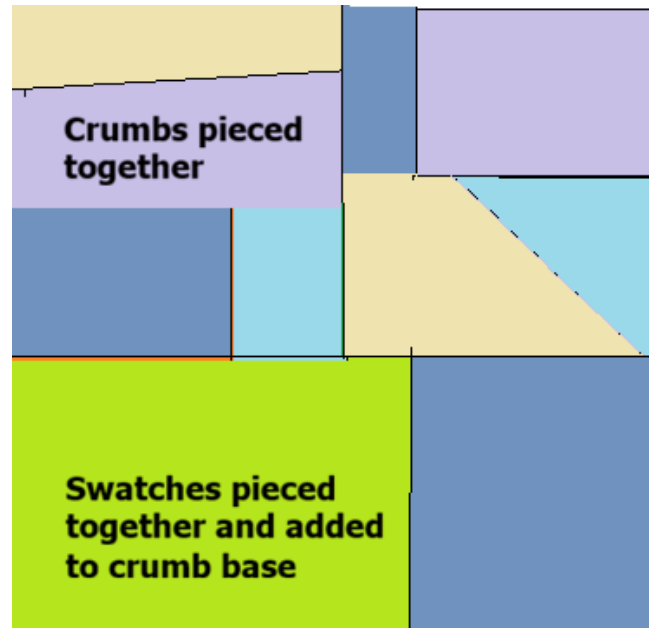
Swatches (5"-8") help your quilt grow quickly and give your composition breathing room. They shift the scale, add contrast, and help your crumbs shine. Swatches are the bridge between tiny play and bold structure.

Step 1 — Mix in the Swatches

Pull out your swatch stack.

If you have only a few swatches: use them now for quick wins and visual interest.

If you have many swatches, you can first sew a few together to speed up the process, then mix them into your doubled-up crumbs.



Step 2 — Play With Scale

Swatches change the visual rhythm of your quilt.

WHAT SWATCHES DO

- Add calm between busy areas
- Create larger shapes
- Help unify color
- Give your eye a place to rest

This is where your quilt starts to feel intentional.

Step 3 — Treasure the Stray Crumbs

You'll find stray crumbs everywhere — under the machine, on the floor, hiding in drawers.

I treat them like little jewels.

- Add them to swatches
- Tuck them into corners
- Let them sparkle in unexpected places

These tiny surprises give your quilt personality.

ENCOURAGEMENT: You're moving beautifully through the improv process. Your quilt is growing, shifting, and becoming something uniquely yours.

Let the swatches open the space.

Let the crumbs add sparkle.

Let your instincts guide the mix.

TRY THIS FOR FUN

COLOR ECHO Repeat a color three times in different places to create rhythm.

VALUE POP Add one unexpected light or dark piece to wake up a quiet area.

SHAPE PLAY Try adding a triangle or curve into a mostly rectangular area.

SCALE SHIFT Place a tiny crumb next to a large cabbage for instant drama.

STRIP SHUFFLE Sew several strips together → cut apart → resew in a new order.

LESSON SIX — GROWING CABBAGES

BUILDING LARGE IMPROV UNITS WITH CONFIDENCE AND PLAY

WHY THIS STEP MATTERS

Cabbages are your big, bold building blocks. They shift your quilt from small, detailed play into larger, expressive shapes. This is where your improv starts to feel like a quilt instead of a pile of pieces.

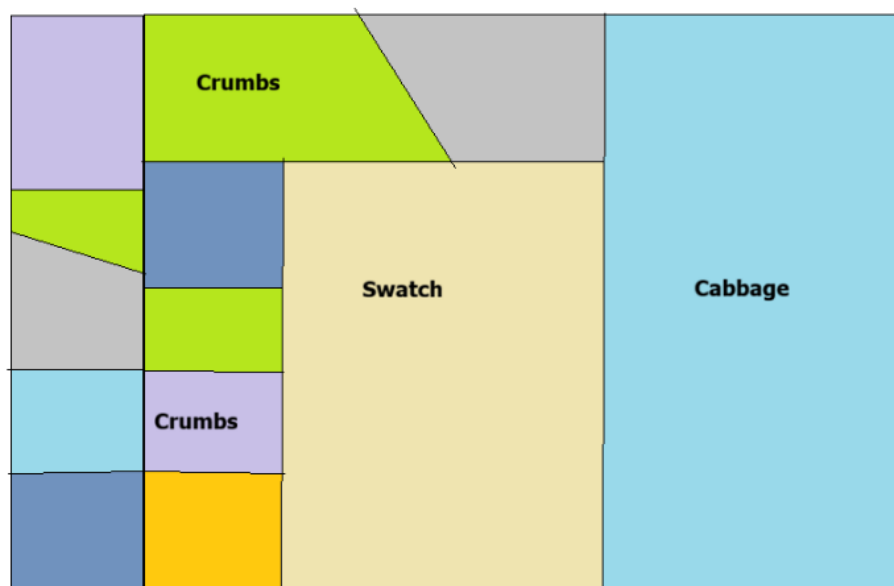
Cabbages give your quilt structure, scale, and personality.

Step 1 — What Is a Cabbage?

A cabbage is simply a large piece of fabric — anywhere from 10" to 16".

It can be:

- One single large scrap
- Several smaller pieces sewn together
- A combination of crumbs, swatches, and strips



Step 2 — Build Your Cabbages

Start with whatever feels right:

- Add a swatch to a crumb unit
- Add a strip to square up an edge
- Add two medium pieces together
- Add a large chunk to a smaller one

Let the cabbage grow in any direction.

TIPS FOR BUILDING CABBAGES

- Keep edges somewhat straight, but don't obsess
- Let the cabbage grow unevenly — that's improv
- Add color where you want energy
- Add calm fabrics where you want rest

Step 3 — Play the Deconstruction Game

This is a powerful improv exercise.

Take a cabbage (or look at the example in your video) and ask:

- *Can I see how this was built?*
- *What was added first?*
- *Where did the maker change direction?*
- *What choices stand out?*

Then try it yourself:

1. Build a cabbage
2. Number each seam in the order you added it
3. Step back and study the sequence

QUICK CHECKLIST

- Cabbages built
- Edges trimmed lightly
- Seams numbered (optional exercise)
- Understanding how units grow
- Feeling confident with larger shapes

This teaches you how improv grows — one decision at a time.

ENCOURAGEMENT: You now have the skills to deconstruct traditional blocks and rebuild them improv-style. If you see a block you love, you can recreate its *feeling* without following a pattern.

Cabbages are where your voice gets louder. Let it be bold, quirky, calm, or dramatic — whatever feels like you.

LESSON SEVEN — USING STRIPS (COPING STRIPS)

Filling gaps, solving problems, and bringing your quilt together

WHY THIS STEP MATTERS

- Strips are your secret weapon. They solve problems, fill gaps, adjust scale, and help your quilt top come together beautifully.
- Strips are the bridge between “almost” and “ahhh, perfect.”

Step 1 — Pull Out Your Strip Stack

If you have many strips, now is the time to use them.

Strips can be:

- Skinny
- Wide
- Short
- Long
- Solids
- Prints

They all have a role to play.

Step 2 — Start Matching Units

Look at your design wall.

Choose two units that are:

- Almost the same size
- Close in width or height
- Wanting to be together

Pin them as pairs.

ZEN NOTES

Let the fabric lead. You don't have to know the whole path — just the next step.

Pressing is a pause. Use it to breathe, reset, and see your work with fresh eyes.

Variation is the point. If everything matched, it wouldn't be improv.

Trust your hands. They know more than your brain does.

Let go of perfect. Perfect is boring. Interesting is better.

Step 3 — Add a Strip Where Needed

If one unit is slightly smaller:

- Add a strip to the smaller edge
- Press the seam
- Sew the two units together
- Press again
- Trim lightly

This is the heart of coping strips — they help everything fit.

Step 4 — Keep Going

Repeat the process:

- Match units
- Add strips
- Sew together
- Trim
- Add to the design wall

You'll see your quilt grow in real time.

Step 5 — Step Back and Look

Every few units:

- Step back 8–10 feet
- Take a photo
- Look at the quilt in your camera viewfinder

You'll see things you can't see up close:

- Color clusters

- Value imbalances
- Areas that need calm
- Areas that need energy

Step 6 — Use Strips Intentionally

Strips can do more than fill gaps.

USE STRIPS TO:

- Separate units that look too similar
- Add more of a color you love
- Create pathways or movement
- Break up busy areas
- Add calm to chaotic areas

ADVANCED PLAY

Sew several strips together → cut them apart → resew them into new units. This is especially helpful if strips are “stealing the show.”

ENCOURAGEMENT: You’re close to the finish line. This is where your quilt becomes whole — not by forcing it, but by gently guiding it.

Strips are your helpers. Let them support your quilt wherever it needs balance.

Quick Checklist

- Units paired
- Strips added where needed
- Units sewn and trimmed
- Quilt growing steadily
- Stepped back to evaluate
- Used strips intentionally

LESSON EIGHT — PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Assembling your improv quilt top with clarity and confidence

WHY THIS STEP MATTERS

You've built crumbs, swatches, cabbages, and strips. You've played, explored, trimmed, pressed, and trusted your hands. Now it's time to bring everything together into a cohesive quilt top.

This is where your quilt becomes whole — not by forcing it, but by guiding it.

Step 1 — Lay Out Your Units

Place all your units on the design wall (or floor).

Look for:

- Color clusters
- Value balance
- Areas of calm
- Areas of energy
- Shapes that want to connect
- Shapes that want space

This is your first full view of your quilt's personality.

Step 2 — Start With the Best Pairings

Choose two units that:

- Are close in size
- Share a color or value relationship
- Feel like they belong together

Step 3 — Add Strips Where Needed

If the units don't quite match:

- Add a strip to the smaller edge
- Press
- Sew the units together
- Trim lightly

This is the magic of coping strips — they help everything fit without stress.

Step 4 — Build Larger Sections

As you join pairs, you'll create:

- Rows
- Columns
- Clusters
- Islands of improv

Let these sections grow organically.

TIPS

- Don't aim for perfect rows
- Let the quilt grow in multiple directions
- Add strips to adjust height or width
- Keep stepping back to check balance

Step 5 — Evaluate the Whole Quilt

Every few seams:

- Step back 8–10 feet
- Take a photo
- Look at the quilt in your camera viewfinder

You'll see:

- Where color needs repeating
- Where value needs balancing
- Where a strip could add calm
- Where a crumb could add sparkle

This is where your artistic eye takes the lead.

Step 6 — Final Assembly

Once your sections feel balanced:

- Join them with strips as needed
- Press seams thoughtfully
- Trim edges lightly
- Square the quilt top only at the very end

Let the quilt tell you when it's done.

ENCOURAGEMENT: You've created something that could only come from your hands, your eye, and your sense of play. No two improv quilts are ever alike — that's the beauty of it.

YOUR QUILT IS A RECORD OF YOUR DECISIONS, YOUR INSTINCTS, AND YOUR JOY. CELEBRATE WHAT YOU'VE MADE.

Quick Checklist

- Units laid out
- Best pairings chosen
- Strips added where needed
- Larger sections built
- Quilt evaluated from a distance
- Final assembly complete
- Quilt top finished with confidence

CONCLUSION — YOUR IMPROV JOURNEY

You've sorted scraps, built crumbs, grown swatches, shaped cabbages, and guided strips into place. You've trusted your hands, followed your instincts, and let your quilt grow one decision at a time.

This is the essence of improv quilting:

- Respond, don't plan
- Explore, don't perfect
- Notice, don't judge
- Play, don't pressure

Your quilt is a record of your curiosity, your courage, and your joy. No one else could have made this — it carries your voice, your rhythm, your sense of color and movement.

Improv is not about control. It's about conversation. And you've learned to speak fluently.

I'm proud of you. Now go make another one.

GLOSSARY — YOUR IMPROV BUILDING BLOCKS

A quick-reference guide for all the scrap types used in this class

Use this page as a quick reference guide while you sew. These categories help you understand scale, rhythm, and how your quilt grows.

Crumbs

Size: 2"–4" **Shape:** Tiny squares, rectangles, triangles, odd bits **Role:** Sparkle, texture, energy **Best for:** Warm-ups, early improv play, adding surprise

Swatches

Size: 5"–8" **Shape:** Medium squares or rectangles **Role:** Breathing room, scale shifts, structure **Best for:** Growing crumb units, adding calm

Cabbages

Size: 10"–16" **Shape:** Large chunks — single or pieced **Role:** Bold shapes, focal areas, expressive moments **Best for:** Building large units, adding drama or calm

Strips

Size: Any width, up to 18" long **Role:** Connective tissue, rhythm, problem-solving **Best for:** Filling gaps, adjusting size, adding movement

Long Strips

Size: Any width, up to 44" long **Role:** Structure, stability, pathways **Best for:** Coping strips, joining large sections, balancing color

Final Notes

These categories aren't rules — they're tools. Use them as guides, not boundaries. Your quilt will grow in the direction of your curiosity.

Improv is freedom with a little structure. Let these definitions support your play.

BONUS SECTION

STUDENT MASTER CHECKLIST

BEFORE CLASS

- Chose fabrics using 60–30–10
- Gathered scraps and yardage
- Set up sewing machine
- Prepared design wall or floor space

DURING CLASS

- Pressed and sorted scraps
- Created crumb pairs
- Doubled up units
- Mixed in swatches
- Built cabbages
- Used strips to join units
- Evaluated quilt from a distance
- Completed final assembly

AFTER CLASS

- Took a photo of finished top
- Reflected on what surprised me
- Shared online using #marymarcotte
- Noted what I want to try next time
- Started gathering scraps for the next quilt

COLOR PLAY PROMPTS

Use these when you want to stretch your creativity.

- **MONOCHROME MAGIC:** Choose one color and explore its full value range.
- **OPPOSITES ATTRACT:** Pick two opposite colors on the color wheel.
- **NEUTRALS + ONE:** Use neutrals with one bold accent color.
- **WARM VS. COOL:** Let temperature guide your choices.
- **UNEXPECTED FRIENDSHIPS:** Pair colors you've never used together.
- **FOCUS FABRIC FIRST:** Let one print lead the whole palette.

COMMON IMPROV PITFALLS

PITFALL 1 — EVERYTHING IS THE SAME SIZE

Fix: Add crumbs or cabbages to shift scale.

PITFALL 2 — COLORS FEEL MUDDY

Fix: Add a strong light or dark for contrast.

PITFALL 3 — QUILT FEELS CHAOTIC

Fix: Insert calm swatches or neutral strips.

PITFALL 4 — UNITS WON'T FIT TOGETHER

Fix: Use strips as coping strips.

PITFALL 5 — FEELING STUCK

Fix:

- Step back
- Take a photo
- Rotate the quilt
- Add one unexpected piece

ZEN NOTES

LET THE FABRIC LEAD. You don't have to know the whole path — just the next step.

PRESSING IS A PAUSE. Use it to breathe, reset, and see your work with fresh eyes.

VARIATION IS THE POINT. If everything matched, it wouldn't be improv.

TRUST YOUR HANDS. They know more than your brain does.

LET GO OF PERFECT. Perfect is boring. Interesting is better.

TRUST YOUR HANDS. FOLLOW YOUR CURIOSITY. MAKE SOMETHING ONLY YOU CAN MAKE