

START SMALL FARMS

A Beginner's Guide to *Kinusaiga*

*Patchwork without sewing.
No needles, no glue, no mess.*

START SMALL FARMS • WORKSHOP GUIDE
WHAT IT IS • WHAT YOU NEED • HOW TO DO IT

START HERE

What is kinusaiga?

Kinusaiga is a Japanese textile art that looks like quilting and involves no sewing at all. You cut shallow grooves into a polystyrene board along the lines of a design, then tuck fabric into those grooves. A sheet of double-sided adhesive between the fabric and the board holds each piece flat, so the finished piece looks like careful patchwork with none of the stitching.

It grew out of a thrifty habit rather than a fine-art tradition. Silk kimono are expensive, and when one got too worn to wear, the good fabric was too lovely to throw out. Cutting it up into a picture gave it somewhere to go. That's why the craft rewards a pile of odds and ends over a trip to the fabric store.

For a first-time maker, that's most of the appeal. No needle to thread, no seam allowance to measure. If a piece isn't sitting right, you pull it out and tuck it again.

1 Cut Shallow grooves along your design lines	2 Peel One section at a time, exposing the adhesive	3 Tuck Fabric pressed down, edges into the grooves
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ALSO CALLED	Patchwork without sewing, or no-sew appliqué
SKILL NEEDED	None. If you can use scissors, you can do this
BEST FABRIC	Quilting cotton scraps. Silk is traditional and slipperier
BEST TOOL	The flat back of a seam ripper. Thin beats thick, every time
MESS FACTOR	No wet glue, no paint, no water. Trimmings are the only mess
PACE	Slow on purpose, and settling once you get going

— *Niki, Start Small Farms*

THE SUPPLY LIST

What you need

The left column is genuinely required. The right just makes it nicer.

THE ESSENTIALS

A polystyrene board

The base your grooves get cut into. Thicker is more forgiving.

Double-sided adhesive paper

Don't skip this. Sheets with a peel-off liner on both sides, not spray.

A seam ripper

The tucking tool, used flat back down. Nothing else we tried came close.

A craft knife

An X-Acto. For cutting the grooves through the paper into the board.

Fabric scraps

Several colors and patterns. Small pieces go a long way.

Small sharp scissors

For cutting each piece of fabric to its template.

NICE TO HAVE

A frame

A shadowbox with some depth suits it better than a flat frame.

Tweezers

For small shapes, where fingers get in their own way.

A cutting mat

Saves your table while you cut the grooves.

A pencil and your design

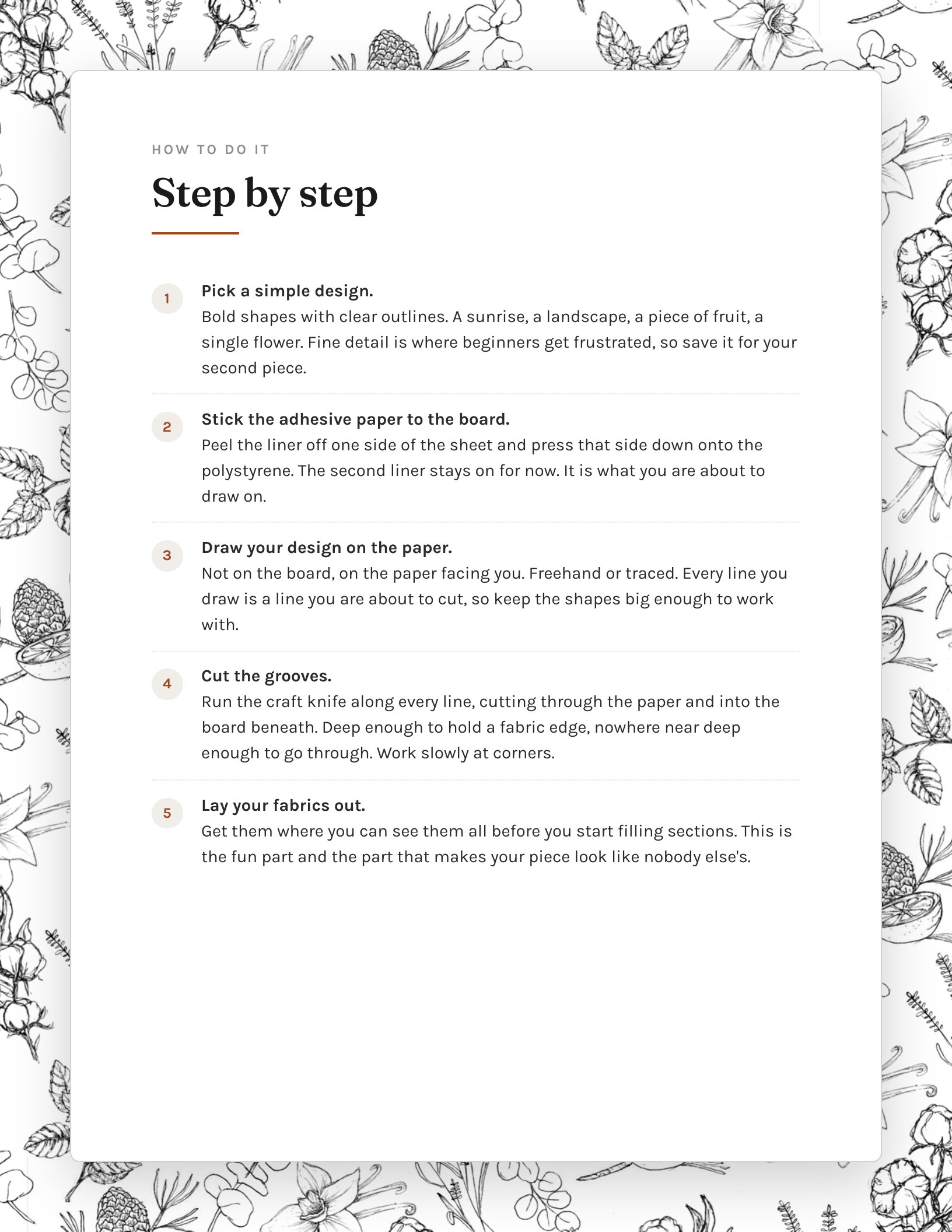
Or a printed pattern to trace. Bold simple shapes work best.

A tray or a few bowls

Sorting fabric by color first makes choosing much easier.

ON THE TUCKING TOOL

Worth being fussy about. We tried a lot of tools and the flat back of a seam ripper won: the right size, and thin enough to slide fabric into a groove. A butter knife is far too thick.

A decorative border featuring various botanical illustrations in black and white, including flowers, leaves, and fruits, framing the central text area.

HOW TO DO IT

Step by step

- 1 Pick a simple design.**

Bold shapes with clear outlines. A sunrise, a landscape, a piece of fruit, a single flower. Fine detail is where beginners get frustrated, so save it for your second piece.
- 2 Stick the adhesive paper to the board.**

Peel the liner off one side of the sheet and press that side down onto the polystyrene. The second liner stays on for now. It is what you are about to draw on.
- 3 Draw your design on the paper.**

Not on the board, on the paper facing you. Freehand or traced. Every line you draw is a line you are about to cut, so keep the shapes big enough to work with.
- 4 Cut the grooves.**

Run the craft knife along every line, cutting through the paper and into the board beneath. Deep enough to hold a fabric edge, nowhere near deep enough to go through. Work slowly at corners.
- 5 Lay your fabrics out.**

Get them where you can see them all before you start filling sections. This is the fun part and the part that makes your piece look like nobody else's.

HOW TO DO IT

Step by step, continued

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Peel one section, and only one.

Lift the paper off a single shape. That exposes the adhesive underneath it and nothing else, which is the whole trick: the rest of the board stays covered and clean while you work.

7

Use the peeled paper as your template.

The scrap you just lifted is exactly the shape of the hole it left. Lay it on your fabric and cut around it, and the piece drops straight into place. No measuring, no guessing.

8

Press it down, then tuck the edges.

Set the fabric onto the exposed adhesive and press. Then work around the shape with the flat back of the seam ripper, easing each edge down into the groove. Go around rather than back and forth.

9

Repeat, section by section.

Peel the next shape, cut it, press it, tuck it. Watching the picture close up one piece at a time is the best part of the whole process.

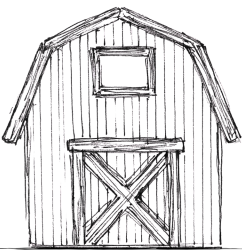
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Frame it.

A shadowbox frame protects the tucked edges and makes the piece look like the finished object it is.

WHERE BEGINNERS GET STUCK

Skipping the adhesive paper is the big one. Without it the fabric shifts and bunches as you work, and edges you have already tucked creep back out. Second: peeling the whole sheet off at once. Go one shape at a time or you lose your templates and the exposed adhesive picks up everything in the room. Third: too thick a tucking tool. Test your groove depth on a spare corner before you commit to the whole design.



**START SMALL
— FARMS —**

Start small.

*You don't need the whole thing
figured out to begin.*

Kinusaiga is the craft we chose for our very first class. If
you try a piece at your kitchen table, we'd love to see it.

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