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Size Matters for 9-Patch Quilt Blocks

The easiest way to determine the finished size of a traditional 9-patch is to measure the center, multiply it by 3. Add ½" for seam allowances to calculate the unfinished size. Conversely, if you know the finished size of the 9-patch block, divide it by 3, then add back ½" to determine the size to make each block element.

For example, if you need a 12" 9-patch block, divide 12 by 3, and the result is 4. Add ½" for seam allowances, and each of the elements needs to be 4½".

Follow this simple chart to work backwards and forwards to determine some common traditional 9-patch sizes and the size of the 9 squares needed to create them.

Square Cut Size	Square Finished Size	Unfinished 9-patch	Finished 9-patch
1"	½"	2"	1½"
1¼"	¾"	2¾"	2¼"
1½"	1"	3½"	3"
1¾"	1¼"	4¼"	3¾"
2"	1½"	5"	4½"
2¼"	1¾"	5¾"	5¼"
2½"	2"	6½"	6"
2¾"	2¼"	7¼"	6¾"
3"	2½"	8"	7½"
3¼"	2¾"	8¾"	8¼"
3½"	3"	9½"	9"
3¾"	3¼"	10¼"	9¾"
4"	3½"	11"	10½"
4¼"	3¾"	11¾"	11¼"
4½"	4"	12½"	12"
4¾"	4¼"	13¼"	12¾"
5"	4½"	14"	13½"

Of course, there are lots of size options in between these dimensions, but the math starts to get pretty strange and the measurements involve using the eighth inch (or less) markings on the ruler to cut the 9-patch elements.

Why does the math get weird? Let's say you want to make an 8" finished 9-patch block. When you divide 8" (the finished size of the block) by 3, the result is 2⅔". The imperial measurement system (inches, feet, and yards) doesn't handle thirds very well, so a possible solution would be to select a finished size from the chart that is less than 8" and add borders or sashing elements to the block to up-size it – just an example of about a million ways to get creative when building your 9-patch universe of quilts!