

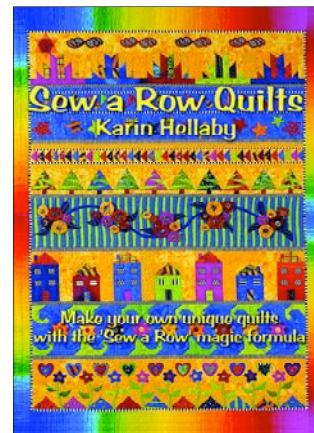
TIPS ON RUNNING A SATURDAY SAMPLER COURSE

Set up your teaching area with demo table and tables showing the latest goodies you want to promote.

Arrange chairs in a semi-circle around tables. Leave space behind chairs for standing room as you don't know how many will arrive and not everyone needs a chair.

Display class quilts to encourage enrollment of other classes, Block of the Month quilts etc.—anything you can promote. Label these with enrollment details and mention them during your demo.

All the techniques covered are explained in *Sew a Row Quilts* book. Each customer must have a copy of this book in order to participate in the course. Make sure you have ordered enough copies for the first month.



Advertise well. Use your newsletter and web site. Get staff to wear badges 'Ask me about Saturday Samplers' in weeks running up to 'kick off'.

At the first session have a member of staff at the shop door ready to take \$5 from each customer before they are allowed into the store. That way they are committed.

We chose to run two sessions so that customers could vary each month as to which session they attended.

The first session was the third Saturday of each month 9 am-9:30 am. The second session was the last Thursday evening of the month 6 pm-6:30 pm. Customers could attend either session. We listed the dates for both sessions on the monthly pack notes. If a session was missed then another \$5 had to be paid!

Not everybody likes the same fabric lines. Choose two colour schemes and mention this when you advertise. Some fabric lines can attract customers to Saturday samplers as they are so recognizable, e.g. Thimbleberries®, Bali Batiks. You may even be able to persuade a distributor to sponsor all or part of the fabric used. We have found that our distributors have been keen to do this as it exposes their fabric lines to the customer.

The first month have fabric packs of each colour scheme made up (we cut 20 of each colourway). If you run out of one or both fabric packs, they are quick to make up and the customers can simply browse around your shop whilst waiting. They may just find more to buy!

The fabric cut for each monthly pack is exact, allowing little room for error. We insist that the blocks must be made up in the fabric provided. If the customer makes a mistake they have to buy more of the same fabric. We keep the fabric bolts in reserve ready for more 'accidental purchases'.

Each month for six months the customer is asked to make either six 4" or three 8" (finished size) blocks. Explain what finished size means i.e. they will have an extra 1/4" seam allowance all around before they are sewn together. Ask the customers to keep the blocks separate until they have decided on the final quilt plan in the last month.

Have each person register. Place their details on a data base for future months. The data base sheet can be used to keep track of your customers.

Let each month be a surprise! Don't tell customers in advance about the techniques you will be covering.

It is a good idea to have another member of staff alongside to speak when you are concentrating on demonstrating each month's technique. Their job is to show any tools you are using and new stock that has arrived in your store the previous month. He/she should be able to sales talk at any moment when you have stopped. Remember you only have 30 minutes so talk to the audience all the time. Try not to have silences that they can be distracted with idle chatter.

Demonstrations should not involve much cutting and sewing. Instead prepare in advance stage by stage samples on the technique you are showing that month in one of the colour schemes you have chosen. This sample pack can then be stored for future teaching. Record on the front of the pack, the technique used, book used and page number for easy reference. By making a stage by stage fabric teaching aid you can concentrate on selling the tools and notions that are used to make the technique easy!

Use a flannel board or have a flannel wall behind you to set up the stage by stage samples as you speak.

Remember to mention classes and other events happening in your store in the upcoming weeks.

After the first demonstration everyone who has registered is given a fabric pack for the month and asked to complete the blocks shown and bring them back to the next session. On producing the completed blocks the following month they will be given a 'free' pack at the end of the next demonstration and so on.

We don't serve refreshments. There is no spare space, sometimes customers are on limited time and we would prefer them to be shopping, not drinking and eating.

Make sure that your shop is open at least 30 minutes before sessions start to allow for browsing and shopping and similarly at the end of the session. Close off your teaching area during this time so customers are encouraged to browse in your shop rather than sitting waiting for you to start the demo.

Arrange to have a large basket full of the items on your shop counter that you are promoting during Saturday Sampler. Customers then have no excuse for not finding things.

The quilt design sheets are given in the final month. This is when you can show the simplest quilt design where the blocks can be sewn into rows and made up into a Quilters Tote bag. Give customers permission to come up with their own design ideas and discuss how extra fabric can be purchased for sashings and borders or to make more blocks in the original techniques. We included a discussion on battings we stock.

The final month is an ideal time to promote the companion pattern book *Sew a Row Projects* as this has the Quilters Tote bag. It is a great way to use the six rows of blocks that have been made.

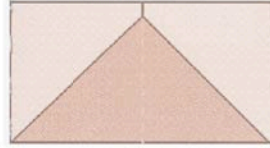
Arrange a date for a Saturday sampler show, say six months from the last class. We have found that customers all have different ideas on how they are going to use the blocks and we want to see them finished. This event would be a great advertisement for the next Sampler course you run. The quilters will want to visit your shop to see their work and others displayed, a great chance to shop some more!

In our experience sales have been very buoyant; customers have a really good time and are keen to come back for more. They have also told their friends about this wonderful 'free' course. The goodwill generated is considerable.

The Saturday Sampler 7 month course using the Sew a Row Quilts book

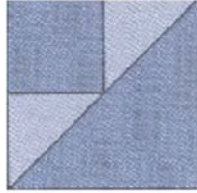
Each month the customer is given fabric to make either six 4" or three 8" blocks.
The blocks can eventually be sewn into rows where two 4" blocks equate to one 8" block

Month 1 - 3D Geese



Two geese make
one 4" block

Month 2 - Squared Up Triangles



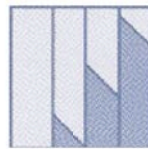
4" block

Month 3 - Applique, stems and Suffolk puffs



8" block

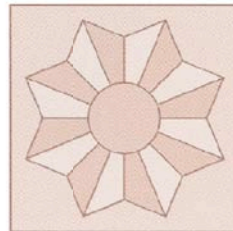
Month 4 - Delectable Mountains



4" block

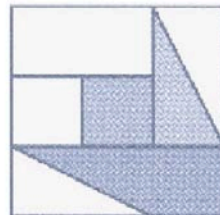


Month 5 - Dresden Daisies



8" block

Month 6 - Foundation Fun - Tulip



4" block

Month 7 - Tote bag, quilt designs.
batting information