

Tumbled Glass

One improvised curve at a time, a whole beach in cotton



1. Finished size

Finished quilt: 60 in x 72 in (152 cm x 183 cm).

Finished block/unit concept: “Pebble” curved units pieced with narrow sand-cream sashing between.

Design note (improvised curves): Each stone is made from a paired, curved improv “half” (an outline and its mirror). No two shapes need to match. Consistency comes from finishing the unit to a chosen size before sashing is added.

2. Materials and yardage

All yardages assume 42 in (107 cm) usable fabric width.

Fabric role	Suggested colors	Yardage	Notes
Main “pebble” stones	Frosted white, pale aqua, sea-glass green, driftwood grey	3 1/4 yd total	Scraps encouraged. Aim for at least 4–6 fat-quarter equivalents across the set.

Fabric role	Suggested colors	Yardage	Notes
Amber accents (lucky gems)	Amber/golden	1/4 yd	Cut a few gem centers or small highlight arcs.
Cobalt accents (lucky gems)	Deep cobalt/ink blue	1/4 yd	Cut a few gem centers or small highlight arcs.
Sashing	Sand-cream	1 1/2 yd	Narrow strips separating stones so the quilt reads as shingle beach.
Backing	Harbor-water tone (solid or subtle texture)	4 1/2 yd	Use a single piece if possible (72 in length). Otherwise piece to 60 x 72.
Batting	Any mid-loft cotton	5 yd	Choose 80/20 or 100% cotton, about 1/2–1 in loft for quilting visibility.
Binding	Driftwood grey or sand-cream	1/2 yd	Enough for ~300 in binding length at 2-1/2 in strips.

Extras you'll likely want: 6"–12" curved ruler or a flexible quilting curve, a rotary cutter, pressing surface, neutral thread, and painter's tape or removable marking pencil.

3. Cutting

This pattern uses a “stone unit” method: each pebble unit finishes to a consistent rectangle size so sashing lays evenly, while the pebble curve remains improvised.

Quilt layout

Stone units: 5 rows x 6 columns = 30 stone units.

Sashing: narrow strips between stones, creating a beach-shingle rhythm.

Finished unit sizing targets

- **Finished stone unit:** 9 in x 10 in (22.9 cm x 25.4 cm)
- **Finished sashing strips:** 1/2 in wide
- **Common assembly allowance:** 1/4 in seams

Working size reminder: Before sashing, each stone unit should be trimmed to **9 in x 10 in finished** dimensions (i.e., including seam allowances). In practice, you'll trim the unit so that when you stitch sashing, it lands on the 9" x 10" finished layout.

Sashing strips

- Cut **1-1/2 in** wide strips from sand-cream fabric. (This yields 1/2 in finished width after seams.)

- Cut enough for both horizontal and vertical runs. For a 5 x 6 stone layout, you need approximately:
 - **Horizontal sashing pieces:** 6 pieces x (10 in) per row boundary = 6 x 4 = 24 pieces at 10 in each (allowing minor trimming)
 - **Vertical sashing pieces:** 5 pieces x (9 in) per column boundary = 5 x 5 = 25 pieces at 9 in each (allowing minor trimming)
- **Border/edge sashing:** Use the same sand-cream to frame the outer edge. Cut additional strips and pieces to complete outer runs.

If you prefer a cleaner workflow, cut extra sashing pieces (at least 10–15% overage) to compensate for improvised stone trimming.

Stone pieces (improvised curve “pebble” halves)

Each stone unit is built from **two curved halves** (a left pebble half and a right pebble half), each half made by improv cutting from the chosen color pair(s). You will then assemble them into a unit and trim.

- **Total stone units:** 30
- **Total pebble halves:** 60
- **Cutting strategy:** For each color, cut several “fat” rectangles or strips that are larger than needed for trimming (example: 6 in x 10 in or 8 in x 12 in).
- Plan for **4–8 improv “scrap starters”** per color to keep variety. You can do 4 stones per 1/4 yd of a given tone if cutting generously and trimming.
- **Gem accents:** Cut 12–18 small curved or wedge-like pieces in amber/cobalt. Each gem should finish around 1”–2” wide at most.

4. Piecing / block construction

Make stone units first. Each unit finishes to a consistent footprint, even though the pebble curve is improvised.

Suggested tools & setup

- Use a **sharp 75/11** or 80/12 needle.
- Press seams as you go: set seams with dry iron, then finger-press and steam as needed.
- Use a **scant 1/4 in** seam allowance if your seams tend to run large on curves.

Stone unit pattern (repeat 30 times)

Target footprint: 9 in x 10 in finished stone unit.

1. Choose your stone colors.

Select 2–3 tones for each unit (e.g., frosted white + aqua, or driftwood grey + green). Optional: place a small amber/cobalt “gem” near the curve’s high point like a lucky find.

2. Cut two improv “half” shapes.

From a larger rectangle, cut a curved profile so that one side will become a smooth outer curve and the opposite side will become the seam line where the two halves meet. Make

the two halves mirror-able (you don't have to perfectly mirror—just ensure similar curvature and match the seam line length).

- To improve accuracy, lightly sketch a curve on the wrong side with a removable pencil.
- As you cut, keep the seam edge straight-ish and consistent in length so the halves meet without puckering.

3. Add a gem (optional).

If using amber/cobalt, place a small piece against the outer curve area of one half, then stitch along its curved edge and trim. Keep it subtle—only a few stones should have gems.

4. Sew the two halves together.

Place halves right sides together, matching seam edges. Stitch with 1/4 in seam. Go slowly through the curve.

5. Trim to unit footprint.

Press seam allowances to one side (or toward the darker tone). Then trim the entire unit to the **unit finished dimensions** before adding sashing. A practical workflow:

- Trace/mark a 9 in x 10 in rectangle on a cutting mat.
- Trim your unit edges to that rectangle while keeping the pebble curve centered and un-warped.

Improved curve success tip: If the seam length differs between halves, don't force the fabric—trim back both seam edges, then stitch again. Small corrections now prevent sashing gaps later.

Color placement guidance (to avoid a grid look)

- Alternate light and medium tones across each row.
- Scatter gems so there's at least one cobalt or amber stone every 2–3 rows, but not evenly—leave empty stretches like real pebbles.
- Keep most pebbles “matte” (frosted/sea-glass). Use driftwood grey to ground the overall value contrast.

5. Quilt top assembly

Assemble the quilt as a grid of **30 stone units** separated by **narrow sand-cream sashing**. The final look should read as shingle beach rather than a patchwork grid.

Layout map

Because all stone curves are different, rely on a physical layout first.

- Draw or tape a 6-column x 5-row layout on a design wall or large floor.
- Place stone units in order (30 rectangles).
- Confirm: sashing widths should be consistent and stone curves should not “bunch” at seams.

Row assembly

1. Join stones within each row using sashing.

Sew vertical sashing pieces between units: stitch sand-cream strip to the right edge of one trimmed stone unit, then to the left edge of the next.

2. Press.

Press sashing seams toward the sashing or toward the stones consistently across the quilt. (Choose one direction and stick to it.)

3. Square each row.

After attaching all stones and vertical sashing in a row, check the row's finished height of 10 in + sashing seams. Trim only if needed, but avoid over-trimming.

4. Sew rows together with horizontal sashing.

Add sand-cream horizontal strips between rows using the same method. Keep alignment by pinning at stone corners and along the midpoints.

5. Add outer frame.

Use sand-cream strips to frame the outer perimeter, matching the same sashing width treatment.

Read-as-shingle adjustment: If any stones touch too tightly and the quilt starts looking blocky, slightly “ease” seam allowances with gentle pressing and keep sashing strips straight. The eye should catch curves and values, not rigid rows.

6. Basting, quilting and binding

Layering

- Press quilt top lightly to remove wrinkles.
- Layer with batting and backing (backing should be at least 4 in larger on each side).
- Baste using spray, safety pins, or thread basting. Because of curved piecing, use **more basting points** than usual to prevent shifting.

Quilting design (two-level motion)

Quilt two complementary systems: **dense pebble motifs** inside each stone and **long tide lines** running across the quilt.

Level 1: Dense pebble-shaped motifs (inside each stone)

- In each stone unit, stitch 1–3 quilt motifs shaped like small overlapping arcs/pebbles, following the interior curve rhythm.
- Stitch density: approximately **1/2 in** apart, but let thicker areas (darker stones) have slightly more spacing if needed for aesthetics.
- Quilting lines should echo the improvised curve without tracing the border seam exactly.

Level 2: Long straight tide lines (edge-to-edge)

- Mark 6–8 straight lines that sweep across the quilt from one side to the other.
- Spacing between tide lines: about **9–12 in** depending on preference.
- Curate the angles: choose a gentle slope so the quilt feels like morning tide moving through still water.
- Quilting stitch length: use a balanced setting (commonly 2.0–2.5 mm) so lines stay smooth and straight.

Thread color suggestion: Use neutral grey thread for tide lines and either matching stone tone thread or a light grey thread for pebble motifs. If you prefer one thread, choose a soft charcoal that won't distract.

Binding

- **Binding width:** Cut 2-1/2 in strips. You need approximately 300 in (7.6 m) of continuous binding.
- **Strip count:** Depending on how you piece strips, plan for about 7–8 strips from 1/2 yd; add extra to be safe.
- **Attach:** Sew binding to quilt with 1/4 in seam. Miter corners.
- **Finish:** Hand or machine stitch to the back. Press to set final shape.

7. Finishing notes

- **Final trim:** After quilting, square the quilt to its finished dimensions (60 in x 72 in). Trim only if needed.
- **Pressing:** Press from the back first to avoid flattening pebble texture. Finish with a light top-side press to set binding.
- **Wash:** Pre-wash if your fabric is prone to shrinkage; otherwise cold wash and tumble low/dry flat recommended for cotton batting.
- **Photography look:** For the “mid-morning harbor breakwater” effect, keep quilting contrasts moderate—dense pebble motifs give texture while tide lines provide broad calm movement.

Optional improvement: If you want even more “improvised pebble” variation, rotate some stones slightly during layout (within the 9 in x 10 in footprint). Keep seam lines trimmed so sashing still fits cleanly.