

SEWING THE BORDERS TO YOUR QUILT

Cindy Roth
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After the body of the quilt has been pieced, gently press it before adding the borders. The logical place to measure the finished top is along its outside edges, but this is the **MOST un-stable** part of the quilt! It is prone to stretching from holding the quilt by it's edges.

Here how to apply square and flat borders to your quilt.

Step one - lay the quilt so the side borders are horizontal to where you are working. Measure from raw edge to raw edge in at least 3 places - usually across the middle and a "little bit" away from the raw edges. I prefer to measure along a seam line that runs the length / width of the quilt. Write these measurements down and then find an average of these dimension.

Example -

Measurement 1 - 72-1/2 inches,
Measurement 2 - 73 inches,
Measurement 3 - 72-3/4 inches.

An average of these measurements
= **72-3/4 inches**.

This is the measurement that I
would cut my side borders.



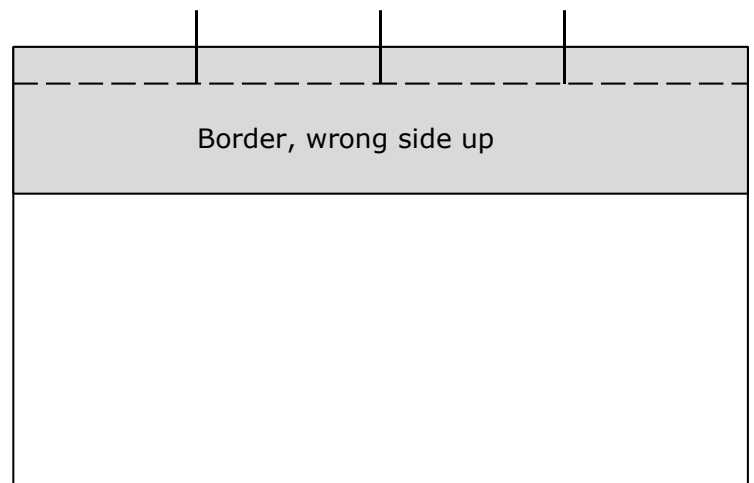
Step 2 - After you cut the border pieces, fold them into quarters and mark the quarter marks with a pin.

Fold the quilt top along the side edge into quarters and mark with pins.

Place the border on top of the quilt, Right Sides Together, and match the (quarter mark) pins and pin these pieces together to hold in place.

Stitch with a 1/4 inch seam.

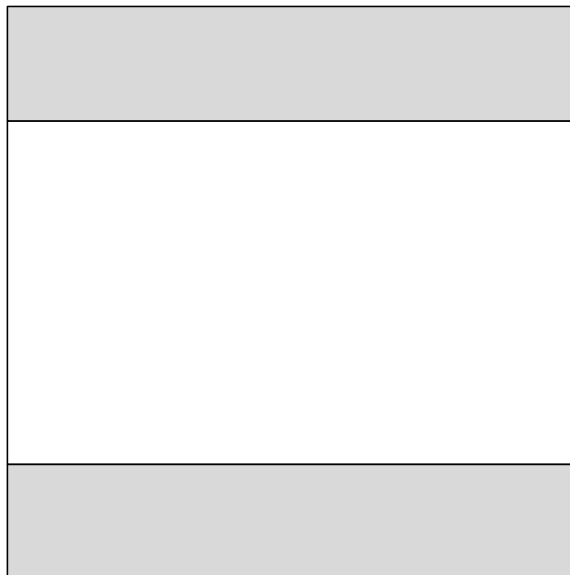
Repeat for the other side edge and press seam toward the border.



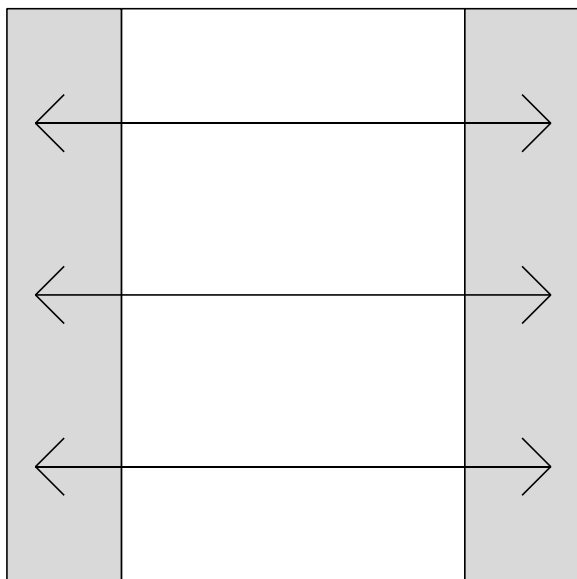
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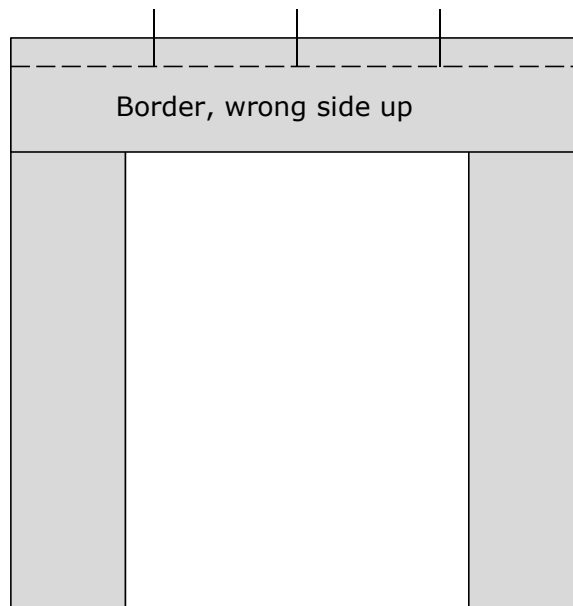
Side borders have been applied and pressed.



Repeat this process for the top and bottom borders.



Measure border and cut to size.



Stitch border to quilt and press.

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Borders have been applied to the quilt and they are flat, square and smooth!

The quilt is now ready for quilting!

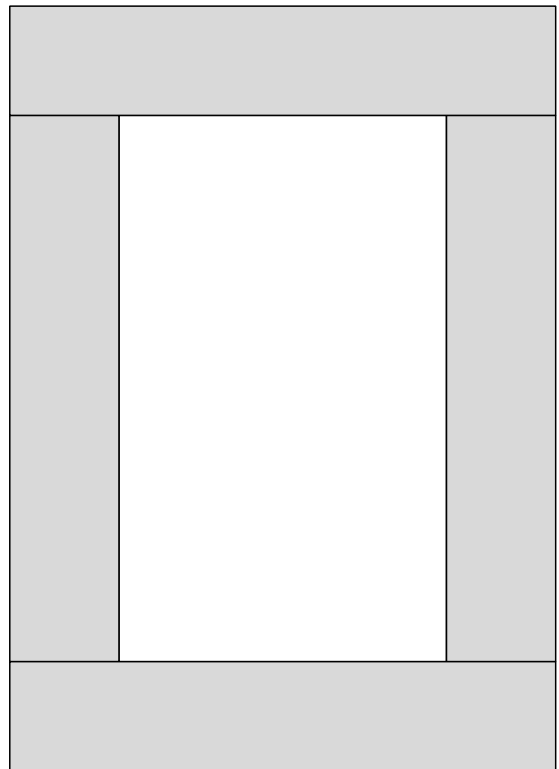
For more information about Borders, go to -

How to Apply Borders Mini Class

<https://www.longarmuniversity.com/Tutorials/Stitching-Borders.html>

Wonky Borders

<https://www.longarmuniversity.com/Tutorials/Wonky-Borders.html>

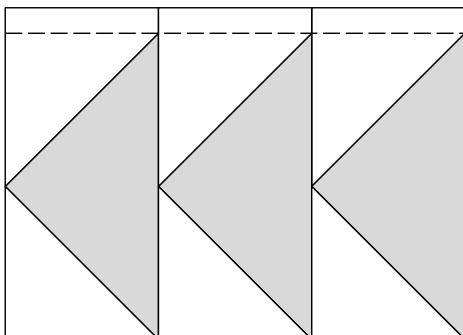


If there are NO borders on the quilt, or the borders are pieced - think of a Piano Key border or a Flying Geese border - you will need to add some "stay stitching" to the edges of the quilt.

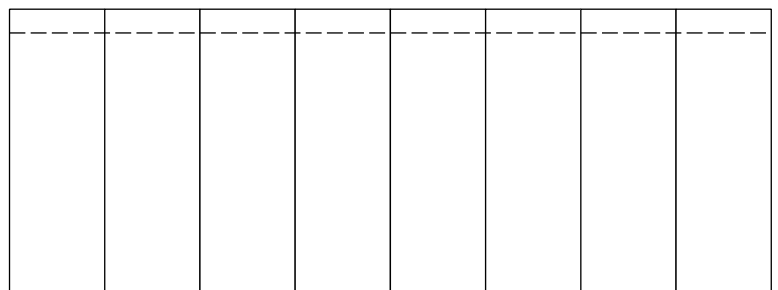
To Stay Stitch - using your home sewing machine, stitch a line about 1/4 inch away from all the raw edges of the quilt. Use a thread that matches the quilt.

The Stay Stitching will hold the seams together while you are quilting.

Raw edge of the border



Raw edge of the border



STITCHING THE QUILT BACK

By Cindy Roth
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Sewing panels of backing fabric together can be intimidating. The instructions below are how I stitch my backing fabric together. Yes, these instructions are different than any other instructions you may have seen or used. With my method you will get seams that lay flat and the backing fabric will be straight at the top and the bottom.

How Much Backing Fabric?

First, figure out how much fabric and how many panels you will need for your quilt backing. Be sure to add a minimum of 6 – 8 inches to the quilt length and width measurements. (3 – 4 inches extra at the top, bottom and sides).

Example, if your quilt is 75 x 100 inches, adding 8 inches to the length and width will make your quilt measure 83 x 108 inches. From these adjusted measurements we know we will need 6 yards of fabric for the backing. (Two panels of 45 inch fabric, each panel 3 yards --108 inches – long for a total of 6 yards of fabric. Personally, I would probably buy an extra ¼ - ½ yard of fabric).

Backing Fabric Shrinkage

If at all possible, **machine wash, dry and press your backing fabric!**

Most fabric shrinks about 3 - 5 % with washing! This may not be a problem when making the quilt top, but it **CAN** be a problem with the backing!.

Example - Your backing fabric is 100 inches long. 3% shrinkage is 3 inches, 5% shrinkage is 5 inches!

The shrinkage could cause a “flat” quilt to become wrinkled and yucky looking after washing.

If you are unable to wash a customer quilt back, I would note that on the Customer Worksheet.

Vertical Backing Seam, Vertical Backing Seam, Vertical Backing Seam!!!

If at all possible, have a **vertical** backing seam!!! Here’s why -

Much easier to put the backing fabric on the quilting machine matching the center back seam to the center markings on the leaders.

You can tell almost immediately if you are going to have problems with the backing laying flat and smooth!

If one side of the backing “sags” and the other side is flat and smooth, this can cause a problem when quilting. You will NOT know this if the backing seam is horizontal!

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If the backing sags on one side, roll the backing back and forth on the quilting machine once or twice to see if the backing smooths out. If, after 2 "roll ups" the backing is still sagging, take the backing fabric off the machine and re-measure and re-stitch the backing seam!

Is this a pain, yes!!! But do it anyway!! In the long run, it will save you a bunch of time and make the quilting much easier!

Avoid like the plague backing with LOTS of piecing!!

You don't know where the back seams will line up with the quilt top. Having a lot of seams on the back and a lot of seams on the front is setting yourself up for thick, nasty seams that you may not be able to quilt over!

NO Horizontal Backing Seams -

If there is "backing sag" with a horizontal seam, you may not notice it until the quilt is quilted and there are pleats quilted into the backing fabric!!

IMHO - It is **much** harder to determine where the center of the backing is and there is much more "quilter's math" involved.

Quilter's Math for a horizontal center backing seam -

Total length of backing _____ inches. Length of quilt top _____ inches.

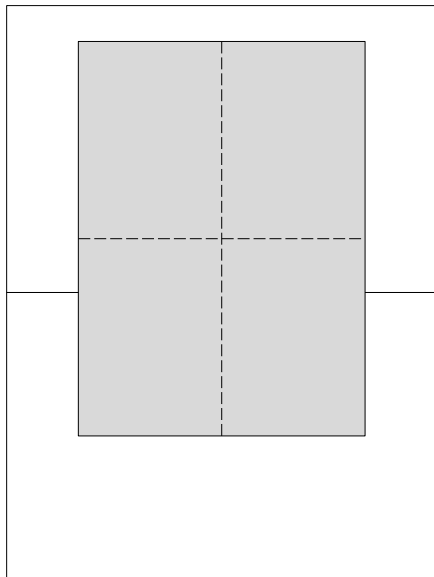
Subtract length of the quilt top from the total backing length.

Divide this number in half (one half for the top and bottom.) Now add about 2 - 3 inches to this number for the fabric needed at the top of the quilt for pinning on, etc. But .. For this calculation we need to subtract this number from the amount trimmed from the top of the backing (trust me, this makes sense.)

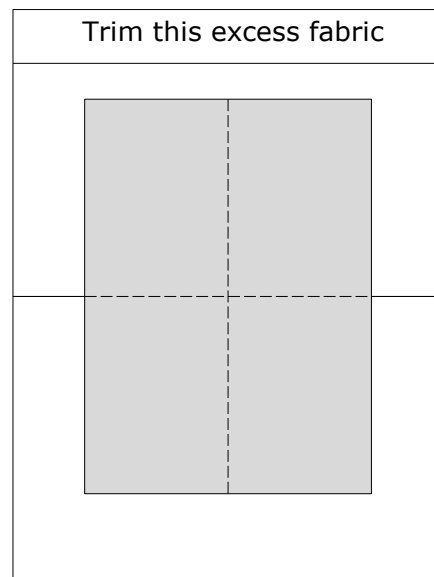
This is the amount of fabric you will need to trim from the **TOP** of the backing fabric before putting it on the quilting machine.

Example - Backing fabric length - 82 inches minus length of quilt top - 60 inches, equals 22 inches. Divide in half = 11 inches. Subtract 3 inches for pinning on the quilt, etc., = 8 inches.

You will need to trim **8 inches** from the **TOP** of the backing fabric so that the horizontal seam is approximately in the center of the quilt!



“Normal” positioning of a quilt top on a horizontal backing seam



Centered positioning of a quilt top on a horizontal backing seam

Cutting Backing Fabric to Size - Vertical Seam

1. Take your scissors and make a small “nip” across the selvedge on one end of the fabric and TEAR across fabric. The tear should go completely across the fabric. If it doesn't, nip, then tear again; slightly lower than the first nip. Tearing your fabric makes a straight edge and makes measuring easier.
2. Measure down the length of the fabric and make another nip at your adjusted quilt length measurement. Example – 108 inches. Tear fabric again.
3. Measure down the length of the fabric again to the adjusted quilt length, nip and tear again. You should have two length of fabric. Fold any remaining fabric and reserve for other projects.

Sewing the Panels Together

4. Go back to the first panel you tore. Take and fold in half along one long selvedge edge (lengthwise) and make small diagonal cut. This will form a notch at the center of the fabric. Fold in half again, to fold into quarters and make two more notches. This divides the length into quarter sections. Instead of making notches, you could use straight or safety pins to mark quarter sections.

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5. Take the other fabric panel and divide the length into quarters. Make sure the edges marked will be the edges that will be sewn together.
6. Place fabric panels, Right Side Together (RST), matching, then pinning edges and notches.
7. Begin sewing RST using a seam that is large enough that the selvedge can be trimmed away and that no "selvedge printing" is showing. You may have to make your seam up to **1 inch wide or larger**. After stitching, both the top and bottom edges should be even.
8. Trim away the selvedge edges. I prefer to use pinking shears but a regular scissors will work. Press seam OPEN.
9. Quilt backing is now ready to be used in your quilt. Note – if you are making a three panel quilt back, repeat these steps for the third panel.

For a (free) video mini class on Sewing the Backing Fabric go to -

<https://www.longarmuniversity.com/Tutorials/Backing-Basics.html>

Splicing Batting Together on a Longarm Quilting Machine

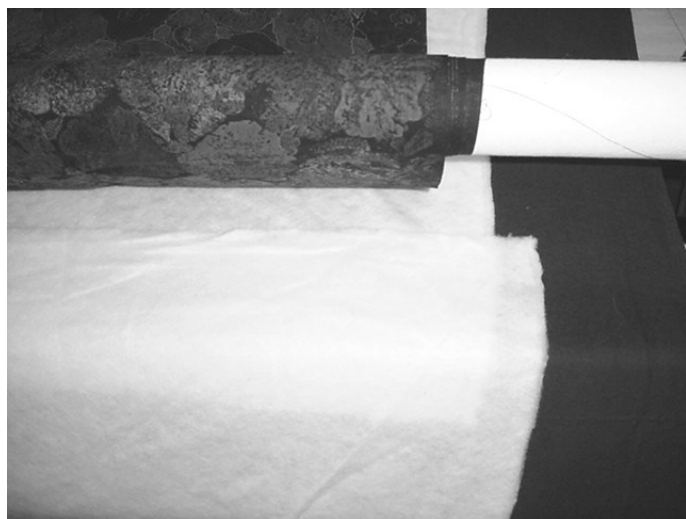
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**For a video on how to deal with batting that is too short, go to -
<https://longarmuniversity.com/Tutorials/Basic-Techniques-6.html#Batt>**

One of the frustrations of quilting is mis-calculating the length of the batting. Even the most experienced quilter can make mistakes like this. (Ask me how I know!) You have measured the top, backing fabric and batting before starting your project, but sometimes, even after all the measurements are taken, the batting, which you thought would be the right length, is too short. This can be a real dilemma, especially if you are working on a deadline for finishing your project.

Here are my instructions for adding extra batting to your quilt while it is still on the quilting machine. This method works best with a quilting machine that lets you lift up the top roller to have access to the batting. Most new models of quilting machine have this option and many of the older machines can be adapted to have access to the batting.

Here you can see that the batting is too short and I need to add another piece of batting to complete my project.



(These photos are of a project was quilting on a Gammill Classic quilting machine with Pivot Access. Backing fabric is 100% cotton Timberjack Chamois Cloth, top fabric is cotton quilting fabric and batting is Thermore Ultra Thin Batting by Hobbs.)

First you need to lift the top roller to expose the batting using the pivot access or similar feature on your quilting machine. Take another piece of batting and lay it on top of the main piece of batting and overlap the battings by 3 – 6 inches. The amount of overlap will be determined by the project and how much batting you need to add.

Take your scissors and VERY CAREFULLY cut a wavy line through BOTH layers of batting. Keep waves moderately gentle being careful not to cut into the backing fabric.

When finished cutting the batting, you will have four pieces of batting -- the main (large) piece of batting and the lower (small) part of the main batting piece AND you will have the new (large) batting piece and the top (smaller) part of the new batting piece. Remove the small LOWER part of the main batting and the small UPPER part of the new batting and discard. You should have two large layers of batting with matching curved edges adjoining.

(Note: Batting pieces have been separated slightly in photo to show the cutting line.)



Carefully move batting so the MAIN batting piece overlaps the NEW batting piece and the curved edges match. I now use Quilt Basting Spray (any brand will do) -- I lift the batting up and spray the basting spray onto the wrong side of the quilt back then position and smooth the batting pieces in place. The basting spray will now hold the batting in place.

Carefully return your machine back to its regular quilting position and you are now ready to continue quilting.

These photos show the batting at the side edges of the quilt top. Notice how the main batting (on the top) overlaps the new batting piece.



Machine Basting A Quilt

Cindy Roth, Longarm University

Updated 2024

There are several reasons why you would want to baste a quilt, or a larger area on the quilt, before quilting it.

- the quilting you are planning on doing will require a lot of “moving around” to get it quilted. The basting will hold the quilt together and eliminate stretching and distortion of the layers of the quilt as it is rolled and re-rolled during the quilting process.

I have recently been quilting panel quilts with larger printed panels. I will do my regular quilting on the “non-panel” part of the quilt, and when I get to the panel area of my workspace, I will change my thread and baste the panel area. Then I will move to my next workspace, baste the panel area, change back to my quilting thread and continue my “regular” quilting. I will do this as many times as needed for the size of the quilt and the size of the panel.

Next I will go back to my basted panel area, remove the basting from the workspace I am working on, and quilt the panel as desired.

- you are working on your quilt and for whatever reason, you need to remove the quilt you are working on and put another quilt / project on the quilting machine. Basting the layers together **BEFORE** taking the quilt off the machine will prevent stretching and make your life a **LOT** easier when you put the quilt back on the machine.

For a Machine Quilting Business

You can offer Basting services - for a fee - to those who hand quilt, quilt using their home sewing machines or have a sit down quilting machine.

Thread - I like to use a high sheen polyester or slippery thread in an “obnoxious” color, usually neon orange or neon pink! The bright color will stand out and let you know where the thread is and the slippery thread is easy to pull out. There are usually less thread “shreds” and if you see them, you can easily remove them.

Cotton or cotton covered polyester thread will also work, but it is a little harder to remove.

If you have a stitch length regulator turn it off and use the **Manual mode** for the stitching.

If you have a Basting Mode on your machine, be sure to check it before using it!

Basting the Quilt

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Set the speed of the machine to about halfway between slow and medium and move the machine at a moderate speed. This will make big stitches, which is what we want! I aim for 3 - 4 stitches per inch.

Follow the stitching diagram on the next page, starting at the top edge and working across the quilt. Or, you could use a large meander / stipple pattern.

I like to baste the quilts this way because my borders are secure (we all know what problems you can have with borders) and all the raw edges are stitched about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the raw edges.

I like to keep the rows of basting about 8 - 10 inches wide, depending on the size of the quilt.

Don't worry if your rows aren't perfect or stitching lines don't "match" properly. You are basting the quilt and these stitches **WILL** be removed at some time.

BASTING A QUILT

Stitching Diagram

