

## Preparing Your Quilt for Longarm Machine Quilting

### QUILT TOP:

- Do not baste your quilt, with pins or any other method.
- Identify the top of your quilt if applicable.
- Piece your quilt top as carefully as possible. If blocks are not the same size, it will not lay flat and might result in causing puckers or pleats when quilting.
- Square your quilt top. The sides should be the same width and length.
- Press your quilt and backing well. Seams should be pressed flat. I like seams that go to one side (rather than pressed open), especially on the backing fabric. I believe this makes the quilt stronger.
- Trim all loose threads on the top and bottom of your quilt. They could show under light fabrics after the quilt top is quilted.
- Quilt top should be free of any embellishments such as buttons, pins, charms, sequins, etc.
- Borders that do not lay flat may cause tucks, pleats or fullness.

### BATTING

- I do not supply batting. Please provide your own. Batting must be the same size and width of the backing.

### QUILT BACKING:

- If you are piecing your backing, cut off all selvage edges. Press the seam either open or to one side.
- Bed sheets are not recommended for backing fabric. However, if you choose to use a bed sheet, please cut off (remove) all folded edges from the edges.
- Make sure the backing is at least 10 inches larger, both length and width, than your quilt top. (Please -- I cannot emphasize how important this is).
- Square up your backing. If folded in half and laid on a flat surface, you should have 90-degree angles on the corners.

### SQUARING UP THE BACKING

- The success of longarm quilting relies on several key issues, one being that the backing is square for proper loading and large enough to quilt the top edge to edge.
- Backings must be 10 inches larger than the quilt top. In other words, if your top measures 70 x 90 then you back should measure 80 x 100 AFTER it has been properly squared.
- No matter how hard you try, if you cut two lengths of fabric or more to piece a back it WILL need to be squared, even if you "tear on grain" the finished product will not be square. Even 108" wide fabric must be properly squared prior to loading on the longarm. - so purchase a few more inches to allow for this. Squaring a back is no

different than squaring a fat quarter for rotary strip cutting, just larger! Find the center of the back lengthwise, fold in half, then carefully smooth the fabric and fold again as necessary to fit on your cutting table. You will quickly notice that the fabric does not line up when it is smoothed out. These rough edges need to be tamed with a rotary cutter. Repeat this procedure for the other side. Then fold the backing widthwise and repeat the process on each of the width sides. Ta-da, now you have a square back! Now press the seams open, trim any loose threads, give it a once over with a good ironing and you are ready to bring it in along with your top for quilting! And you saved a service charge.

- Do take into consideration when you are purchasing your fabric and constructing your backing that you may possibly lose several inches in the squaring process ~ for this reason plan on the back starting out much larger than the intended final result of 10 inches on each side.

#### ELIMINATING THE WAVE IN BORDERS

- When you take a quilt class the teacher concentrates on teaching you the technique to make the blocks then sends you home to complete the quilt top. Patterns and books seem to major on the construction of the blocks and minor on the importance of piecing and applying borders. Oh sure, they tell you to measure, but they don't tell you why...and isn't it much easier to just sew on a strip then cut it off when you run out of quilt top? Sure it is. The problem with this sort of construction is the undesirable end result, especially if your quilt top is going to be put on a frame to be quilted. These so called "wavy borders" will result in pleats when it's quilted. Follow these steps to assure that your borders are not wavy and your top will lay flat when placed on the quilt frame.
- First, take the center measurement of the width of the top. Using that number, cut the top and bottom border to that length. The quilt top may have some fullness in it, if necessary measure in three places and take the average. Fold the quilt top in half and place a pin to mark the center, and then fold in quarters marking with pins. Do the same for the border. Next match the pins and pin the border to the top, right sides together. There may be fullness as the pieces come together, if so, ease this in at the sewing machine, with the fullness next to the feed dogs. Attach both the top and bottom border. Press.
- Repeat the process by measuring the length of the quilt top then cut the side borders to this number. Cut the borders to the measurement, mark the center with a pin and then find the quarter marks as described above. Pin the border to the quilt top, right sides together. Sew, easing in any fullness. Do this for both sides. Press and ta-da, you now have borders that make a square frame for your quilt top! There may be some slight fullness in the center, but this will usually quilt out. The important thing is your borders will be square and therefore your quilt should be square too!