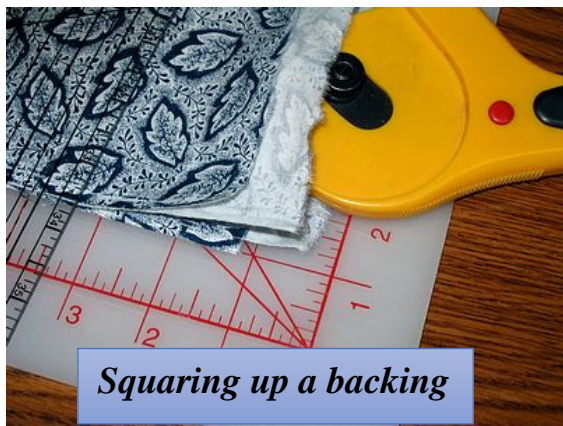


Preparing Your Quilts Tops

Why do longarmers need backing 8" larger than quilt top (4" on all sides)? Because--

- Top and bottom of backing are attached to canvas on rollers.
- Left and right sides of backing are clamped to keep quilt taut. *Don't want clamps too close to quilt top -- can cause pucker in quilt or hinder machine's movement.*
- Side areas are also where longarmers place a piece of fabric to test thread tension before quilting.
- Squaring up the backing can result in several inches being trimmed off.

When you must use the backing you have and it's not quite large enough, you can add temporary strips to the backing top or sides to



Squaring up a backing

accommodate the clamps or pins. *BUT, you don't want the seam of those strips to be located where they will be included in your binding area.*



Quilt "sandwich" on longarm.



See at least one thread of bottom fabric

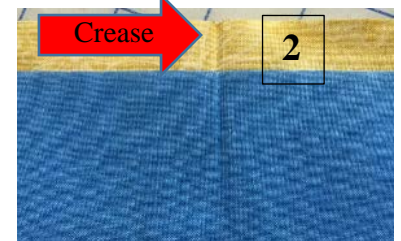
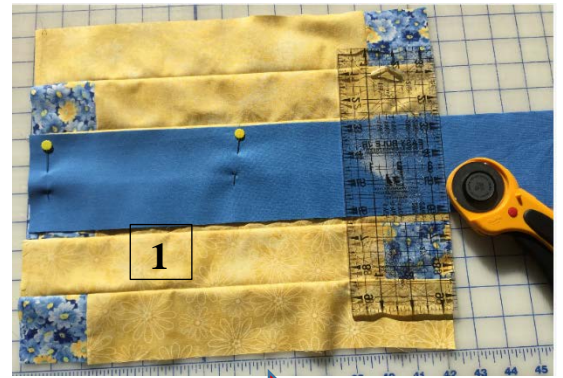
How to avoid open seams. *A tip from Ricky Tims. Always be able to see at least one thread width of the fabric on the bottom. Especially important and difficult when joining long and sometimes heavy rows together.*

How to avoid ruffled borders – Measure before stitching.

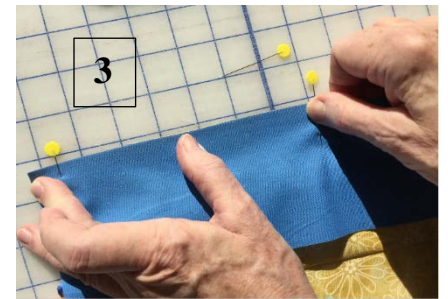
1. Measure across middle of quilt using two border strips



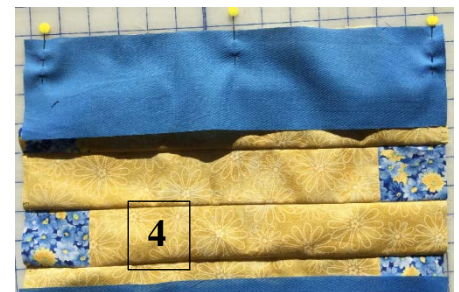
on top of each other as your “measuring tape.” *A tip from Eleanor Burns.* Anchor with pin at one end, smooth both border strips across center of quilt top, using more pins as needed. Then cut at opposite end.



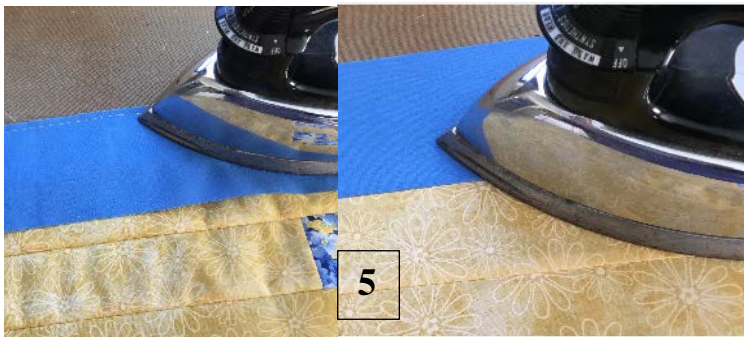
2. Fold the cut strips and quilt top separately in fourths. Mark or *finger press* a crease in each fourth.
3. Pin the strips onto quilt top at the center, at the quarter marks, and at each end. *For large quilts, I use my large cutting table, but you can also do this on the floor.*



4. Ease remaining areas by stretching, if necessary, and pin in place.
To help ease in a fuller side, place the “bubble on the bottom” – A tip from Alex Anderson. That way your feed dogs will lend a lot of help. Remove pins as you go, easing strips between pins as you stitch.



5. After stitching these two border strips, *set* seams with iron then *press open*.
6. Repeat for remaining two borders.



Mitered Joins. Unless **PERFECTLY** executed, mitered joins can also skew borders. Personally, I use straight seams to join all border strips except for binding and mitered corners, of course. *Bonnie Hunter recommends a straight join for borders 3.5" or wider.* <http://quiltville.blogspot.com/2005/06/border-hints.html>



Bulky seam joins can be remedied by either spinning the seams or by pressing open.

Selvages. I think most machine quilters prefer you leave the selvages on the OUTSIDE edges of backing. The nice straight edge helps when pinning the backing onto the zippers. **However,** if you piece a backing, you should **remove selvages within all seams.** *When washed, selvages can shrink almost twice as much as the main fabric.*



Choosing custom designs. If you wish to take part in the selection of the MANY quilt designs available for your custom quilt, *below* is an example of what I can email you to choose from.



(Done using Quilt Path software for an APQS machine (American Professional Quilting Systems.)



Quilting. *Below* is an example of how well quilting shows on plain fabric. Busy fabrics hide quilting. *All applique has been stitched around.*



Stay stitching. If your quilt top has no borders and the seams are not secure, you might need to **stay stitch** about 1/8" around the outer edge of your top.



Example of how nicely the quilting shows on plain fabric