



Border Tips for Square Quilts

Timeless Stitches – Quilt Capital of Kansas

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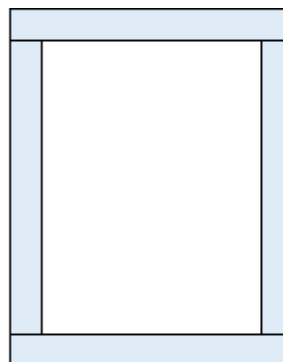
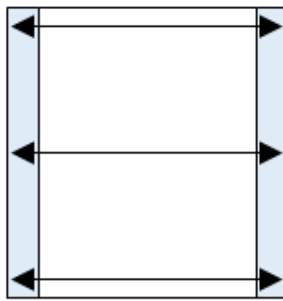
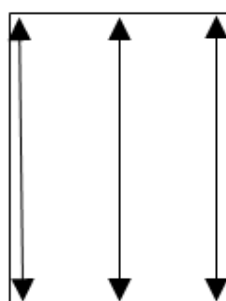
Have you ever seen a quilt top that wouldn't lay flat because the borders were too full? How about a quilt that wasn't quite square? Adding borders properly can make a huge difference in keeping your quilt square as you complete your top and prepare it for machine quilting. Although seeing a wavy border isn't uncommon, there are certainly ways to overcome this issue.

Having wavy borders isn't uncommon, but it certainly can be problematic for your longarm quilter. Too much fullness in your borders can cause puckers or pleats to be quilted in. There are even some longarm quilters who will send a quilt top back to the maker to redo their borders if they are too wavy. Many quilters simply piece width of fabric (WOF) strips together into strips that are longer than their quilt top and sew them on the sides and trim off the excess. As you sew, you may be stretching one layer or the other, often unknowingly. Or the feed-dogs may be pulling at the bottom layer unevenly, thus adding fullness that may be unintended. To fix uneven or full borders, start with these tips that we share when teaching our Quilting Basics classes.

When assembling a quilt top, always try to keep your blocks squared up to the same size. As you sew your blocks into rows, whether adding sashing and/or corner stones or not, check the length of your rows as you go to keep them all of equal length. Once the main part of the top is made, follow these steps to add borders that match your quilt top and help to keep it square.

Typically, side borders are added first and then top and bottom borders that are the full width of the quilt; however, you can make your quilt your way. If you feel your quilt needs the top and bottom borders added first, do the same process as follows, but in reverse.

Once your rows are assembled, measure your quilt top in three places—along both sides from top to bottom, as well as down the center of the quilt. If these measurements are different, add them together and divide the sum by three (3). This average length is the length you want to cut your side borders. Fold them in half twice lengthwise and mark the center and quarters with pins. Fold your top the same and mark the center and



quarters with pins. Match up your pins and pin along the entire side and stitch. If either the quilt top or the border strip has any fullness, ease it in as you stitch. If one layer is obviously fuller, sew with the full layer on the bottom where the feed-dogs can help ease in the fullness. By marking and pinning the center and quarters, you are spreading any fullness in either layer out along the entire length.

After the side borders are on and pressed, measure the width of the quilt across the top and bottom and across through the center to find the average width. Cut your top and bottom borders both this length and, again, pin first at the quarters and center and then across the entire width and stitch. By using this formula to cut your borders, you are creating a square grid in the border around your quilt, easing any added length or width into evenly matched borders.

Another tip is to cut your borders along the length of grain (LOG) or parallel to the selvedge. There is virtually no stretch in fabric along the grain line. The width of fabric, however, has a fair amount of stretch to it and is limited to ~42" requiring borders to be pieced that can be more easily stretched. Purchasing enough fabric to cut your borders length of grain, especially for large quilts, can be a bit more expensive, but in the end, you will love the results. The lack of stretch in the LOG will help keep your borders from stretching or creating unwanted waves.

Measuring your borders properly before cutting and then sewing on borders that are cut to fit your quilt top will make you and your longarm quilter much happier.