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Marilyn Kidd of Beyond the Square Long Arm Quilting is part of the Hen & Chicks Studio professional longarm team. Marilyn offers the following tips for prepping your quilt for the FINISH by your Long Arm Quilter (LAQ).

**REMOVE LOOSE THREADS** As you created your top, threads get between the seams and stick out on top. If they are not removed, the long arm quilting will stitch them down, creating a messy looking top when it is finished. Please take time to remove them before sending your quilt to be quilted. There may be an extra charge if the quilter removes them.

**BACKING** Cut it 6-8" larger (but no more than 12") than the total quilt top. A 50x50" quilt would have backing fabric 58X58". If the backing is greater than 12", it makes it difficult to handle and may result in an additional charge for trimming it to the requested size. If the backing is pieced, remove the selvage edges, use a ½"-¾" seam and press the seams open. Talk to the quilter prior to delivery if you have a back that deviates from these suggestions. It should be flat and square, straight and even.

**SELVAGES** Remove them before cutting your fabric for your quilt and before piecing your backing. The selvage edges shrink differently than the other fabrics. You do NOT want them ANYWHERE in your quilt.

**Quilt Top** Accuracy and pressing seams while creating your quilt top will keep your top square. The LAQ attaches your quilt to parallel bars to create tension. If the quilt is not square, she will do her best to finesse it to square. Attaching borders accurately will help this a lot. A top that lies flat and without spots that stick up will give you a final outcome to be proud of.

**BORDERS** If not applied correctly, they appear wavy or pinched. Your quilter can improve this, but only slightly. Measure your quilt in three places—top, middle and bottom. Average the three for the border length you ultimately attach to your quilt. Line up the ends and the centers. Pin before you sew. This practice will go a long way to giving you a square quilt.

If you have pieced borders or if the border contains any pieces on the bias, please stay-stitch 1/8-1/4" from the edge all the way around your quilt to stabilize bias edges on the outside of the quilt.

If your borders are very uneven, the LAQ may have to take tucks to help bring it close to square.

**PRESSED** Pressing the seams as you create your quilt top will enhance the finished look of your quilt. Give it a final pressing before you take it to be quilted :)m quilter tries to

**BINDING - ALWAYS** cut one more strip than your calculations. If you would like your binding to be machine sewn to the front of your quilt top, cut the fabric in 2.5" strips (WOF) and connect them together with right angles. Cut one strip more than the total measurement around the perimeter of the quilt. Once all the strips are connected, press them in half (the short way), wrong sides together. The binding will be attached to your quilt by machine. Decide if you want it to be machine or hand stitched down. Communicate with your long arm quilter - she may do either service or help you to find someone who will.