



Preparing Your Quilt for the Long-arm Quilter

Quilt Top Preparation

- Seams should be $\frac{1}{4}$ " and ironed down firmly.
- Bulky seams can be pressed open. Please be aware that bulky seams make it difficult to stitch in the stitch or continue in a smooth line.
- Bias pieces or "B" Cups - areas where there is fabric fullness, need to be ironed out.
 - A starch and steam method can be used to ease in the fullness.
 - Using Mary Ellen's Best Press Spray (other starches can make the fabrics stiff), spray the fullness until damp. Using the steam of your iron, without actually ironing on the fabric, let the steam help shrink in the fullness.
 - Another way to dry the starch is to use your hair dryer.
- Stitch seams with a 1.5 or 2 stitch length (2.5 maximum.) A larger stitch length can cause outer seams on the quilt top, and where seams come together to open up.
- Stay stitch $\frac{1}{8}$ "- $\frac{1}{4}$ " around all top edges if your quilt has bias or pieced borders.
- Trim all loose threads. Stray threads can show through, especially dark threads behind cream or white.
- Do not baste, pin, or tack the quilt and backing together.

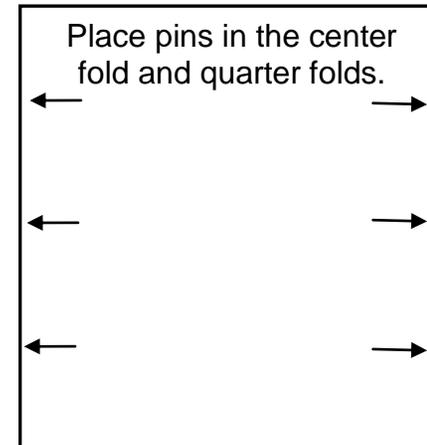
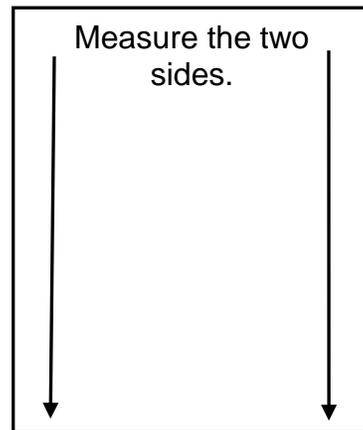
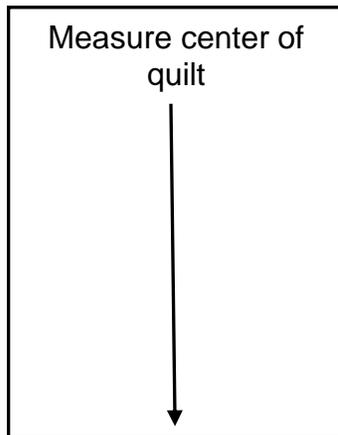
- If necessary, please indicate the top of your quilt and backing by placing a safety pin at the top.
- Measure your quilt top along one edge and again across the opposite edge (width wise.)
 - The two measurements need to be close to the same.
 - If there is more than one inch difference, the quilting will accentuate this and could cause pointed corners, wavy edges or excessive puckering.
 - Adjust the borders to make the quilt square.

Quilt Back Preparation

- Backing needs to be 8" longer and 6" wider than the top.
- If backing is seamed, it is preferable to have a seam the width of the back, not the length. Remove the selvage edge on the seam.
- Some longarmers may prefer no selvages anywhere on the backing.
- If backing is pieced do not iron any seams open. Iron all seams in one direction. Longarm stitching can break threads in the backing if seams are ironed open.
- If your quilt top has been washed, wash the backing fabric also.

Beware of wavy borders on the quilt!

- Measure your quilt in the center and both sides.
- If the difference in the measurements is $\frac{3}{4}$ " , check your piecing. Adjustments may need to be made.
- Cut the border fabric to the average of the two sides and center.
- Fold the quilt in half and mark the center fold with a pin. Fold the sides in to the center and mark those folds with a pin. Attach the border at the center pins, quarter pins and at both ends.
- Repeat the above steps for the top and bottom borders.
- Borders that are too long become wavy and the longarm quilter may have to make pleats, use the starch & steam method, or some other treatment to make the fullness fit.



What to quilt on the quilt?

- Meander: Simple stitching pattern on the full quilt.
- Pantograph: A repetitive design that is the same on the full quilt. Also known as Edge to Edge or Border to Border.
- Light Custom: The longarm quilter may use stencils, rulers, free-motion or a computer system to quilt in the center of the quilt and do simple border treatments.
- Custom: Quilter will do "stitch-in-the-ditch", complicated motifs in squares and other pieced areas, including borders and sashing.
- Heirloom: Show quality quilting using the same type of quilting as Custom but more extensive. Micro-stippling, knotting and burying threads in the quilt.

Quilting Threads

- Do NOT use cheap thread on your quilt.
- Finer (or thinner) threads will blend on the quilt and thicker threads will show on the quilt.
- Quilting thread comes in many weights and plies. Example: 50/3 - 50 weight thread with 3 plies, or strands twisted. 50/2 is the same weight of thread but with only 2 plies twisted so it will be “thinner” than the 3 ply.
- The smaller the number of thread weight the thicker the thread.

Batting Information

- Purchase the best batting you can afford.
- If you purchase the batting to give to the quilter, it must be at least 6” wider and longer than the quilt top.
- The batting you choose makes a difference in how the quilting will look.
- Tell your quilter how your quilt will be used. Baby quilt, bed quilt, wall hanging, show quilt, etc. This will help you and your longarm quilter decide which batting is best for your quilt use.
- Show quilts; it is recommended to use a very drapeable batting. Many quilters recommend using a thin polyester or cotton with wool on top.
- The higher the loft of batting the more definition in the quilting.

Thread Types	
Cotton	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The traditional go-to thread. Comes in many weights and plies.• Gives a soft, matte look on the quilt.• Using cotton thread with cotton quilt fabric means the fabric and thread will use and wash equally.• Long staple cotton thread is best for use on quilts. It is finer and stronger than regular cotton.• Comes in various weights.
Polyester	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be used for decorative effects.• Polyester threads do have some give or stretch to them and work well on quilts.• Polyester can be matte or shiny.• Comes in various weights.
Silk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A great strong fiber for longarm quilting.• It's a natural fiber like cotton.• High sheen on quilts, yet a delicate look.• Most expensive thread.
Metallic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Made from metal strands around a poly core.• Different sized needle needs to be used and tension adjusted.
Rayon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not recommended for longarm quilting. Colors have a tendency to bleed.

Batting Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	Characteristics
100% Cotton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-6% shrinkage • Natural fiber so batting breaths. • Comes in different lofts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often cannot be prewashed. • May have seeds and plant residue that can release oils on the quilt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flatter look when quilted. • Traditional feel to quilt. • Low level of warmth. • Stitch up to 3"-4" apart.
100% Polyester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No shrinkage. • Resilient and lightweight. • Not harmed by moths or mildew. • Comes in different lofts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthetic fibers lack breathability. • Most flammable batting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher loft than cotton with greater stability between fibers. • Soft and drapeable. • Medium level of warmth. • Stitch up to 3" – 12" apart.
Cotton/Poly Blend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-6% Shrinkage. • Offers the softness of cotton and the stability of polyester. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some shrinkage that can be avoided by pre-washing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quilting will show more than 100% cotton but less than 100% poly. • Low level of warmth. • Stitch up to 3" – 12" apart.
Wool / Wool Blends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-8% shrinkage if not done by manufacturer. • Extremely soft and drapes well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have inconsistent loft. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest level of warmth. • Stitch up to 4" apart.
Bamboo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-4% shrinkage. • Long and strong fibers but very soft. • May be blended with silk and man-made fibers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can beard (fibers can migrate out of the quilt.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drapeable as silk and as soft as fine wool. • Very washable with minimal shrinkage. • Low/Medium level of warmth. • Stitch up to 8" or less.
Soy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for allergy sufferers. • Usually blended with cotton. • 1-4% shrinkage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be a fairly thin batting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stitch up to 8" or less. • Low level of warmth.
Silk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-7% shrinkage. • May be combined with polyester or other fibers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive and not widely available. • Can be damaged by exposure to direct sunlight. • May shrink 5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very supple and drapes well. • Stitch up to 4" apart. • Low/Medium level of warmth.
Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-environmental. • Machine wash and dry with little to no shrinkage. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stitch up to 10" apart. • Drapeable like polyester.