

## Backing Preparation

To square up your backing, first determine that you have enough fabric for it to be 4-6 inches larger than the quilt top on all sides after squaring and seaming.

It is almost impossible to have your quilt centered lengthwise as many factors come into play. Density of quilting; thickness of batting are some factors that affect the rate of shrinkage while the quilt is being quilted. That is one reason that you need to have more for the length than the width.

Extra width is needed to not only account for quilting factors, but to have a few inches to attach clamps to help keep the width flat while quilting.

### How do you get a flat, square back?

Even **wide backs** need to be squared. When you buy, fabrics are quickly cut and can be off square by 3-4 inches each side. Plan on buying that much more (9-inches) to allow for squaring. Weft threads go across the width of the fabric and are easily torn to get a straight edge. Do this on both raw edges whether you plan to use the raw edges as sides or top and bottom. If the selvages are the top and bottom of the quilt, they may be left intact. For sides of the quilt, they need to also be torn or cut with a rotary cutter.

If you don't want to tear your fabric, here is how to square: Fold the fabric in half lengthwise (shortest edges together) and hold it while standing. Look for any diagonal folds in the fabric and adjust the edges to eliminate the fold. This will probably mean that the long edges do not meet in a straight line. Lay folded fabric on a table and bring the fold to the long edges to result in four layers of fabric. Hold it up again and check to be sure the new fold hangs straight and adjust as needed. Continue bringing up folds to the first edges and adjusting as needed until the width is small enough to lie flat on your cutting surface. Trim off the excess uneven layers on the short edges. (4 inches may also be lost on each side in this method)

**Piecing backs:** Many quilts have backs that are pieced from 40-inch(or so) wide fabrics. Unless the fabric is **DIRECTIONAL**, the best result is to cut the widths the top measurement width plus 8-inches. Cut the widths before sewing them together so they are exact. Then pin and sew together with ½-inch seams with the selvages removed. Press to one side.

Quilt lengths:

Up to 36-inches; cut one width

From 37 to 72-inches; cut two widths

From 73-inches to 112-inches; cut three widths

After the quilt back is squared, the measurements need to be 4 inches larger than the quilt top on all sides (80 by 100 top should have a 88 by 108 back). Squaring your quilt backing is something you can do yourself or you can pay extra to have your quilter do it. If you do it yourself, you not only save money but you will be sure the back is large enough.