



Distinctive Quilts. Timeless Treasures

Quilt Preparation Guide

A properly prepared quilt top and backing are essential to achieving the best results possible for your quilt. Review our guidelines, then download our [Quilt Prep Checklist](#) and keep it handy as you prepare to ship or deliver your quilt project.

Quilt Top Preparation

Stabilize the Edges of Your Top

If your top has a pieced border, stripy border or block border it is important to stabilize the edges by sewing a close basting stitch, 1/8" to 3/8" along all of the outside edges of the top. You can also reinforce each seam by backstitching a couple of stitches as you assemble the border or border blocks. Reinforcing the edge provides stability and some protection from the seams pulling apart during the long arm machine quilting process. It isn't a bad idea to do stabilize regular boarders, too, as it helps reduce raveling.

Press the Top

Begin by giving your quilt top an all over pressing from the front of the top. Press carefully to ensure there are no pleats or deep folds anywhere on the fabric. Pay particular attention to the seams. As you press, remove any excess threads that became trapped in the seams during the quilting process. Now, flip the top to the back and give it a good pressing. Again, remove excess threads, particularly dark threads that could be visible behind neighboring light fabrics once the top is quilted. Finally, check all seams along the edges to be certain they are secure. See Stabilize the Edges of Your Top, above.

If your quilt has a specific direction, for example directional motifs that should be placed in a particular direction, or you want a specific row of blocks to be at the top of the quilt, mark the edge as the top of your quilt using the appropriate tag from the bottom of our [order form](#) and a safety pin.

Important Note Regarding Embellishments:

If you plan to embellish your quilt with items such as buttons, beads, charms, rick-rack, etc., **please wait until after** it has been quilted and returned to you. Hard items like buttons, beads, crystals, etc. can cause a safety hazard for me, damage your quilt, and damage my *very* expensive machine. *Quilts with embellishments will not be accepted and will be returned, unquilted.* It is best to hold off on the embellishments until your quilted top is returned to you. Besides, your desired placement of those embellishments may shift once the top is quilted and you will achieve a better result if you wait.

Squaring your quilt

Having with a squared* quilt top is the result of proper piecing all along the way. We receive quilts from quilters of all skill levels and understand the learning process. It's ok. Here at Mary's Art Hutch, LLC, we are a no judgment zone. As you gain experience you will develop the skills to achieve a squared quilt every time. In the meantime, here are a few tips to get your quilt top closer to squared.

* by "squared" we don't mean the final shape is a square. Rather, it means that the top and sides meet at 90° right-angles in all four corners. If you plan to scallop the border, wait to trim the scalloped edge after it is quilted. If you like, we can stitch a scalloped cutting line ¼" from the finished scallop during the quilting process.

1. Strive to square your top as you do your piecing. Check measurements all along the way. The greater your accuracy in the early stages the better your results.
2. Once the top is assembled, measure the length in three places; left, center, and right. The three measurements should be close to the same. If the variance is less than $\frac{3}{4}$ ", you will be ok. (For example, $58\frac{1}{2}$ ", $57\frac{7}{8}$ ", $58\frac{1}{4}$ " – they are all within $\frac{3}{4}$ " of each other) Add the three numbers and divide by three to get the average. (In the example, about $58\frac{1}{4}$ ") The result is the LENGTH of your quilt top. Write this number down as the length on your Order Form. If you plan to add borders, this is the length to cut the side borders. If the variance between the three measurements exceeds 1", it is likely there is excess fabric or the seams joining your blocks and rows are not a consistent $\frac{1}{4}$ ". You can recheck your seams and try to get closer to consistent measurements.
3. Next, measure the width in three places; top, middle, and bottom. Again, the three measurements should be close to the same. Add the three numbers and divide by three to get the average. The result is the WIDTH of your quilt top. Write this number down as the width on your Order Form. If you plan to add borders, you will take new measurements after the side borders have been added. If the variance between the three measurements exceeds 1", it is likely there is excess fabric or the seams joining your blocks and rows are not a consistent $\frac{1}{4}$ ". You can recheck your seams and try to get closer to consistent measurements.
4. Small variances can be eased during the quilting process. Variances exceeding 1" will incur additional charges for dealing with the excess fabric. Should it be determined that the borders are at issue:
 - a. Option 1: You correct the borders yourself
 - b. Option 2: We correct the borders at \$25 per hour
 - c. Option 3: Leave the borders "as is" and we can do our best to ease the excess, however, pleats and tucks are unavoidable, and you must accept the pleats and tucks if you choose this option.

Borders

It is best to measure the center section of your quilt top length in three places – through the center, and each edge of the quilt. Take the average of those measurements and cut both side borders to the average measurement. Pin along the border, matching the top and bottom edges. If necessary, ease any excess along the full length of the top and border fabrics. This will ensure that you have flat, non-wavy borders. While some border “wave” can “quilt out”, tucks may be unavoidable. Measure the width at the center, top and bottom. Take the average and repeat the steps above for your top and bottom borders.

We can do our best to quilt out fullness if these instructions aren't followed, but in many instances, small pleats or tucks can't be avoided.

Backing

Your backing must be a minimum of 8" (4" on each side, top and bottom) larger than your quilt top. For example, if your top measures 60" x 80" then your backing needs to be 68"x88". This extra fabric is necessary for mounting your quilt to the quilting frame. Your completed quilt will be returned to you with the backing untrimmed unless you've requesting trimming or binding service. If you can, please square your backing fabric so that it has 90 degree corners. Use straight grainlines for the backing edges. Bias edges will continue to stretch during the framing process. The easiest way to get the straight grain is to *tear* the edges along the grain. If you are uncomfortable or unsure how to do tear on

the grainline, we will do it for you. Just be sure to include a few extra inches of fabric for squaring so the final result is 8" larger than the quilt top.

Your backing can be pieced either vertically or horizontally. To join two lengths of fabric, leave the selvages intact, place right sides together, and stitch using a one inch seam allowance, then trim to half an inch, trimming off the selvedge on the seam. Please leave the outer selvages intact, and press open, your seam allowance.

We prefer quilts with a horizontal seam on the back, but we accept quilt backs with a vertical seam.

Batting

We have a selection of Hobbs Batting including Hobbs Heirloom Premium 80/20, wool and cotton. We also have Hobbs Tuscan Cotton, Tuscan 80/20 cotton/wool, Tuscan 100% Wool and Tuscan Silk (90% Silk, 10% poly). We also have Quilter's Dream batting available in poly, cotton, 80/20 cotton/poly, wool, bamboo blend and silk blend. We continue to test other battings.

Thread

I will choose a complimentary thread color that will let the texture of the quilting shine but not overwhelm your piecing. Please be aware that I use the same or similar color of thread for the quilt top thread as well as the bobbin thread. If you have a high contrast backing the thread choices may be limited.

Thread weight will be determined by the quilting design selected, and whether emphasis on the quilting is desired.

Our prices include either Omni thread, a matte-finish thread, or Glide thread, a shiny-finish tread. Other thread options are available such as variegated threads, So Fine!, Auriful, metallic and others at an additional cost.

Shipping

For internet/mail order clients, please neatly fold your quilt top and backing, *place in a plastic bag* along with your name and contact info. The plastic bag will provide some additional protection during shipping.

Currently shipping, via Priority Mail 2-Day™ Medium Flat Rate Box, is \$14.35. For most sizes, both quilt top and backing will fit this box. Include your completed order form.

Ship to: Mary's Art Hutch, LLC
249 Thorn Brook Drive
O Fallon, MO 63366

For in-person delivery, carefully fold the backing and the top over a thick hanger. Call us at 202.527-0509 to arrange an appointment. All in-person deliveries require an appointment.