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How To Add Borders:

Many quilters add borders by cutting long lengths of fabric, sewing them on and then cutting off the excess. This method may result in “ruffles” being added to a perfectly pieced flat top. These borders are difficult to quilt and often result in a wavy quilt edge with puckers and pleats in the borders. It’s easy to avoid; simply follow the instructions below.

1. Fabric is most stable in the lengthwise direction, parallel to the selvage. Fabric is less stable in the crosswise direction, perpendicular to the selvage. Fabric is the most unstable cut on the bias; any cut on the diagonal can easily be stretched and distorted.
2. Whenever possible, cut border fabric from the lengthwise grain of the fabric. These cuts are made parallel to the selvage. If necessary, join lengthwise grain to lengthwise grain using a straight seam. Avoid joining lengths with a bias cut. (Don’t confuse these instructions with piecing the binding using a bias seam; this is done to reduce bulk and isn’t problematic on bindings.)
3. To stabilize the outer edge of the top, I recommend stay-stitching the outer edge with a long stitch length about 1/8” from the raw edge. This is especially important if there are many seam intersections along this outer edge and will strengthen the top for the measuring and adding borders processes.
4. Take measurements through the **center** of the quilt top and in several other areas. Do not measure at the outer edge. The outer edge measurement is not accurate because of the raw edges and seam intersections. Take an average of these measurements. Using the same tape measure, measure and cut 2 borders along the lengthwise grain of fabric.
5. Lay the quilt top and borders on a large, flat, smooth surface. Find the lengthwise center of each border and mark with a pin. Find the center of the quilt edge and mark with a pin. Match center mark pins and pin together. Match each end of the border with the edge of the top and pin in place. Pin every 3-4” distributing any fullness along the entire length.
6. The edge of the quilt top is probably longer than the borders and will have to be eased to fit. When sewing, think “blousy bottom”; put the blousy or fuller piece on the bottom and feed into the sewing machine in this position. The feed dogs help ease the fullness in. You may find it helpful to sew on the borders using a walking foot. It is not recommended that pins be sewn over, but keeping them in place until just before they go under the pressure foot also helps ease in the fullness and aids in sewing an accurate seam allowance. Press seam allowance, usually toward the border.
7. To determine how long to cut the next two borders, measure through the **center** of the quilt top and borders in several places, but not on the edge. Take the average of these measurements and cut the borders along the lengthwise grain of fabric, parallel to the selvage.
8. The second set of borders is pinned and sewn as described in step #5 & #6.
9. When sewing on multiple borders, continue to measure through the center area of the quilt; average the measurements. Use the same tape measure, measure the border fabric, and cut along the lengthwise grain of fabric.

These steps should help you create a flat, smooth and stable quilt top.