



Holly Casey Quilts

45335 Vista Place
King City CA 93930
(831) 385-3374
holly@hollycaseyquilts.com
www.hollycaseyquilts.com

How To Piece a Quilt Back:

There are many choices of extra wide fabric specifically manufactured for quilt backings. This 108" wide fabric is a great choice and usually very economical. Some quilters like using the leftover fabrics from the top to piece together a quilt back. Others like to use regular width fabric pieced together. All are appropriate, but some require careful measuring and piecing to avoid puckers and pleats in the backing after the quilting is finished. For the most pleasing results, please consider the following when piecing a quilt back.

1. **Back Size:** I need at least 5" extra backing fabric on all 4 sides, more is even better. You'll have some very useable strips after you trim the quilt. I must also make the backing "square", that means that opposite sides are parallel to within 1/4". If you don't have an area large enough to do this, please provide extra backing fabric and I will square it for you.
1. **Fabric grain:** 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. When piecing backing fabric, join lengthwise grain to lengthwise grain. Join crosswise grain to crosswise grain. Avoid large sections of backing cut on the bias.
2. **Measure carefully:** Accurate measuring is just as important when piecing the back as it is when constructing blocks or adding borders. All pieces for the back must be measured, cut to size and pinned every 3-4" when sewing. Small piecwork on the back can have an 1/4" seam. An 1/2" seam is recommended when large pieces of backing fabric are joined. Press the seam open to reduce the bulk; this is not a problem if a small stitch length is used.
3. **Regular width fabric:** When joining a length of regular width fabric (40-44") to another length of regular width fabric, measure and cut 2 pieces of fabric the length required. Remove the selvage from 2 edges. Usually removing 1/2" is adequate. The selvage is under a different tension than the rest of the fabric. If the selvage becomes part of the back, the tightness can distort the back. Selvages on the outer edge can be left. Pin every 3-4" carefully matching the center and the edges. Work on a large, flat, smooth surface. It is not advised to simply join two long pieces of fabric and remove the excess from the longer one; this almost always results in a backing that won't lay flat.
4. **Thread count:** Be careful when mixing fabrics of a high thread count and low thread count. The lower thread count fabric is less stable and can become "blousy".
5. **Making Regular Width Fabric "just a little wider":** Some smaller quilt tops will not fit on a single piece of regular width fabric and it is necessary to add fabric. Turn this into a possibility to get creative on the back. Slice the fabric lengthwise near the middle or some place that creates a pleasing proportion, maybe a 1/3:2/3 ratio. Insert a long strip in the slice using a 1/2" seam allowance. Slicing the main fabric in the middle keeps the piecing seams on the back away from the final finished edge when the quilt is trimmed. Seams on the back that are near the edge of the finished quilt top can be visually awkward and add extra bulk to the binding if they are too close to the edge.

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