

# Midge's Stitches

## TIPS FOR PREPARING YOUR QUILT FOR THE LONGARM

### #1 Whenever Possible, Prewash your Backing

As a Machine Quilter I want my clients to have the best experience possible. One practice I highly recommend is that you prewash your backing. I don't care if the top fabric has been prewashed, but the backing really should be.

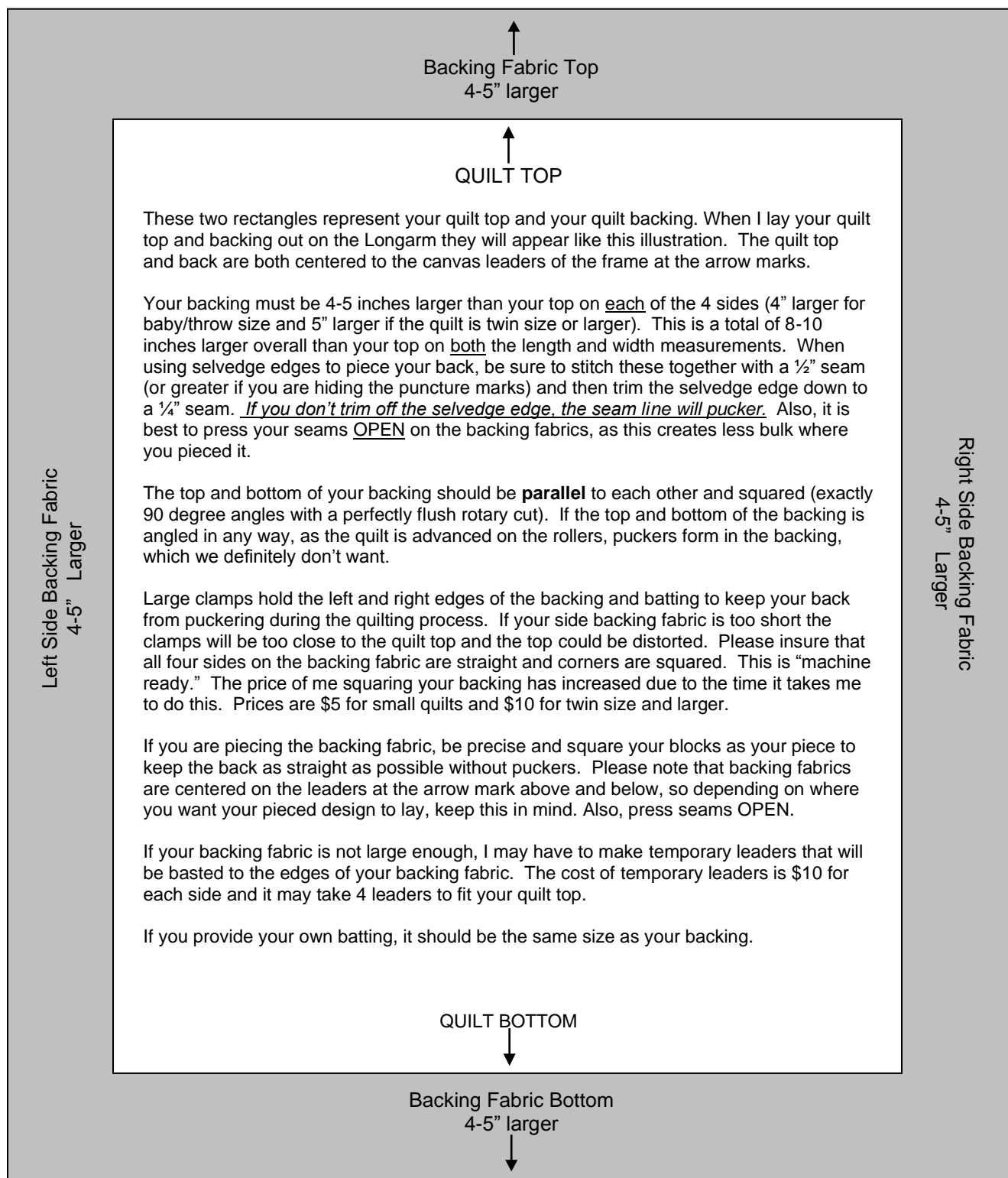
Reason: The fabric purchased in shops these days has multiple times more chemicals, sizing, formaldehyde, etc. on them to keep them looking fresh on the quilt shop shelves. Fabrics did not used to have the amount they do now, but back in the day the average time a bolt would sit on a shop shelf was approximately a year at most. These days a bolt can sit on a shelf in a shop for many years. So, to keep the bolts fresh and crisp and to keep them from fading, most fabric manufacturers have added the extra sizing and chemicals.

When a quilt sandwich is quilted on a quilt with a pre-washed back the needle properly slides through and separates the soft fibers the way it is intended. When a machine quilter quilts a quilt with an unwashed backing, the needle "punches" through the stiff, over chemically treated backing, much like driving a nail through tin or aluminum, leaving the fibers torn and pushing tufts of batting through (bearding). It doesn't happen with every unwashed backing because different fabric manufacturing plants use different amounts of chemicals and formaldehyde in their production.

One thing is certain, a prewashed back "never" will be an issue whether expensive or cheaper discount fabric. So, my suggestion to avoid issues is to prewash your backing. Pictured below, unwashed backing with a new needle.



## #2 Squaring Your Backing Fabric



### #3 Reinforcing Strip Borders

If your quilt top has a strippy border or a border that is not horizontal or vertical in nature, please reinforce those edges by sewing a 1/8" line of stitching along the edge all around your quilt. This helps to keep the quilt top from pulling and unraveling during the quilting process. This is a good idea to do even with regular borders.

### #4 Pressing Fabrics

Please be sure your quilt top and backing have been pressed and are as free of wrinkles as possible. When pressing borders, a great tip is to press your seams VERTICALLY on your ironing board, not horizontally. Pressing horizontally distorts the fabric.

### #5 Loose Threads

Cut loose threads off the top of your quilt top. While I do my very best to remove threads for you, these little critters love getting caught in the foot of the machine, and if caught, they WILL tear your quilt.

### #6 Batting

I carry some cotton batting, mainly 80/20 96" wide. You are more than welcome to purchase your own batting and bring it to me. I'm not a big fan of Hi Loft Poly Battings as they don't do well on the Longarm.

### #7 Borders

After you have spent hours piecing your top, don't rush when putting on your borders. Many quilts have problems in the borders. Here are some tips to ensure your borders will lay flat.

1. Always square your top as you do your piecing and again just before you attach your borders. This helps to reduce fullness in the center of the quilt.
2. Borders are best when cut along the straight of the grain (running parallel to the selvage edge) because there is less stretch to the fabric.
3. Measure all the edges of your top and compare the top to the bottom and then the sides. If any measurement is greater than 3/4 to 1 inch, you should ease in the top before applying your borders. Of course, you could also trim the top slightly if it doesn't interfere with your piecing or pattern design,
4. Once your top measures correctly, square your edges using a large square ruler, if you have one. (I use a 12 1/2" ruler). Line the ruler up on each side (top and side) with the 45° angle line on the corner and trim to square the corners.
5. Attach your borders keeping your seams as straight as possible with a 1/4" seam. Once you attach your left and right side borders (and pressed well), align your 45° ruler along the top and border and trim the borders so that they are flush with the sides of your top. Now, attach your top and bottom borders along the entire edge and trim as necessary before applying any additional sashing or borders.
6. When done applying all your borders, re-measure your top, bottom and sides to be sure your quilt is as close as possible to lining up properly. If not, you may need to do a little more easing.
7. Your quilt top should now be as square as the diagram on the front page of this instruction sheet.

These tips should help you keep your tops laying flat and give the best results possible when on the Longarm.

If there are other questions or concerns you have when preparing your quilt and back for the Longarm, please don't hesitate to give me a call. I'm here to help you create the most beautiful quilts possible.

Midge Flinn

Midge's Stitches  
1112 Acorn Hill Ct.  
Fenton, MO 63026  
[midgesstitches@gmail.com](mailto:midgesstitches@gmail.com)  
636-236-7332 (text or call)  
636-225-0484 (home)