

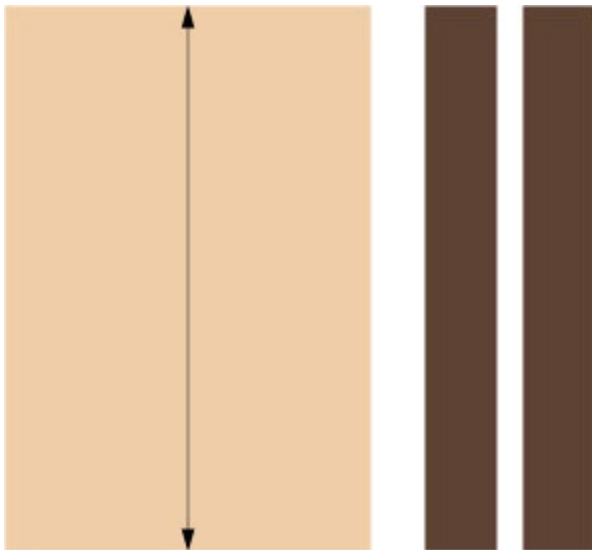
How to Measure and Sew Borders to a Quilt



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Quilting Expert

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Why Is it Important to Carefully Measure and Sew Quilt Borders?



Measure the quilt from top to bottom through its vertical midpoint. Cut or piece two borders to match that length. Photo Credit: © Janet Wickell

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Sewing Correctly Sized Borders Is Important for Quilt Accuracy

It's not unusual for the four edges of an unfinished quilt top to all be slightly different lengths, because the edges of quilts are often stretched out of shape a bit during construction. If the quilt is skewed a bit, and you measure the sides of the quilt to determine border length, the quilt will be just as out of square as it was before borders were added.

Instead, we measure the quilt a bit differently and allow the borders to square it up. The instructions for measuring and sewing straight borders to a quilt can be used to add any type of border

What Are Straight Sewn Borders?

Straight sewn quilt borders, also called butted borders, are quick and easy to sew -- that's probably why they are the most commonly used borders for quilts.

Borders are usually sewn to the two longest sides of the quilt first, and then to the remaining two sides, with the final two extending straight across the ends of the first borders.

Determine the Length of Straight Sewn Side Borders

Measure the quilt from top to bottom through its vertical midpoint.

Cut two border strips that match the measurement exactly, using the width you've already determined looks best with the quilt. Borders made with crosswise grain strips are somewhat more stretchy than lengthwise grain border strips, but either type is suitable.

Piecing for Length: If necessary, piece border strips end-to-end to achieve length. Strips lose 1/4" for each seam it takes to stitch them together, so allow a little extra length when cutting. Sew the strips together along their ends, press seam allowances open to reduce bulk, then trim the strip so that its length matches the measurement in Step 1. Some quilters use 1/2" seams. You could also opt to place a diagonal seam between pieced border strips instead of a seam that runs across each strip's width. Connect the strips with the same technique used for continuous binding strips (you'll need additional length for a diagonal seam).

Border Measuring Option

Some quilters prefer to measure a quilt's length and width in multiple spots, add those lengths together, and then divide the total by the number of measurements taken to determine an average. Borders are then cut to match the average length.

I've always had excellent results using the method explained in this tutorial, but try both techniques to determine which works best for you.

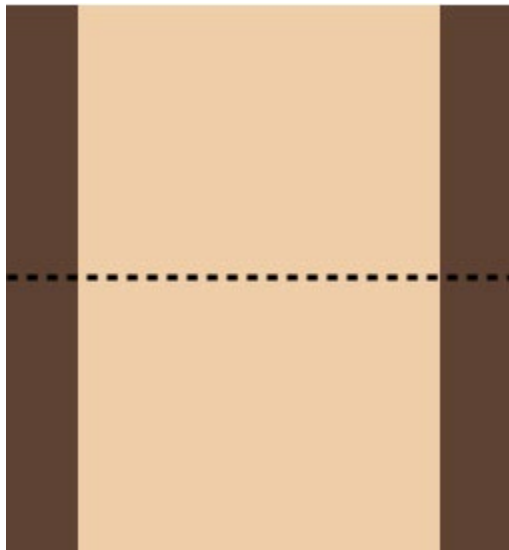
Sometimes It's Good to Sew Borders to the Short Sides of a Quilt First

Sometimes you will find that it's best to add top and bottom borders first to avoid the need for piecing those border strips. Use the same method, but measure horizontally first (rather than vertically) and start at the Short sides.

Determine which borders to sew first to make the best use of your fabric.

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How to Sew The First Two Borders to the Quilt



Side borders shown matched and sewn to the quilt's horizontal midpoint. Photo Credit: © Janet Wickell

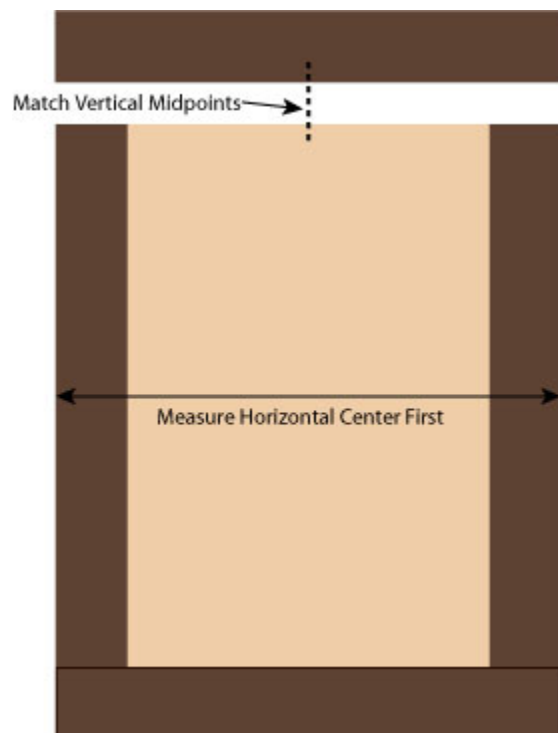
Sew The First Borders to the Quilt

1. Fold one of the borders in half crosswise to find its midpoint, using your fingers to crease it slightly at that spot. Find the quilt's horizontal midpoint.
2. Place the border along the side of the quilt, right sides together and midpoints matched. Pin through both layers at the match to keep fabrics from shifting.
3. Match and pin the bottom end of the border to the bottom edge of the quilt, then match and pin the other end of the border to the quilt.
4. Continue matching and pinning the border to the entire side of the quilt, pinning at close intervals if you must ease in fullness to coax the two lengths to match. Raw edges should be aligned along the quilt's entire side.

5. Sew the border to the quilt with a 1/4" (or half inch if desired) seam allowance, removing pins as the needle approaches them to avoid bending pins and breaking needles. If you had to ease in fullness, sew with the longest piece next to the feed dogs.
6. Press the seam allowance towards the border.
7. Use the same method to sew the remaining border to the opposite side of the quilt.

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Sew Remaining Two Borders to the Quilt



Sew Top and Bottom Borders. Photo Credit: © Janet Wickell

Determine Remaining Border Length

1. Measure the quilt from side-to-side through its horizontal midpoint, including the width of the first borders. Cut or piece two borders that length.
2. Fold a border in half crosswise and crease. Pin the midpoint of the border to the vertical midpoint at the top of the quilt, right sides together and raw edges matched.
3. Continue matching and pinning the border to the quilt just as you did side borders, working with ends first then matching and pinning the remaining length.
4. Sew the border to the quilt with a 1/4" seam allowance. Press the seam allowance towards the border.
5. Repeat to sew the remaining border to the quilt.
6. Repeat all steps To add more borders.