

10 Tips to Better Borders

Tip #1: **Press as you go:** As you were sewing your blocks, you should always press your seams toward the “path of least resistance”. This means pressing the seams to reduce any bulk. Once the top is together, press from the back to ensure the seams are not twisted, then turn over to the front and press well again. Press your border strips too to remove any creases.

Tip #2: **Squaring a pieced top:** Fold the quilt top in half and lay it on a cutting mat to determine if it is square. Use a large square ruler or long ruler to check if all 4 corners are square (90 degrees) and trim the corners only if you can do so without messing up the design or cutoff your points. Using your long ruler, check to see if all the sides edges are even and trim as necessary.

Tip #3: **Squaring a panel:** Panels are usually **NEVER** square! Always remove the selvages and before adding the borders, square a panel the same a pieced top in Tip #2.

Tip #4: **Piecing border strips together:** Again, always remove the selvages from all border strips. There are 2 ways to piece border strips, either straight seams or diagonally. Diagonal seams are less noticeable than straight seams. A Creative Grids Folded Corner Clipper ruler is a helpful tool to making diagonally seams quick and easy, as we will demonstrate.

Tip #5: **Cutting your borders:** To ensure that your finished quilt will be square, borders should be cut to fit the actual finished quilt at the center of the pieced top, **NOT** the outer edges, which are often different on opposite sides. This ensures that the finished quilt will be “square” with 90 degree corners and with opposite edges at equal lengths.

Tip #6: **Measuring your borders:** There are different methods to measure your borders. We find that the “measuring without measuring” method to be more accurate and easier. To do this, first lay both side border strips on top of each other and place them down the middle of your quilt top. Ensure that both strips are straight and even. The ends of the border strips should extend past the quilt top edges slightly. Now trim both borders even with the quilt top.

Tip #7: **Pinning:** Once you’ve trimmed your borders to length it’s time to pin. Find the center of your quilt top and place a pin. Now fold each border strip in half and find the center. With RST, match the centers of the border strip to the center of the quilt top and pin in place. Take the ends of the side border and pin the border to the edge of the quilt or panel top. If you have a large quilt top, you may need to mark your quilt top and border strips in fourths.

Tip #8: **Easing in:** Even after squaring up your top, the top may still be a bit longer on the sides than you border strip requiring you to ease in any fullness. **By “encouraging” the quilt to fit the measured strips, your finished quilt will be square with flat borders!**

Tip #9: **Sewing on your borders:** Sew a consistent $\frac{1}{4}$ ” seam. Be sure to backstitch a few stitches at the beginning and end of each border strip. If your top has a lot of seams on the edges it may be easier to sew with the border strips toward the feed dogs, instead of the border strip on top. Also, you’ll be able to see that your needle is going to hit the intersections properly so you won’t lose your points. Use a stiletto or seam ripper to help keep your pressed seams lying flat.

Tip #10: **Pressing borders:** After adding the side borders, press the seam toward the border. Repeat tips #6 thru #10 to add the top and bottom border.