

Border Patrol!

by Claire Wallace
International Educator for
Handi Quilter
www.quiltastix.co.za or
082 562 5983



Welcome everyone to 2016?! How on earth did that happen?! I'm still wondering where 2014 went and now I see 2015 is finished too! I really can't believe how fast time is flying...but you know what they say when you are having fun!

Today's article is not about free motion quilting on a domestic machine or on a longarm machine. It's not even about hand quilting, but hopefully it will help you to 'iron' out the single biggest challenge I face as a quilter... and therefore, you will face it too.

Borders. How can 7 little letters give us so many problems? Borders that are too long mean you get waves and "Dog ear" corners. Borders that are too short mean the centre of your quilt puffs up and borders around blocks (sashings) cause exactly the same issues. We have ALL been there at some time or another but fortunately, the solution is simple! When I started quilting I used to just cut a strip of fabric and sew it on starting at one end. I soon found out that I didn't get the result I wanted!

Once you have finished your quilt top, it SHOULD lie nicely flat when laid out on a table or clean floor, but we all know that 's not always the case! The problem generally starts with sashings on blocks and blocks that are not all squared up to the same size from the beginning. By the time you have put all these together and multiplied a few millimetres difference over 10 or 12 blocks, you can have quite a challenge on your hands! Then you add borders and boy oh boy what have we got here!

I'm going to share with you the method to add your sashings and borders so that your quilt tops will be nice and flat, square and lovely to quilt.

It all comes down to measuring. Yes, I know; what a pain! But it really is the key. So get out your tape measures and here we go!

Measure your quilt horizontally through the centre and again about 1/3 of the way from each end. Don't measure on the edges of the quilt as these can easily stretch. Ideally each of these measurements should be the same but that is rarely the case! A difference of about 1/2 inch can be worked in without too much problem. If you have a bigger variance than that, then you will have to go back and see where your extra fabric has crept in!

In my example here, (I'm using a block rather than a whole quilt) the top, bottom and middle measurements are 12.5 inches. A perfect block! How lovely!



Cut your border strips to the desired width and length. If at all possible cut them down the length of your fabric rather than across the width. This way you will have much less stretch to your strips which will mean you are less likely to sew in extra fabric. However, cutting across the width is also fine but you need to be more aware of the stretch.

Cut 2 strips to the width of your quilt (12.5 inches in my case).

Fold the strip in half and then half again and mark those centres (you will have 3 markers).

Fold your quilt top edge in half and half again marking these centres.

Match the markers on your quilt to the markers on your border strip and pin. Then pin the rest of the length, easing in any additional fabric or stretching slightly to get the 2 pieces to fit. Doing this will allow any extra fullness to be spread along the length of the border and not all be squeezed in at the end.





Sew your ¼ inch seam removing the pins as you go and then carefully press.



Repeat for the bottom edge of your quilt.

Ok, you now you have the top and bottom borders attached. Next you need to turn the quilt and repeat the process for the side borders - measure through the centre, cut strips, fold to find centres, pin and sew.



If you follow this process you will definitely have a quilt top that is square and lies flat. That translates

into a top that is simpler (and more fun) to quilt!



While we are on the subject of measuring: how many of you measure your binding when you attach it? Have you ever made a quilt that had a wavy edge when you'd finished it?

Bindings are just like any other border - if you don't measure it, you're asking for trouble. Ask me, I know from personal experience! Most of my quilts are relatively small and I'd not had a problem until I put the binding on one of my show quilts called African Fusion.

My perfectly flat quilt ended up with a lettuce leaf edge! I phoned my friend Ina for advice. "Did you measure it?" She asked. Did I what?!!! So I ended up taking the binding off and starting again. By measuring it, I removed 7 inches of fabric, yes, 18 cm of additional binding fabric that I'd managed to sew in the first time round. No wonder it wouldn't lie flat! It happens to all of us! You are not alone but at least you should now be on the right track to making your quilting so much simpler! I know I took a picture of the offending binding and resulting lettuce leaf but for some unknown reason I must have deleted it so can't share it here. But I did at least tell you about my experience!

Happy quilting friends until the next time!

Claire



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