

How to Prepare for a Long Arm Quilter

NOTE: When you send your project to a long arm quilter, the top, batting and backing must be stretched on rollers, as seen here. Prepare the layers according to these instructions to ensure good results.



- * **FABRIC** -- Use good quality 100% cotton fabric.
- * **SEAM ALLOWANCE** -- You may use a seam allowance that is greater than ¼ inch, but **DO NOT** use a seam allowance smaller than that. If any of the seams fray while the long arm machine is in operation, the hopping foot could become trapped by the hole and rip the quilt top. Examine the completed top carefully from the back to check the seams.
- * **STABILIZE EDGE** – If the outer border is pieced, the edge might become distorted when the top is stretched on the rollers. Baste 1/8” from the raw edge, all the way around, to prevent problems.
- * **BORDERS** – Measure the center **BEFORE** attaching borders, so that you’ll be sure how long to cut them.
- * **TEAR FABRIC** – We are told **NOT** to tear fabric, but that is the best way to assure that the grain is straight. Use for wide borders, and for backings. Cut a small notch at the edge with scissors and tear gently.
- * **REDUCE BULK** – Where several seams intersect at one point, press seams open if at all possible. Avoid creating raised areas. Avoid thick layers of stabilizer.
- * **FLAT** – The top must be flat. Check by spreading it on a table or floor. Any areas that stick up might result in pleats, puckers or even damage to the fabric.
- * **EMBELLISHMENTS** – Yoyos, beads, crystals, buttons, ribbons, etc. cause problems with the rollers and with the sewing head. Attach embellishments **AFTER** the quilted project comes back to you.

* **ONE LAYER ONLY** -- If you use pockets, prairie points, loose flaps, etc. an allover quilt pattern will sew right through them; You must request custom quilting if your design uses these elements. Ask if you do not know the difference between allover and custom quilting.

* **MEASURE** – Your top must be square in order to stretch evenly on the rollers. Measure all four sides. If it is off by more than an inch or two, this will cause distortion. Consult an expert quilter about fixing the problem **BEFORE** sending your project to be quilted.

* **SIZE OF BATTING & BACKING** – The back and batting must be at least 6” wider and longer than the quilt top. If the excess gets in the way, it will be cut off.

* **PRESS** – Press the top carefully. Press the backing seam(s) open, unless you use a scrappy back, in which case, you should use the same rules as for the top.

* **BE SURE TO ASK** – If you have questions, your long armer will be happy to answer them. Ask **BEFORE** you submit your project. Good communication ensures good results.

* **SUBMIT YOUR PROJECT** – Do not pin or baste. Fold each layer (top, batting, backing) separately. The layers will be stretched one at a time onto the rollers, as in the photo. Put your project in a bag, not a box.

* **ORIENTATION** – If the top and back are supposed to align in a particular direction, pin a note to the top explaining the relationship. Please be aware that it is not possible to align the top and back accurately. Allow for some “wobble room.”

* **BE SPECIFIC** – Some people let the long armer choose the thread color and quilting pattern. If you let the long armer make those choices, please remember that s/he is not a mind reader. Be very specific about thread colors and quilting patterns that you DO or DO NOT want.

* **BATTING** – Some long armers provide batting as a convenience for their customers. Ask which battings they like to use, and why. If you want a different batting, provide your own. If you have the slightest doubt, it is best to provide your own batting. If your batting is still in its bag, write your name on the bag. Keep in mind that off-white batting might show through the light-colored areas of a quilt. Use a pure white batting that will not create a yellowish cast.



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