

The Best Way to Piece Your Quilt Back

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DbarJ Quilts etc.

Most people who wish to piece a quilt back, and by that I mean sew strips of fabric together that will compliment the quilt top, will just sew a long seam that will run down the middle of the quilt back. Although this works, it is not the best way to accomplish the task. If quilter's would sew their seams across the width of the quilt they would be much happier with the outcome.

The following is a list of reasons why seams across the width is the better way to sew fabric together for your quilt back.

1. When the seam is sewn to go the length of the quilt you don't have to sew as many pieces of fabric together. But, this seam will cause the back to pull funny when it is put in a frame or on a quilting machine reel. The middle of the back, where there is several thickness of fabric will roll up shorter than the outside edges and cause these edges to sag. By sewing the seam across the width of the quilt the back will roll up even, because the seam will be horizontal with the reel.
2. When the back is sewn in the lengthwise fashion, usually the salvage is left on the fabric pieces. This just adds to the thickness of the middle, not to mention that there is 0 give to the salvage. This is also eliminated when the seam goes across the quilt. Although it is always best to cut away the salvage, it will only be a problem to hand quilter's in the widthwise version.
3. The straight of the grain does not stretch, whereas the cross grain of the fabric has just a little give to it. If you make your seam go lengthwise, you need your back longer than the quilt top by several inches (I prefer 8"). When you piece a top you normally have bias pieces as well as a verity of others, some of the pieces may be quite small while others are larger. Every one of those seams are going to have a little stretch in them even when cut on the straight of the grain because of the pull on the stitches. It is not unheard of for a quilt to sometimes grow as much as 2 inches in any direction because of this fact.
4. When you put a quilt back on the reel of a machine quilter, in order to stabilize the quilt you put clamps on the sides while quilting. The cross grain of the fabric will always have a little stretch in it. If the clamps are

attached to the cross grain of the fabric then the mere weight of the clamp will cause the back to stretch a little more wherever it is attached.

5. Putting the cross grain going the length of the quilt also will help you when you go to bind the quilt. Those long sides will not be as likely to turn out wavy.
6. Many times when someone is piecing their back, in order to get it wide enough for a queen or king size quilt they will have to sew three strips of fabric together. One of the strips may just be 8 – 12” wide. Now you end up with one side of the back wanting to roll up shorter and you will have to fight with that droop the whole quilt.

In conclusion: Are you saving money or fabric? Not really, when your Quilter calls you up and tells you that she still has quilt top but the back is a little short. I would say if you were going to do the quilting yourself, go ahead and place the seams wherever you wish. But, if you are asking someone else to work on this quilt then be kind and thoughtful and try to relieve some of the struggle by sewing your seam across the quilt.

I hope this has helped you in some small way with your quilt making process. Unless you have ever used this method and seen the end results of the quilt, you are probably wondering what the big deal is. All I am asking is that you give it a try, you just might like it.