



## **Things to Know Before You Take Your Quilt to a Longarm Quilter**

Listed below are some basic things to remember when preparing to send your quilt top to a longarm quilter. Your quilter will have other specific suggestions and requirements so don't forget to check with them before delivering your top. Good communications between the top owner and the longarm quilter are essential for good working relations and a great finished product!

- ◇ The top and backing material must be squared up. If either piece is a parallelogram or other shape that does not have 90 degree angle corners it needs to be squared before being dropped off.
- ◇ Measure the width of your quilt top horizontally through the center, along the top edge and along the bottom edge. If these 3 measurements vary by more than an inch, you could end up with uneven quilt edges or even small tucks on the back of your quilt. Go back and square up the top by trimming, adding another border or resewing as needed. Make sure to take these same three measurements vertically, as well. Proper repair beforehand saves later heartache.
- ◇ The backing fabric must be between 4 inches and 6 inches larger than the size of the quilt top.
- ◇ If you use spray starch in the piecing process or use inexpensive fabrics with heavy fabric sizing, your top should be washed before quilting. If not, the hard surface of the fabric will 'fight' with the running of the needle and machine thread causing breakage, uneven stitches and a lesser quality of stitching will result.
- ◇ Batting - Check with your quilter to see if you supply it or if you must purchase from them. Most longarmers offer several types of batting for sale and prefer to use batting they know will run with the best results in their machine.
- ◇ When piecers sew, threads can end up everywhere. Long loose threads on a quilt top or back can get tangled with the quilting machine and cause disaster. Remove loose threads. Longarmers usually, automatically remove extra threads when they see them, but this is not their responsibility. (You'll also pay more when you are paying by the hour.) If you have used dark threads on a multi-

colored top, it is up to you to make sure there are no dark threads under a lighter fabric. Remember, the quilter is sometimes working from the back of the machine and not looking directly at the quilt as it is sewn so dark or loose threads are not always caught by them.

- ◇ Never attach embellishments before your top is quilted. The top and backing are loaded onto rollers and then brought together with the batting sandwiched in the center, as it is quilted. The top and back need to be flat and smooth to run through the machine. As mentioned before, the quilter may be working from the back of the machine and not be looking directly at the top as it is being sewn. Hitting an embellishment could damage the machine and make you liable for the repairs. Deliver the plain top to be quilted but after you receive it back; embellish to your heart's content!
- ◇ For best results, press and carefully fold your top and backing before delivery. Longarmers have a surcharge if they are required to press the top or backing before quilting.
- ◇ A few words about pieced backs: Many piecers are making pieced backs for their quilt tops with almost the same number of pieces as the front. Batting and fabrics in the top and back are rather fluid, they have a tendency to shift, move and stretch. They are not like sheets of paper that stack perfectly on top of each other. If you have made a fancy back and want it centered with the front side, talk with your longarm quilter before you deliver them. Your quilter may have some special instructions for you, such as adding more than the standard 4 to 6 inches of extra material in the size of the backing fabric. It takes more time and skill to center a back over a top and have it come out right, so expect to pay a slight surcharge for this feature.
- ◇ Complete all paperwork required before dropping off the quilt whether you leave it with a quilt shop or directly with the longarmer. Leave phone numbers and times when you can be reached and all other important information. Expect to leave a deposit (usually half of the approximated fee) when dropping off and receive an expected completion date. If you must have your quilt before the expected completion date talk with them, many quilters have a rush service, but expect to pay a surcharge. Most longarmers expect you to have full payment at the time of pickup in order to receive your quilt. If this is a problem for you contact the longarmer before the pickup date.

- ◇ Thread color and design choices: You may have something very specific in mind for your quilt or you may want your longarmer to make suggestions. Most longarm quilters can suggest several different ways to quilt your top and may have ideas you have not considered. You should always feel free to talk out what you envision and what the longarmer suggests but ultimately the decision is up to you.
- ◇ It is up to you to fully understand your quilter's fee chart. If you leave the design area incomplete on your paperwork or tell the quilter to quilt it as she thinks it should be quilted; you are turning over the design process to the quilter and this will directly affect the cost of quilting. Upon pickup you may feel that your quilt didn't get the quilting detail it deserved or you may feel it was over done. To avoid disappointment make sure your longarmer understands your wishes and you get an estimate of the cost when the quilt top is dropped off.

I want my customers to be as happy as possible when they get their quilts back from my studio. My customers know I do reserve the right to make a design change, if necessary. I've never had a complaint because something needed to be changed, in fact, they are usually happy to be the recipients of something a little different -- perhaps even special designs made especially for their quilt! There are many different reasons why changing a planned design is sometimes necessary; but most of all it results in a better finished quilt than originally planned. Just be sure you and your longarm quilter understand each other....It's a special collaborative that lasts a lifetime in your quilts!



**Happy Quilting!**  
**Mavis Rosbach**  
**Quiltbird Studio**