

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR BEAUTIFUL STAIRSTEP BORDERS

By the time you begin constructing the borders for your quilt, you have no doubt spent many hours on the rest of your quilt. Why not take a few extra minutes on the borders, to make sure they are as beautiful and perfect as they can be! We have some tips and tricks here that might help you out.

You'll need to begin by deciding if you will create lengthwise or cross-grain borders. Lengthwise borders tend to be more stable, and are great if you are using large prints (florals, etc.), as the fabric won't distort much at the seams. To purchase yardage for lengthwise borders purchase the length of the longest border plus $\frac{1}{2}$ yard.

If you are looking to maximize the use of your fabric choose cross-grain borders. The fabric will have a little bit more "stretch", but you won't have as much fabric waste. To figure yardage for the cross-grain borders add the length and width of your quilt, and multiply by two. Take that product and divide by 40" (since most fabrics don't offer more than 40" useable fabric). This will give you the number of strips that you need to cut. To determine the amount of yardage you need to purchase, multiply the width of your border by the number of strips and add $\frac{1}{2}$ yard. Cut the appropriate number of strips, stitch them end-to-end, press seams open, and then set border strips aside. (Don't cut yet, however, keep reading to make sure you measure accurately before cutting.)

One of the most important factors to creating beautiful borders is measuring accurately. The carpenter's adage applies here: measure twice, cut once. When creating borders, measuring properly is a two-step process. First you need to measure top, middle, and bottom for the horizontal orientation. Take the average of these measurements, and cut the pieces from your preassembled border strips.

Now you are ready to stitch on your first set of borders. We've found that it works best to pin your borders to your quilt, starting in the middle. This way you can even out any discrepancy at the ends of your quilt, instead of having too much border at one end and not enough in the other. Divide your quilt (plus borders) into quarters, and pin one quarter at a time.

Now that you have the horizontal borders sewn on, measure the vertical orientation (left, middle, and right). Use the average of these measurements and cut your vertical borders from your preassembled border strips. Stitch these borders on using the pinning technique described above.

If you are making a quilt that has multiple borders make sure to keep your construction consistent throughout the quilt. If you sew the top/bottom on before the sides, you should do so with each set of borders.

Borders of a quilt are just as important as the quilt itself, so take the time to measure carefully, cut accurately, and stitch precisely, to ensure that your borders will come out perfectly and beautifully!

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