

FREE TUTORIAL: Adding a Border

www.littlepatchpockets.co.uk

No matter how large or small the centre panel of your quilt, or how wide you are planning to make your borders, the secret to keeping your finished quilt top flat and avoiding rippling edges is to cut your border strips to exactly the right length before sewing them in place and to pin, pin, pin. Generally, convention has it that you add the side borders first, but it is entirely up to you. Before starting, press the finished centre panel carefully and square it up if necessary

Measure your panel from edge to edge through the middle and cut two border strips exactly this length and your desired width. By measuring the middle of the panel you will get a more accurate reading than you would at the edges which can stretch and distort.

Lay the first border strip face up on a flat surface then lay the centre panel face down on top, gently smoothing the two together so each end lines up exactly, ease (stretch) the fabric where necessary but don't pull too hard. Put a pin in at each end and one in the middle, then pin carefully all along the length, and I mean really pin – even if you don't usually, it is worth taking time to get it right at this stage

If you are working on a bed-sized quilt you may have to resort to the floor for the pinning part – give it a good vacuuming first and shut the dog/cat/children out of the room while you have pins on the floor.

Sew the layers together with a consistent width of seam (usually $\frac{1}{4}$ inch) pulling each of the pins out as you reach them. By working with the panel uppermost you will be able to see any seams as you sew and can make sure they don't get caught up in the stitching.

Press the seam away from the centre panel and repeat the process with the second strip

Once you have sewn and pressed the second border strip in place, measure this combined panel through the middle and repeat the whole process with two more carefully measured strips.

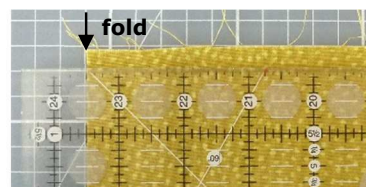
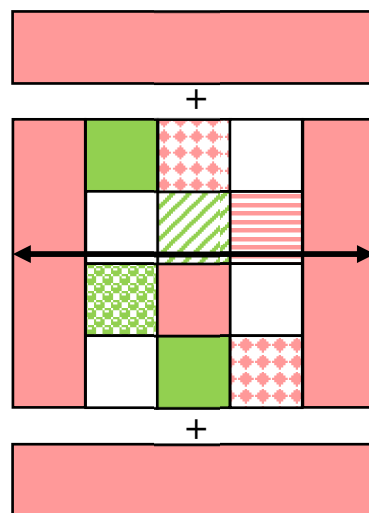
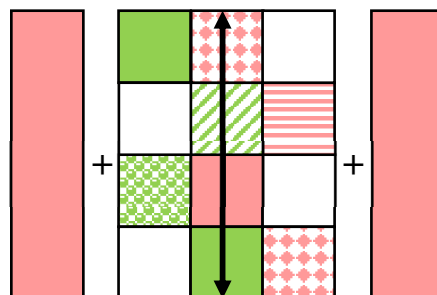
TIPS ON CUTTING STRIPS

Width of Fabric: the easiest way to cut accurate straight strips across the width of the fabric is with a 24 inch ruler and rotary cutter. Fold the fabric in half so the opposite selvages meet and press a temporary fold down the middle. Don't be tempted to make multiple folds in the fabric and cut with a shorter ruler, it is unlikely that you will end up with straight strips

Line up the markings towards one end of your long ruler with the fold and cut across the width of the fabric, thus squaring up one end. It is very hard to get this accurate (without wobbling) if you have the ruler heading away from you. Instead try setting up your fabric so you can place your entire forearm on the ruler and use your weight to hold it in place while cutting across. It takes some practice but it is worth doing for the sake of accurate fabric strips. Once you have made this first cut to square up the fabric you can then turn the fabric round (keeping the cut edges together carefully) and use this edge to measure your desired width of strips from

Longer strips: these can be cut down the length of the fabric. Press the whole piece of fabric and fold so that the selvages on one side meet, and fold again likewise. (With a lovely fresh, sharp rotary cutter blade you can easily cut through four layers of fabric.) Pin the very edges of the selvedge together and smooth the fabric out making sure all the folds stay in place. You can now use this pinned edge – which by default must be straight – to use as the starting point to cut your strips. Cut your first strip over wide, so you trim off the selvedge to get your chosen width of border strip.

Joining strips: Cut your strips to the desired width and make sure the short ends are square to the long sides, including cutting off any selvages. Place two strips right sides together and stitch with a consistent seam. Press the seam open and check that the long edges form a continuous straight line



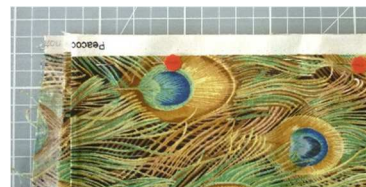
Line up ruler on fold



Avoid reaching to cut strips



Clamp the ruler with your arm



Pin selvages for long strips