

Baby's Got Back!

Why piece the back?

First, let's think about it. I have lots of FQs ($\frac{1}{2}$ yd is really 2 FQs; 1 yd is really 4 FQs; and a FQ is well a FQ). At this point I know everyone has plenty of fabric in their stash to make quilt back of any size without going shopping if we base the back on using FQs.

Second, if we calculate everything up front and then do the all cutting...we are set to speed sew without thinking about it.

Third, after spending oodles of dollars to get our quilts quilted why aren't we making the back almost as fun as the front? At some point, we are going to see the back of the quilt even if it's a wall hanging. Trust me your friends peek at the back of your quilts when you're not looking so surprise them with a WOW!

Fourth, you can stop buying such large hunks of fabric thinking you need a back. Focus on buying stuff you just love and now it doesn't matter which side of the quilt it's used. Come on, with little to no effort you can make a two sided quilt.

Let's do the math, easy prep and get ready to speed sew. Now that's what I'm talking about! This is Gyleen's Official Pieced Back based on Fat Quarters. It's easier to explain by doing; just switch your numbers for mine and you're all set. Oh, this is also easier to do if you don't think about it. Just follow the directions without your brain.

Supplies: 15" square ruler, rotary cutter and mat; paper and pencil; and calculator.

Example: 45" x 45" quilt top.

Measure width and length of quilt top then add 8" for width and length of quilt back. This assumes you will need 4" on each side so the quilt can be loaded on a long arm machine.

Width of back: $45" + 8 = 53"$

Length of back: $45" + 8 = 53"$

Divide width and length by 15" (size of square ruler) for the number of whole blocks.

Number of blocks for width: $53/15 = 3$ blocks

Number of blocks for length: $53/15 = 3$ blocks

Now draw a grid (free hand is fine) which is 3 blocks across and 3 blocks down. The edge blocks will finish at 14.75" and the center blocks finish at 14.5". Add up the distance used so far in both width and length.

Width edge blocks + center blocks = distance used.

Distance used in width: $14.75 + 14.5 + 14.75 = 44"$ used.

Distance used in length: $14.75 + 14.5 + 14.75 = 44"$ used.

Subtract distance used from quilt back. Width of quilt back – width distance used = width for sashing. A note about sashing: I recommend sashing wider than 2" and less than 6.5". Anything else looks too skinny or chunky to me. So you may need to divide the sashing into strips or bump it up a tad to make it an easy number to measure.

Width for sashing: $53'' - 44'' = 9''$

Length for sashing: $53'' - 44'' = 9''$

We want the width of the sashing the same for both width and length and the width to be between 2" and 6.5". Both numbers can be easily be divided by 2; this is the finished width of the sashing then add .5" for seam allowance.

Cut width for sashing: $9'' / 2$ (divide the distance) = $4.5'' + .5''$ (seam allowance) = $5''$

Number of strips for width: $9'' / 2 = 2$ strips

Number of strips for length: $9'' / 2 = 2$ strips

Going back to your sketch...drop 2 lines to represent the sashing in the width. And drop 2 lines to represent the sashing in the length. The sashing MUST be between the blocks and not on the edge of the quilt back. Where the lines cross are the cornerstones. In this case there are 4 cornerstones. The sketches presented are the options on where to drop the lines.

With me so far? This is the final cutting instructions for the example.

(9) 15" x 15" blocks

(12) 15 x 5" sashing strips

(4) 5" x 5" cornerstones

Lay out your FQ (I cut 4 at a time), cut the 15" blocks first using your 15" square ruler from there, the remainder can be used for sashing or cornerstones. You can use the leftover fabric from the FQ or use leftover fabric from the quilt front or a completely different fabric for the sashing and cornerstones. A nice touch is to use a light fabric for one of the cornerstones so it can be used as the label.

Last step is to lay out the blocks, sashing and cornerstones, sew together to form rows then sew the rows together to complete the quilt back. Done, jus' like that...it's Gyleen's Official Pieced Back.

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