

Tips on preparing your backing fabrics for Long Arm Quilting

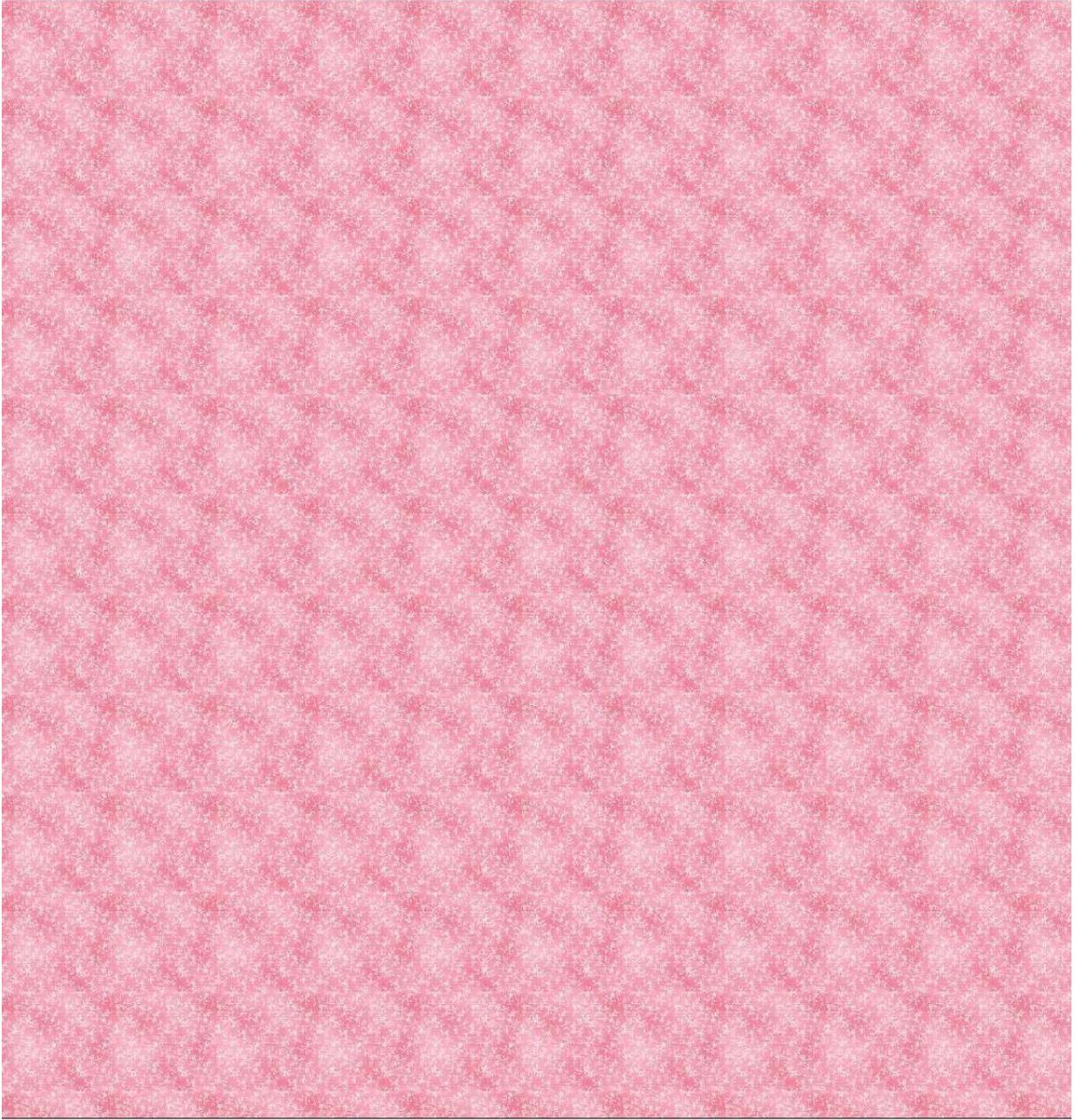
The backing fabric is loaded onto a frame and stretched fairly taught (not tight) between to bars. The more stable your backing is the better the quilting result will be. I have found over the many years of Long Arm Quilting that if I have a nice square backing to start with then I have far fewer issues in the quilting process and for this reason I have learned to be a bit fussy when it comes to the back.

1. **Example A.** My first choice is to have one solid piece of fabric for the back. I will rip the top until I get a clean rip all the way across. Then I will do the same for the bottom. This is the only way to make sure you really have a clean straight edge. You will be amazed what you find. Start with a 1/4 inch snip and rip, you will not get all the way across. Start over with another 1/4 snip and rip. Continue until you get all the way across. I do this on most all backs before I load providing the customer has supplied enough fabric for me to play with.
2. **Example B and C.** It is often hard to find fabric that is both wide enough and works with the quilt top. This is where you want to purchase yardage of 45 wide and piece. The most common is one seam down the middle running the length of the quilt as is example B. Depending on how wide your quilt is you may need to seam 3 sections together to get the width you need + the 8 inches for me as in Example C.

90 or 108 wide backing fabric

Ripped across at top and bottom to make sure fabric is square

Example A:



Seamed Back Example B

Shown as 2 fabrics just so you can see the seam. Normally you will use the same fabric. The seam is running down the center of the back and the sides are the straight of grain. This will be loaded on the frame just like this. The Bias part on the top and bottom is what is pinned on the leaders.

Note: Some times to conserve fabric customers will have this seam going across the width of the quilt rather than down the length of the quilt. When this is done, I will still load the quilt as shown and then the pattern that is quilted should not be a directional pattern.

Top—Bias part of fabric

This is what is pinned to the leaders of the machine

Side s—Straight of grain of fabric



Seamed Back Example C

Here we have 3 sections of fabric seamed down the length of the quilt. Shown in different fabrics for demonstration however this also looks nice for those quilts that are 90 wide and you need just a little extra. Several ways to get creative with this. Try 15–20 inches in the center and the full width on both sides or the full in the center and half the width on the sides. Use all one fabric or 2 coordinating fabrics. This method is also very helpful on baby quilts where the normal width of the fabric is just not enough for the quilt and the 8" I need. (4" on each side).

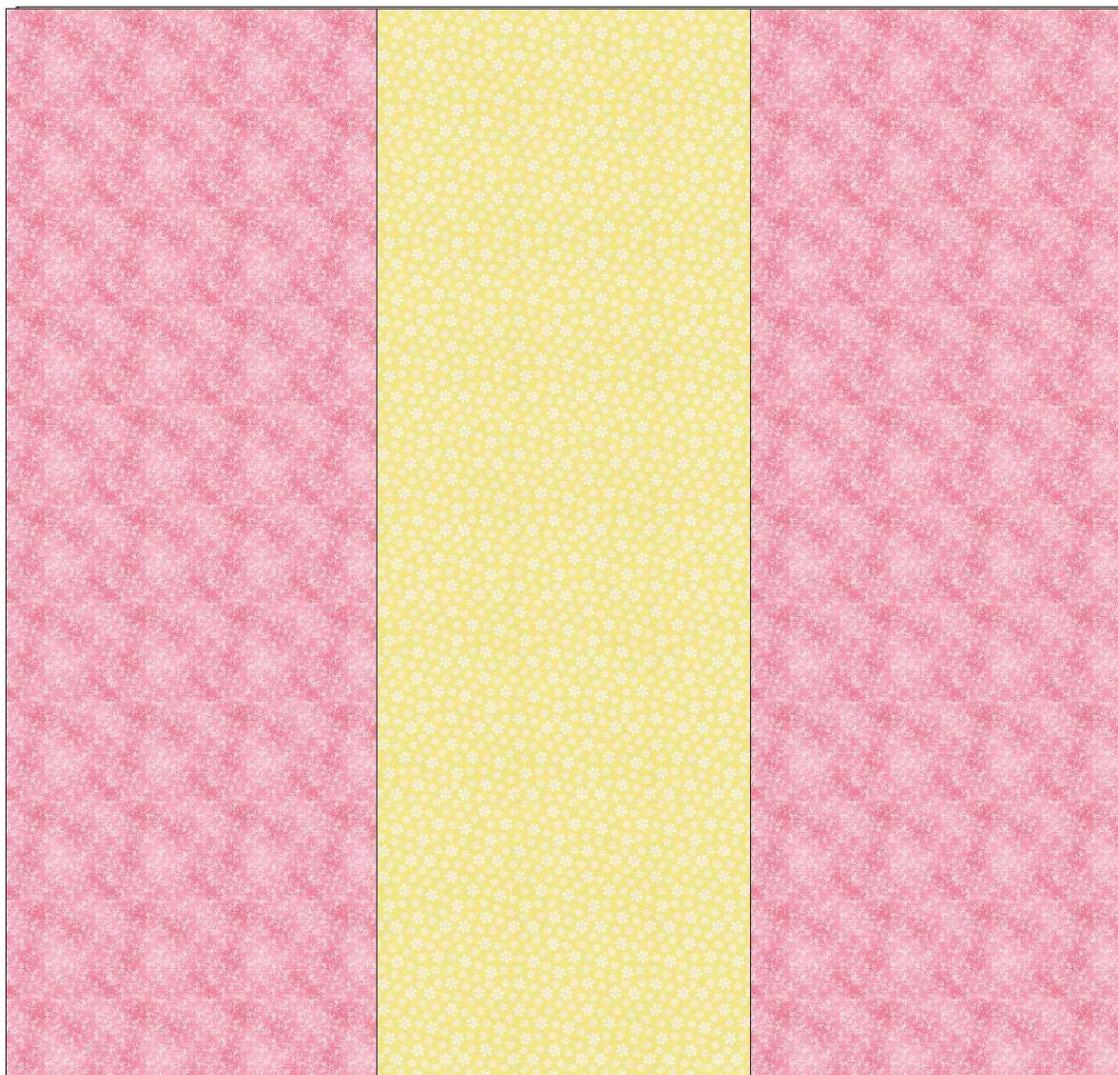
Always start by ripping the fabric before sewing. You must start the first piece off by ripping the top, then the bottom and do the same on all 3 sections, then sew to together. Sometimes you will find that one fabric that was printed crooked and this method will not work. Also if I have a print that really is noticeable to that the print part is not straight then I will not do the ripping.

I do this one all the time on my own quilts, I love the way it looks and allows me to use up lots of fabric. Most of my quilts now are lap size and I am always just a little short on the fabric—this is a good design opportunity.

Top—Bias part of fabric

This is what is pinned to the leaders of the machine

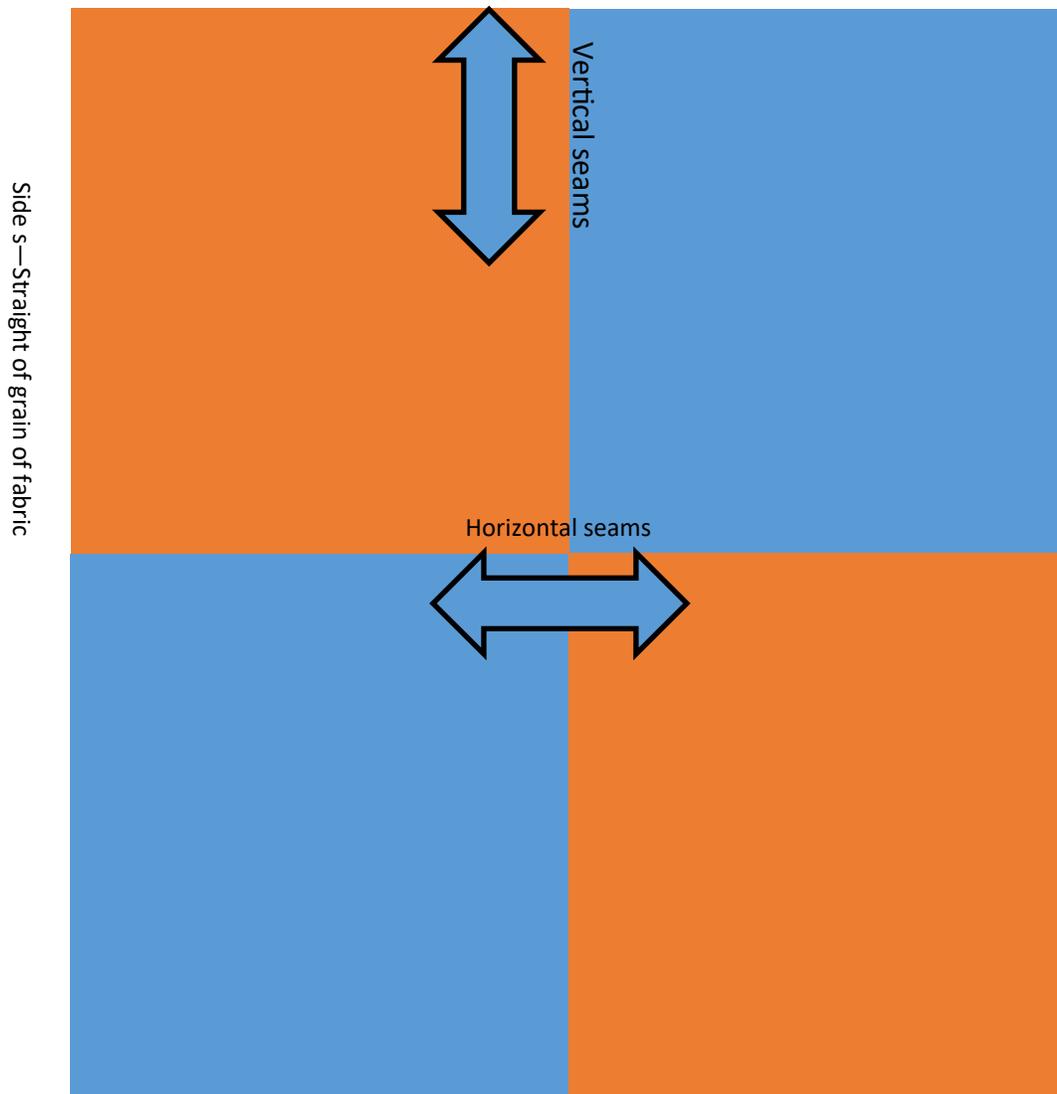
Side s—Straight of grain of fabric



In this example you can use big sections of 2 fabrics or even 4 different fabrics. Again make sure the grain is all the same direction. I am not a big fan of seams that go horizontal because they can get distorted in the quilting process and sometimes if your machine tension is not really good that seam can pull open a little bit. Mostly it works just fine and is an easy way to use up fabric.

Top—Bias part of fabric

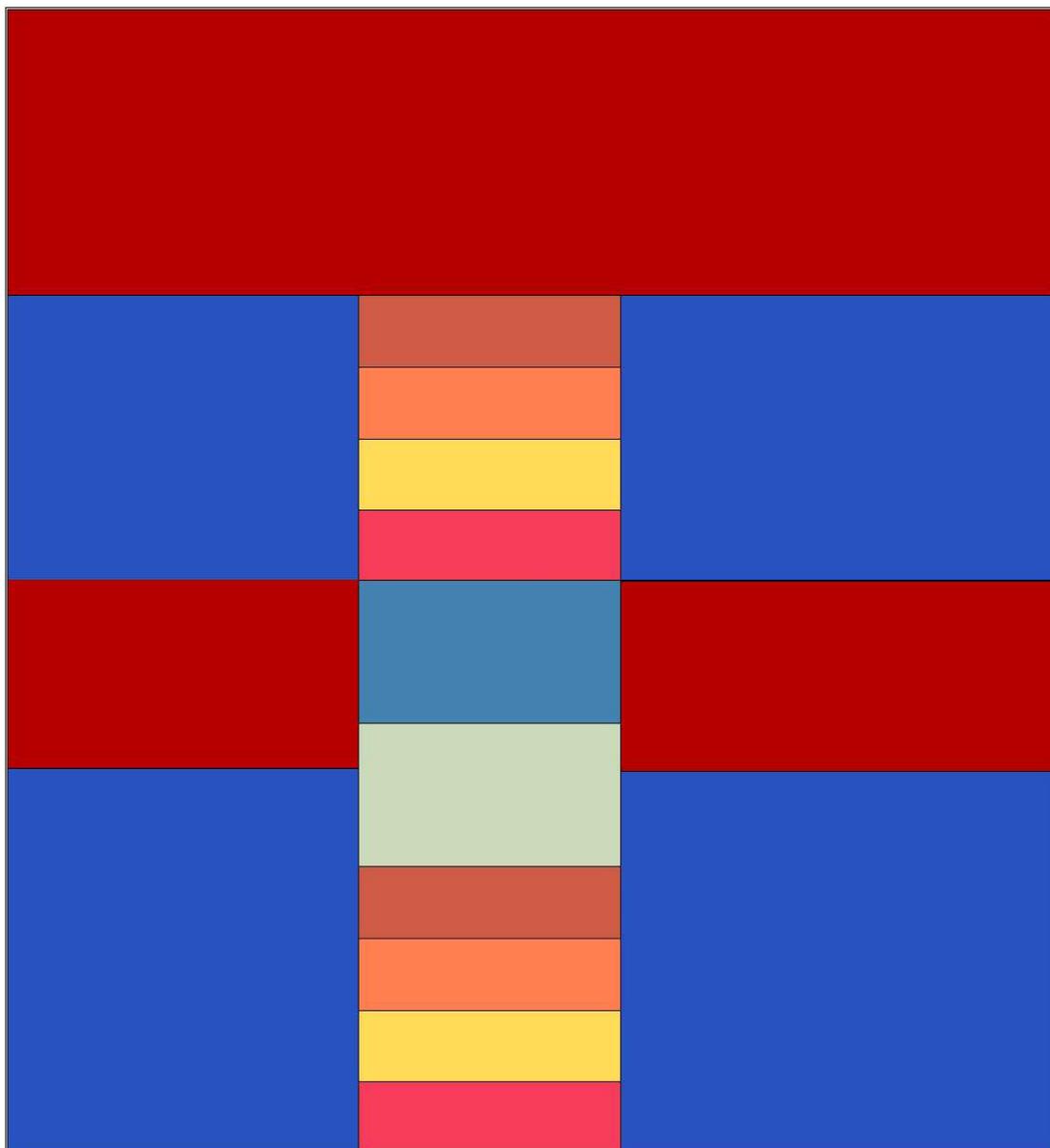
This is what is pinned to the leaders of the machine



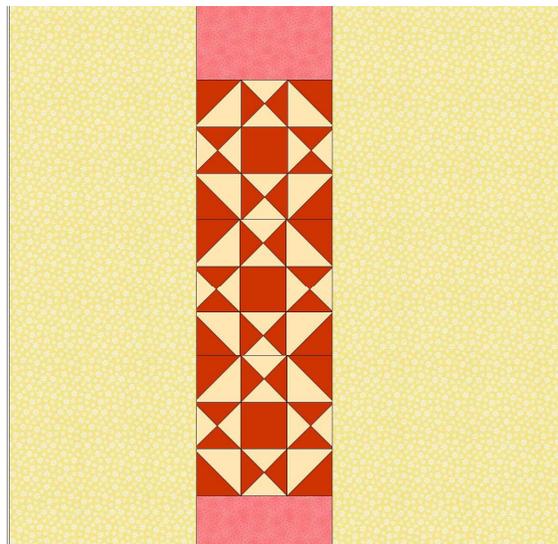
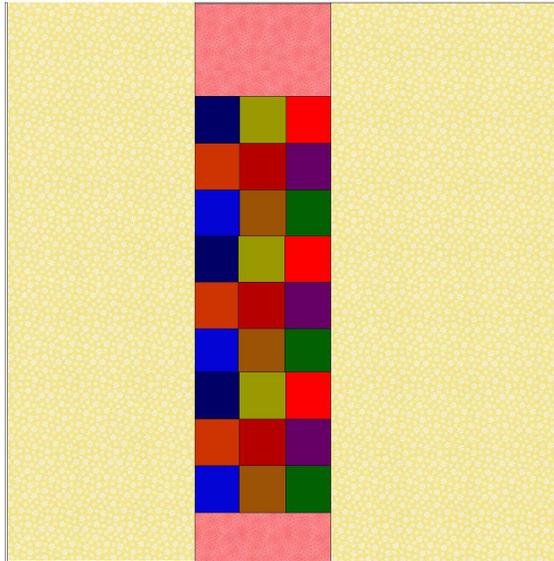
I do not recommend this type of backing. The more seams you have on the back the more they will distort the quilt top and could break my quilting machine.

Top and bottom of quilt backing should be on the bias part of the fabric. This will have a little more stretch. All four sides of backing should be even and measure 8" wider and 8" longer than your quilt top. This gives me a true 4" hang over to work with on the long arm. If you are going to piece your backing with several fabrics it is very important that all bias is on top and all straight of grain is on the sides. Just remember if the quilt top and back both have lots of thick seams, this could cause my drive wheels to break, If I am not comfortable with this I will ask you to provide another backing. Larger piece's are always better.

Sides of quilt should be on the straight of grain. This is the salvage side of the fabric and will not stretch when you tug at it.



The following examples are Questionable and not guaranteed. I have had both machines break down after attempting use these types of backs that the seams on the top and back were so thick the machine just could not get through them and trying caused the drive wheels to burn out. If the blocks are large and the quilt is small and the seams are not thick then this is not too bad but to be perfectly honest I see very few people who really know how to make this type of backing for a long arm quilting process and it just is not worth the risk



Example E.

I do not recommend this type of backing. If you do choose this type of backing then make sure you do not choose a directional pattern for the stitch and the backing is wide enough to accommodate the length of your quilt . I load on the Bias end the backing and not the straight of grain so that I am not stretching against the grain of the fabric each time I advance the quilt. Should you choose a directional backing and/or pattern these will now be going against the quilt top. I.e. Flowers going sideways rather than up and down as in the fabric and if you have Ducks that should be waddling across the quilt they will now waddle down the quilt instead.

Straight of Grain (Salvages)

Bias or Stretch part of fabric

