

Pin & Straight Basting

by~

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2020: For those of you receiving this as an update no changes were made.

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I hereby grant permission for this handbook to be copied. This CD is provided to my students in class and contains all of their class information. They have purchased this information.

If you have further questions, you may contact me via email:

linenqltr@comcast.net

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cindy Needham".

Cindy Needham
January 1, 2020

Introduction

When I changed from hand to machine quilting, I found the basting method I used for hand quilting definitely didn't work for machine quilting! Being on my hands and knees on the floor patiently hand basting with a needle and thread was not only hard on me physically but this method did not provide enough stability for the quilt sandwich in the machine.

I started reading lots of books and came up with a great system of basting a quilt. I took the best parts of several different methods and combined them. This is a "basic bread recipe". Take the theory that I teach you and tweak it so it works for you. Every quilt is different... has different needs, different challenges, different quality of piecing, etc.

Some students feel that I go way beyond in the basting department because I baste twice...pin baste first and straight baste second. I found that if I take my time with this process, and have the quilt well stabilized, I have very good luck with the quilt in the machine. When I rush through the process I usually end up paying a high price with puckers, pleats, tweaking, etc.

Like every part of creating a quilt, take the time to do it right. It's the end result that is important. Taking an extra hour or two for basting is nothing compared to the hundred or so hours you put into piecing and quilting.

Please let me know if you have any questions along the way and feel free to email me at any time.

Hugs, Cindy

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Basting Your Quilt

Basting a quilt is probably one of the most important parts of machine quilting and one of the most disliked parts. If a quilt is not properly basted you are setting yourself up for problems from the start. Take the time to baste your quilt properly and you can be assured smooth sailing at your sewing machine.

Tools

I love gadgets, tools and notions! Many times this is one of the first places I visit when I go to a quilt store. These are some of the tools that I use for basting my quilts.



I recommend this table for basting. These are those nice heavy fold up tables you can order from Office Depot or Staples. They also have the bent legs on the bottom that will allow you to add PVC pipe extensions. A 5' table is sufficient for any size quilt.



These are cut sections of PVC pipe. These raise the basting table to a comfortable height. When you are standing at the table you want to have your hands flat on the surface of the table without bending over. For my table I cut my pipe 12" in length and placed these on the table legs and it raised it up. Easy cheap trick!



These are bed risers that you can find at Bed, Bath and Beyond. They work just as well as the cut PVC pipes and also work on tables that don't have the "bend" in the legs as pictured above. They have a couple different heights to choose from.



Buy the quality safety pins from your quilt store, NOT the cheap ones from Walmart. The cheap ones will rust in your quilt...trust me. I use Size One as they are smaller and don't leave a big hole. They may be silver or brass colored, curved or straight.



I love to use these little basting clamps. Me-Sew makes them and you may find them in your local quilt store.



They easily fit on the side of the table and firmly hold your fabric. Buy two bags so you have enough. The flat side goes on top and the rounded end goes underneath.

(online source: www.mesew.com)



When it comes time to close your basting pins don't use your fingers...you'll do a slice-and-dice in short order. You can use a variety of tools such as spoons, screw drivers, crochet hooks, etc.

My favorites include a product called Kwik Klip that is available at most quilt stores and a rug hook found at most craft stores.

Setting up your Table



It is critical that your quilt be basted on the straight grain. In order to do this I recommend that you measure and mark the center points of the length and width (on both sides) and the dead center of your basting table.

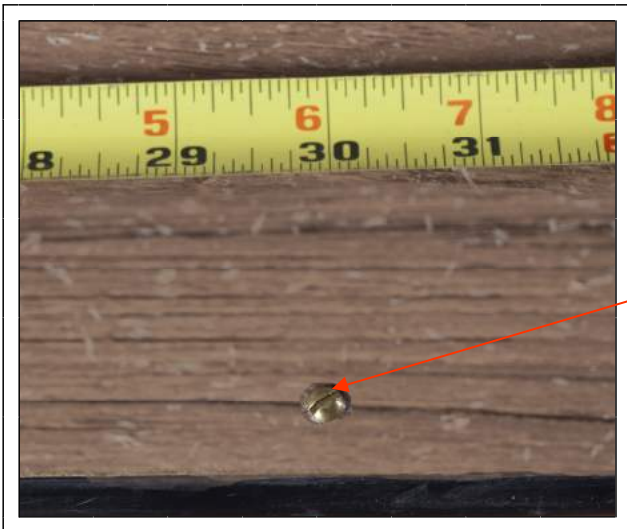


Using a tape measure, measure the width of your table.

Mine is 30" wide...halfway is 15"

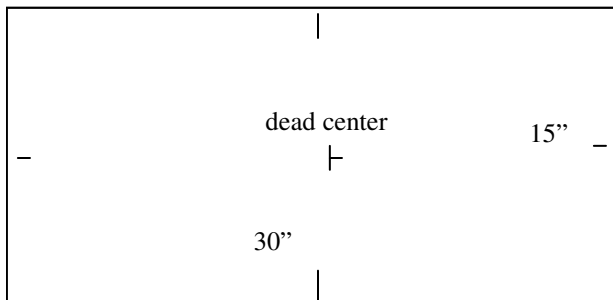
The length is 60" long...halfway is 30"

I've also marked my "dead center"



In order to "mark" these center points you need an "outie"...something that you can feel under the layers of your quilt. You can tape a safety pin, tooth pick, anything to these spots.

Since I have a dedicated table, I drilled a hole and placed a round head screw. It's permanent, I'm not messing with sticky tape residue and it works!



Pin Basting...Getting Started!



Make sure that your quilt back is about 3-4" bigger than your pieced quilt top on ALL four sides.

Hold the yardage so that the width is going across (from shoulder to shoulder), and the length is going up and down (from head to toe).

Fold your back in half width-wise wrong sides together.



Now fold it again length-wise. You have just "quartered" your quilt back.

Make sure the two folded edges are in your right hand.

TOP FOLD LINE

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With the folded back in both hands, *and with the folded edges in your right hand*, place it on the basting table lining up the top right hand corner with the dead center screw and the folded right edges with the halfway point screw.

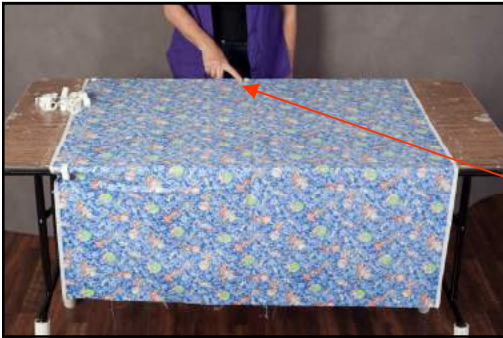


Unfold the back. The length of the back should be going over the width of the table.

The fold should be in the center of the table and lined up next to all three of your halfway point screws.



Carefully pull back the top layer of fabric and place a clamp on the bottom layer, both top and bottom, to hold it in place.



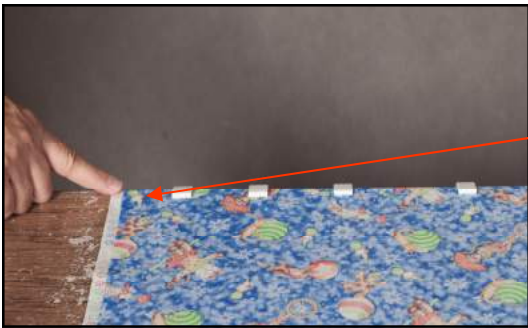
Pull the top layer of the backing all the way to the right until it is flat on the table.
(your two basting clamps kept this fabric in place so it wouldn't move).

Starting next to the center screw at the top of the table, place a clamp.

Now you may go ahead and remove the first two clamps you placed on the ends.



Using your left hand, lightly “pet” the fabric to the left. With your left hand still holding the fabric, place a clamp about 4” down from the first clamp. *(you will see the fabric moving as you are “petting”. This is what you want).*



Continue to “pet” and clamp the fabric all the way to the left and place your last clamp about 2” from the left edge of your backing.

Now “pet” and clamp the backing fabric all the way to the right. Place your last clamp about 2” from the right edge of your backing.



Now that the top half of the back has been clamped you are ready to add a bit of tension.

Starting in the center of the back, grab a handful of fabric that is hanging over the edge and *lightly* pull straight down. Don't pull too tight as it will distort the entire quilt after it comes off the table. I call it a "snug hug"...you're just firming up the backing. Place a clamp.



Moving over to the left, grab another handful of fabric, pull straight down, and add a clamp about 4" over. Repeat this process until the left bottom side is clamped to within 2" of the edge. Now repeat the process for the right bottom side.



Because our quilt is on the smaller side, it doesn't quite make it to the edge of the table so we are unable to clamp the ends. It is just as important to tension the ends as it is to tension the top and bottom edges.

I take wide masking tape and cut a length that will cover the entire width of the table. I put half of the tape on the edge of the fabric and press seal with my fingers.

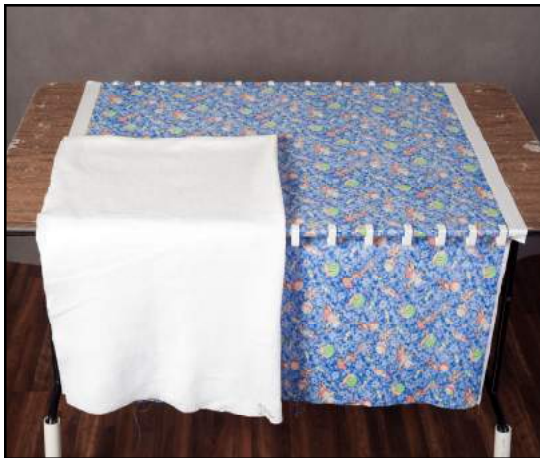


With the four fingers of both hands on top of the tape and two thumbs underneath, gently pull the tape towards you and stick the tape to the table. This lightly tensions the back . Do this for both the right and left sides.

(If you have a quilt back that hangs over the edges of the basting table you will be clamping and pulling...not taping)

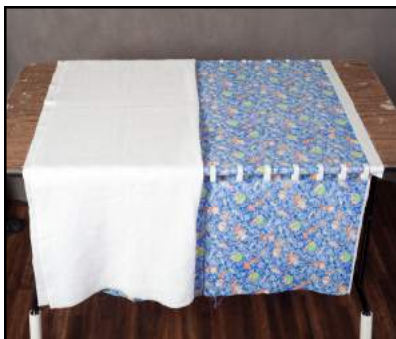
Now lightly run your hands over the tensioned quilt back. It should be smooth with no rippling. If you DO have some rippling or loose areas of fabric, you may remove some clamps and retension or add more clamps. Sometimes if you have a backing that is pieced it can be a little harder to get a good tension.

Remember, it is VERY important to not pull the backing too tightly. If you do, once you remove your basted quilt sandwich from the table, everything will “suck in” and you will have a whole new set of problems!



Now that the backing is clamped to the table it's time to add the batting. Your batting should be 3-4" bigger on all four sides, just like the backing.

Fold and quarter the batting in the same fashion placing the folded corner in the middle of the table. You will be able to feel your markers underneath the fabric.



Unfold the batting just like the backing.

No need to clamp!





Fold and quarter your quilt top with right sides together . Find your dead center screw, line everything up, and unfold. Double check that your quilt top is centered and you have extra batting/backing on all four sides. *(I have waaaaay too much batting and backing showing in these photos...I just didn't want to cut up a good batting for a photo shoot!)*



Using my quilt basting pins, I place my pins about fist-width-ish apart over the entire quilt top. I try and avoid the major seams as I am going to stitch-in-the-ditch here first. I always start in the center and work my way to the right and left edges of the quilt.





Once all my pins are in place, I will close them using my Kwik Klip or my rug hooker. Much easier and safer than using your own fingertips!

Now that the entire tabletop is covered with closed safety pins, it's time to move the quilt sandwich to the next area to be basted.

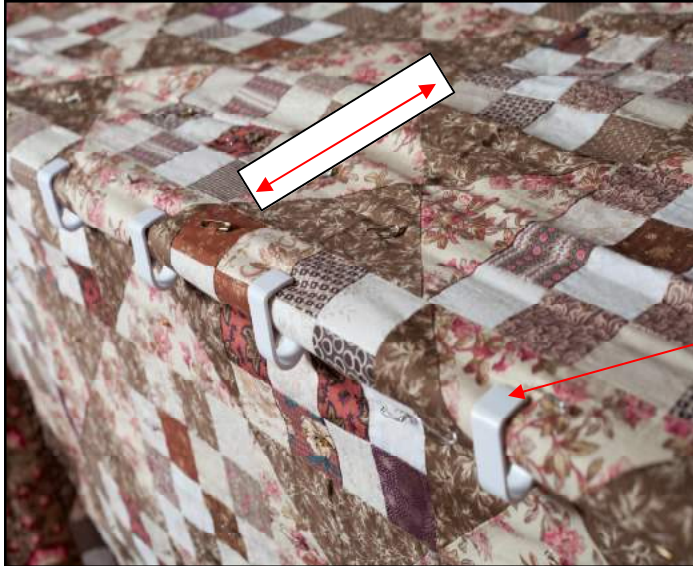
The rest of the instructions for basting will be shown on the larger brown quilt. The guidelines from here are the same whether you are basting a large quilt or a small quilt.



This is a larger quilt...the only difference between basting the smaller pink one above and this one, is the sides of this quilt extend over the ends of the table. I clamped the sides to tension instead of using tape.



When it is time to move either quilt, large or small, to the next area to be basted, remove all the clamps and or masking tape.



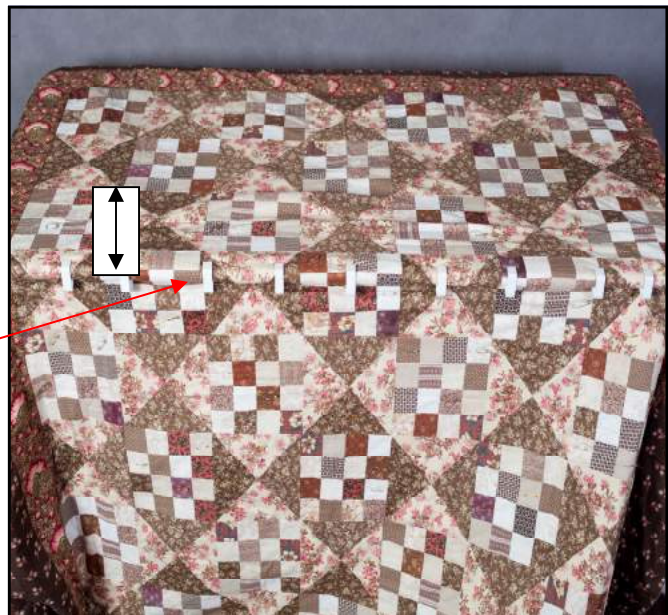
When you move your quilt to the next section, be absolutely certain that you leave at least two rows of closed safety pins on the table.

This time, when you clamp the top edge, you are clamping thru all three layers. If you clamp an unpinned area I guarantee you will end up with a deep ridge in your quilt...ask me how I know!

This is another photo showing how I have moved the quilt to the next section for basting.

I have left two rows of pins at the top edge.

I have clamped thru ALL THREE LAYERS.



Once the top edge has been clamped, go to the bottom edge of your quilt. Fold back the quilt top and the quilt batting and expose the backing.

Starting in the middle, pull and tension the backing just as you did when you first placed your backing on the table placing your clamps about 4" apart. Now fold your batting and quilt top back in place over the tensioned backing.

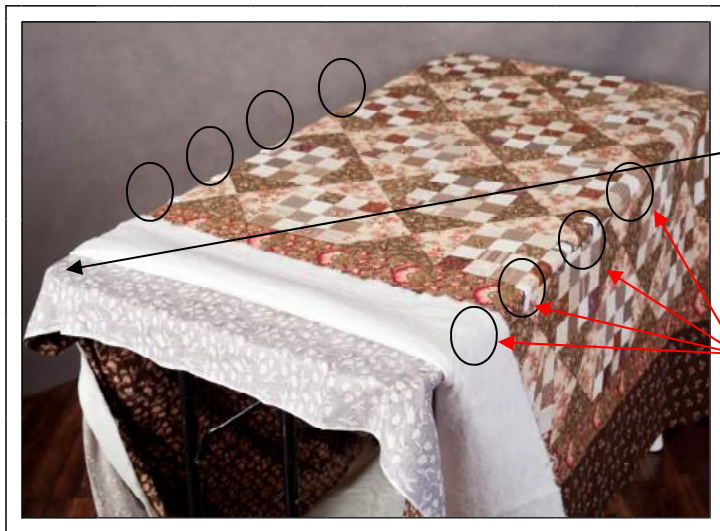
Now pin baste this entire area. When this area is completed, push/pull the quilt sandwich as needed until the pin basting is completed repeating the clamping and tensioning process each time you move the quilt..

If you have a small quilt that does not extend over the edges of the table, you are basically done with the pin basting portion.

If you have a large quilt that DOES extend over the edges of the table, these next few steps are for you!

If you have a large quilt that hangs over both edges of the table, I highly recommend that you pin the center section of the quilt first (*the portion that doesn't hang over the ends*).

Once that entire center section is done, pull/push your quilt sandwich back to center position (*where you started in the first place*).



Standing at one end of the table, pull the quilt sandwich towards you until the edge of the quilt sandwich is on the edge of the table.

Since the quilt sandwich is already stabilized by all the basting pins, you only need to clamp thru all three layers about halfway down the table on both sides.



Fold back the quilt top, fold back the batting exposing the back of the quilt. Pull, tension and clamp just as you have been doing.

Repeat this process for both sides of the quilt. You are DONE pin basting...

Now flip the page and I'll show you one more step that I highly recommend ... straight basting.

Stabilizing a Pieced Quilt Top

(Illustration on following page)

It is very important to have your quilt as stable as possible before placing it into your machine for quilting. Pin basting is good but combined with stabilizing all the long seams first it's even better!

If you have a traditionally pieced top such as the one pictured on the next page with straight set blocks and a wide border, stabilizing is VERY easy. I recommend that you load your machine with your stitch-in-the-ditch thread (I use Superior Threads' Bottom Line or Microquilter) in both the top and the bottom. **Use your walking foot!**

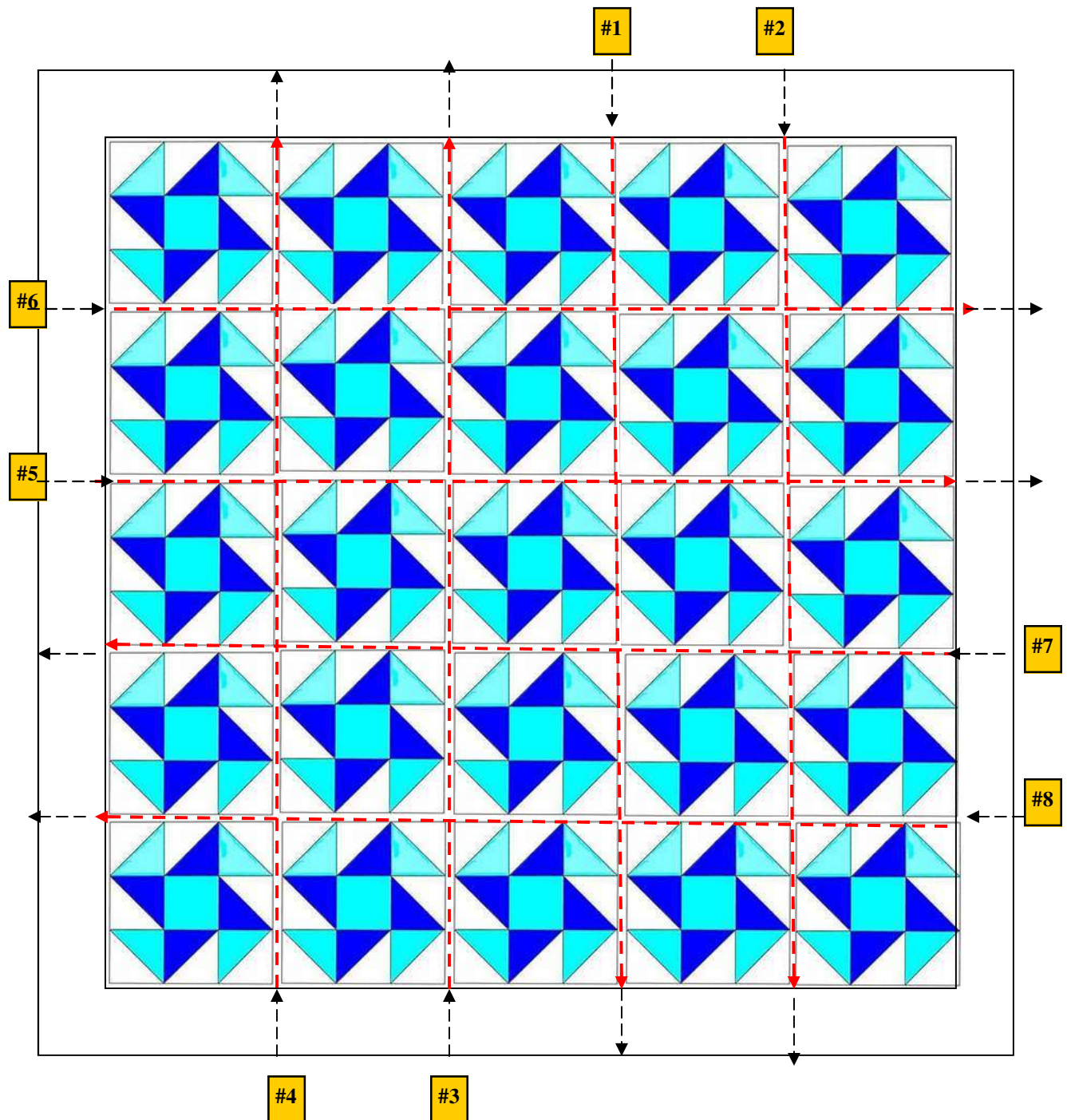
Just like a surfer looking for the really long wave, look for the pieced seams that go all the way thru your quilt top. Start in the center at the top raw edge of your border. Set your stitch length to long. Stabilize your border with longer basting stitches from the raw edge up to the pieced seam where your border attaches to the middle of your quilt. Stop. Reset your stitch length to "normal". Lock in your stitches. Now "stitch-in-the-ditch" all the way down to the bottom seam. Stop. Lock in your stitch. Change your stitch length back to long. Stabilize the border down to the bottom raw edge.

Do half the quilt in one direction...do the other half in the other direction as shown in the picture on the next page.

Flip the quilt around and do half in one direction...the other half in the opposing direction.

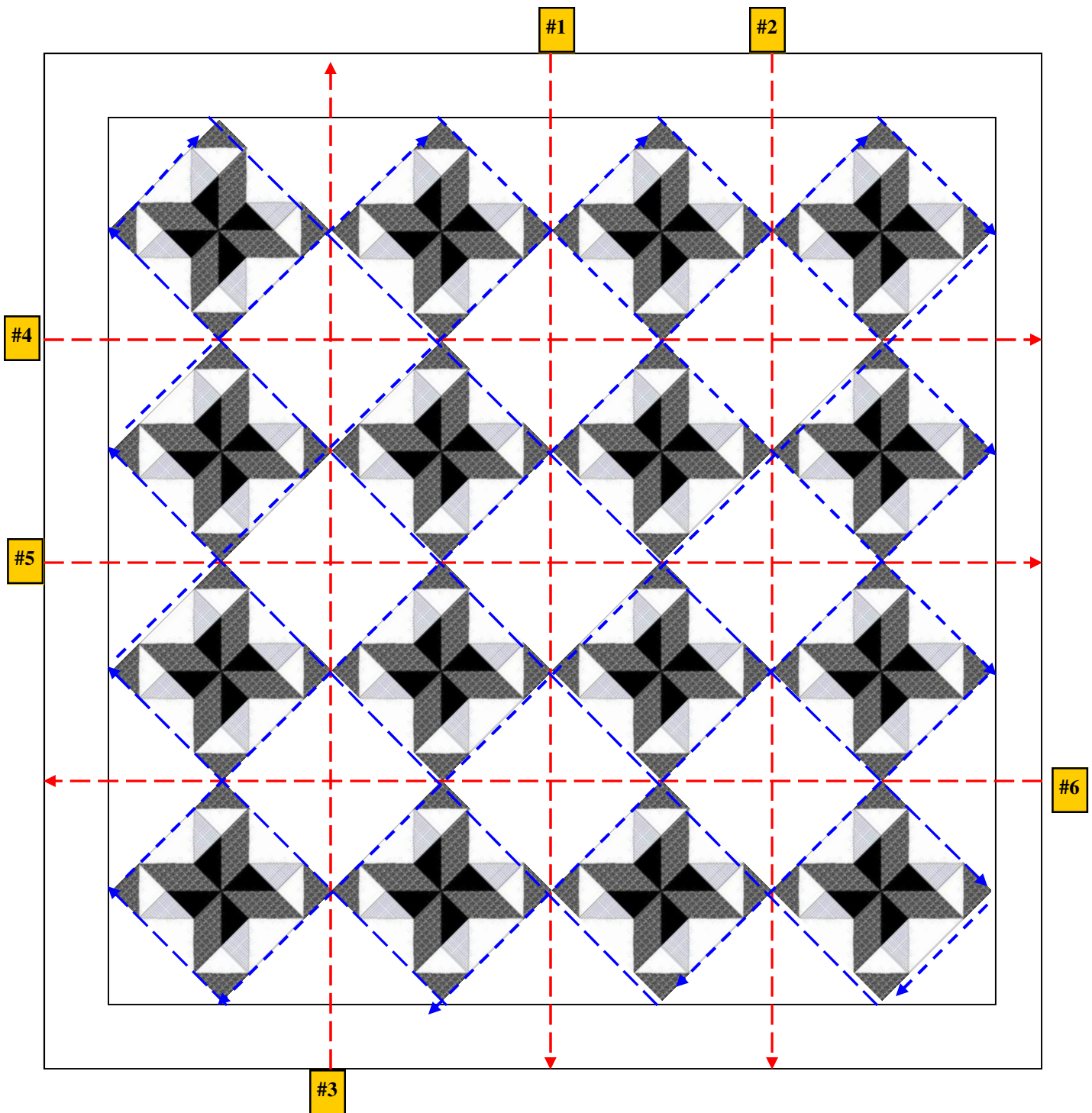
This is exactly the same theory for a wholecloth quilt (*described in the next lesson*). With the wholecloth quilt, all of the stabilizing will be washed away once the quilt is washed as it was done with the water soluble thread. With a standard pieced top, the border stabilizing will be picked out. The stitch-in-the-ditch will stay. This is why you have longer stitches in the border and you locked in your stitches at the seam line.

Check out the next page for the illustration.



This is a very basic quilt with long straight seams. I stabilize the border with long stitches shown by the ----> lines. When I get to the seam line I stop, do a backstitch to lock my stitches and go back to a normal piecing stitch length. By stabilizing the borders you are ensuring that they won't shift and tweak during the quilting process.

Remember...you can stitch-in-the-ditch all of your long seams doing one half of the quilt in the same direction. Flip your quilt around and do the other half in the other direction.

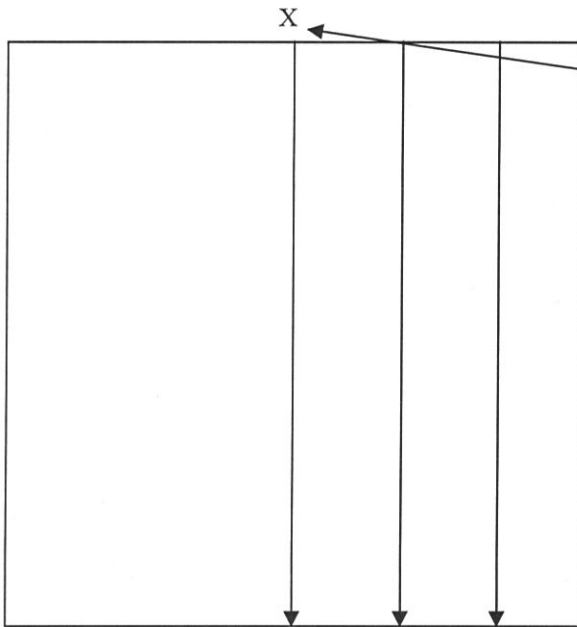


If you have a quilt top that has blocks set on point, I recommend stabilizing this similar to the previous quilt (straight set blocks) BUT this time grid it on the straight grain with your walking foot, using water soluble thread in the top and bottom of your machine and use a large basting stitch. This is shown with the **red dashed lines**.

Once that is done, then go back and stitch-in-the-ditch the long diagonal seams doing one half of the quilt at a time each half in a different direction. These are shown with the **blue dashed lines**.

Basting a Whole Cloth Quilt

A pieced quilt is stabilized prior to free motion quilting by stitching-in-the-ditch all of the major seams first. With a wholecloth quilt you don't have any seams to ditch for stability. I highly recommend straight basting a wholecloth quilt in grid fashion to stabilize it prior to free motion quilting. This is done **AFTER** the pin basting. This will prevent your quilt from twisting and tweaking and keep it flat. I recommend straight basting with Superior Threads' Vanish Lite in the top and bottom. This is a water soluble thread that will wash out in warm water. Set your stitch length to long and use your walking foot.

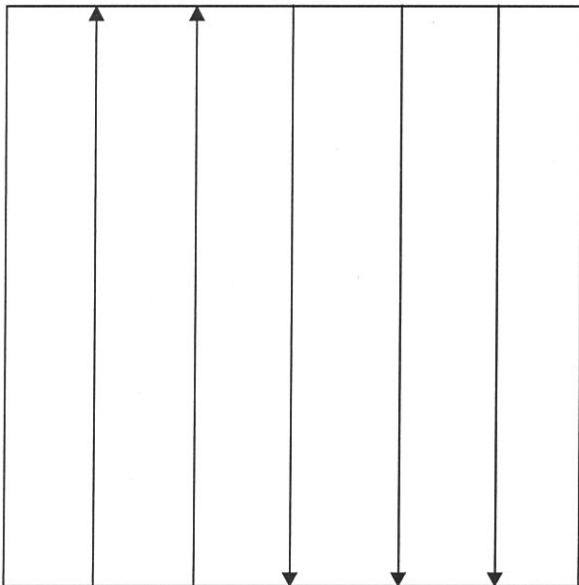


Starting at the top center edge, stitch from the top all the way down to the bottom edge of your piece.

Move your quilt over to the left about 10"-ish and do this again in the same direction.

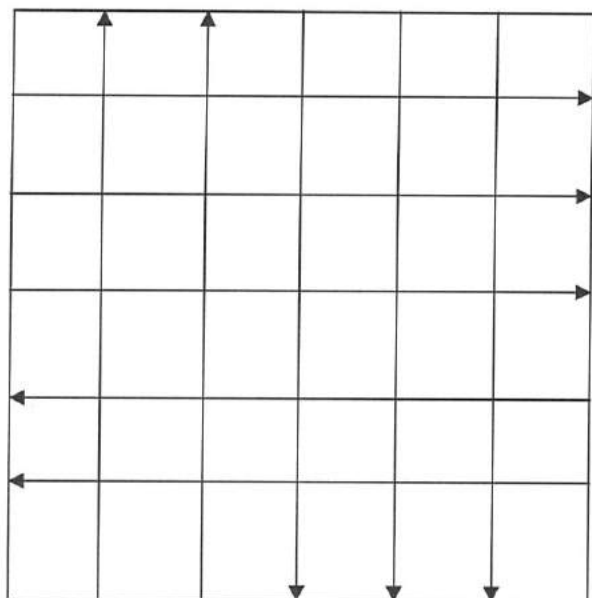
Keep repeating this process until you are within 10" or so from the right edge and stop.

It is important to do this whole half in the same direction.



Turn your quilt completely around and follow the same directions as above.

You will be straight basting the other half of the quilt in the opposing direction.



Rotate your quilt again and now quilt the third half in the same fashion as you did the first two...

Rotate your quilt one last time and do the fourth half.

You have just stabilized the quilt in all four opposing directions in a grid fashion. Everything you do from here will all be eased in on the straight grain of the fabric. You won't have any twisting or tweaking and you will end up with a nice flat quilt in the end! When you **A** straight baste a wholecloth quilt and you are crossing the lines to make the squares, you will find that nearly 95% of the time you will end up with a snowplow pucker where the lines cross. This nearly drove me nuts until I figured out it was a GREAT tool. I recommend that you leave the puckers in...at least for a bit!

This is your quilt telling you where the little hills and valleys are...where there is a little excess fabric. By forming the pucker it is locking in that excess fabric and not allowing it to travel and join all of its other little pucker friends making a huge mess somewhere else in your quilt. **B** When you are quilting and come up to the pucker, simply take your seam ripper and take out that cross section of straight basting. The pucker will dissolve in that area. **C** You simply provide a little hand tensioning on the straight basting lines and it disappears right in that area. Very cool tool!

