

Ask Jo: Figuring Backing Yardage and more

Every so often a question or comment comes from a blog reader that I think other readers might like the answer to. When that happens I answer the questions here on the blog for all to see. Today is one of those days.

The question of the day comes from JanetB: ***"In one of your "ask Jo's," can you talk about piecing quilt backs. I typically buy wide backs because I like the convenience for quilts that I keep or gift. I have some charity quilts and need to piece the back and I'm procrastinating because I've never done it. Do I just start whacking fabric and stitching it together, or is there a method to the madness? Nobody does YouTubes on pieced backs."***

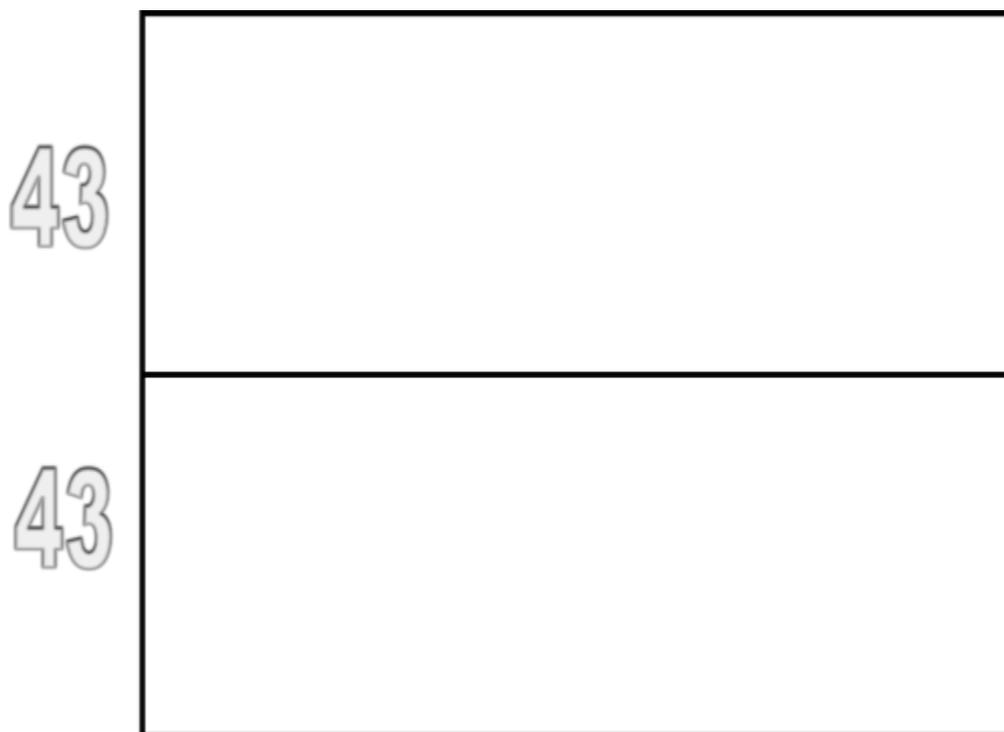
In the comments section another blog reader gave a try at answering Janet's question. Barbie said, *"I'll throw in my two cents worth for Janet's question about piecing a quilt backing as I often piece mine. I start by determining if I have additional blocks or sections from the quilt front that didn't get used. It isn't unusual for me to make a top and have an additional blocks. Then I see if have additional fabric that was also used in the top. That gives me a terrific start as I can often piece a vertical column out of components used on the front. Depending on the size of your quilt you can built out from that and that might mean piecing more pieces or finding some yardage that will coordinate and adding that."*

I've seen all kinds of pieced backings and the sky is the limit. I once just pieced a bunch of solids in big chunks as the front had a lot of small print pieces and the back turned out to be as interesting as the front! Start small and play with what you have. Good luck!"

In thinking about Janet's question I am not sure exactly how much piecing she needs to do so...I'll start super basic.

I am showing 3 diagrams. I hope they help explain it.

When piecing- first ask yourself how long your quilt top is. If it's less than 82" or so you're in luck..less piecing for you. Simply measure the width of your quilt add 6" to that measurement and cut two pieces that size. Sew them together with the seam going horizontally.



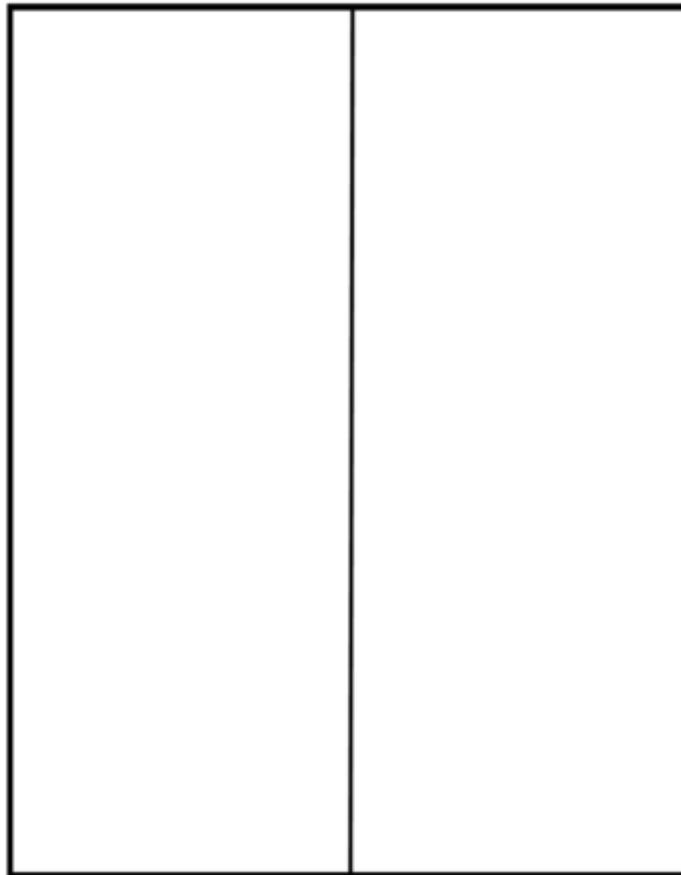
This shows that the seam in the fabric will run horizontally down the middle.

If your quilt is bigger than 84" wide you can likely use graphic #2. Here the seam is running vertically. Simply measure your quilt top length. Add 6". Then cut two pieces of fabric that length and seam them together with the seam running vertically as shown.

$$43+43=86$$



Cut two piece of fabric the length of the quilt plus 6" or so. Seam them together vertically.

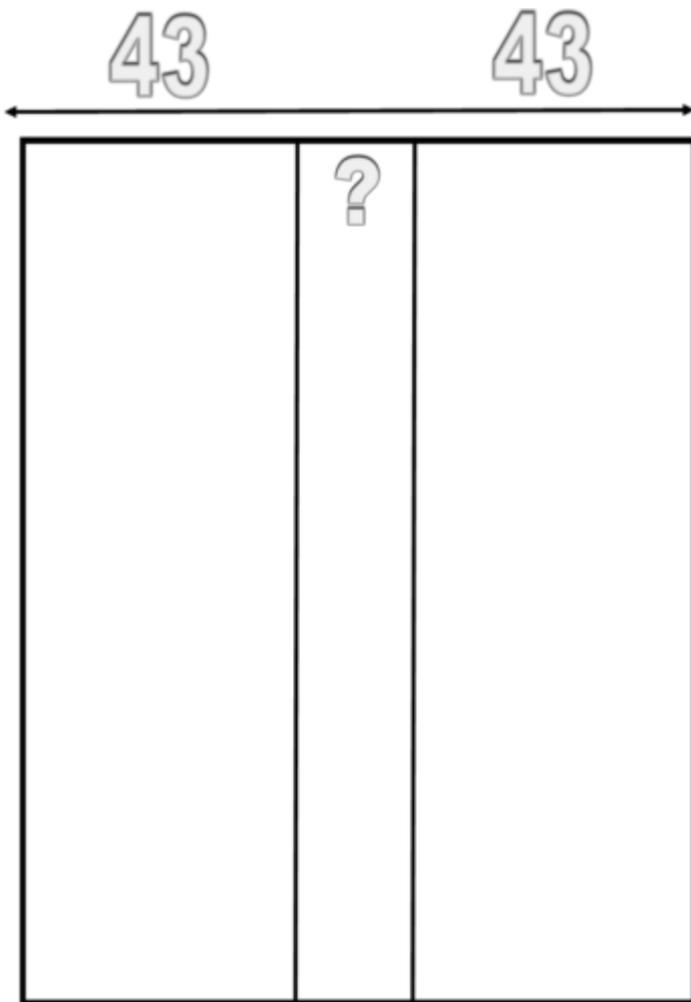


Now if my quilt is over 84" wide but under 100" wide-most all of mine are, you'll need to use graphic #3 which is below... Remember I'm pretty frugal and hate to spend extra on backing...so... I add in a strip of fabric-sometimes pieced, sometimes a plain piece of fabric to bring the backing to the size I need. When figuring the length to cut and work towards, measure your quilt length and add 6". Cut two pieces of fabric that length.

Now figure out how wide your center piece needs to be. To do that take the width of the fabric $43+43=86$ +Unknown=width of your quilt+6

I'll write out an example using that equation. My quilt is 95" x 95" square. I need to cut two pieces of fabric that are 95" + 6" long to cover the length so that's 101". I need two of those. Now we need to cover the width. I have the two pieces of fabric cut...the are about 43" wide so $43+43=86$ that

means we are currently at about 86" wide but we need 101. That means $101-86=15$ " That means we need to build a piece 15" wide by 101" long.

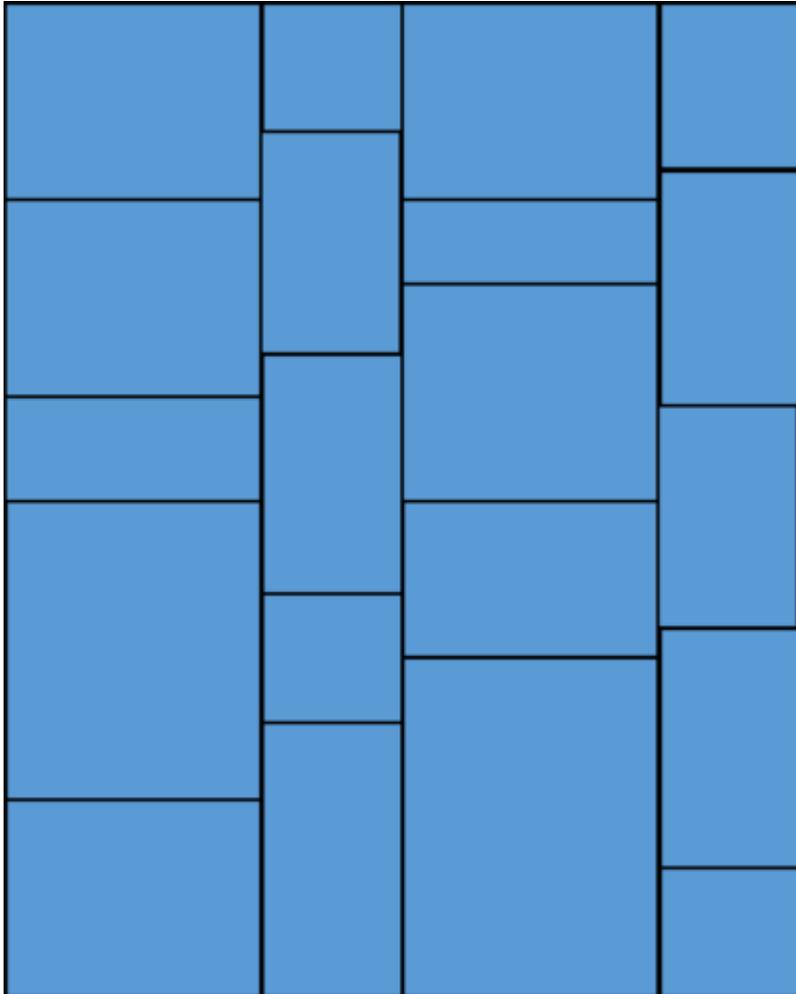


I often times have left over pieces from the top that work well here...extra blocks or fabric. It's a great way to use that up. In this case I might take some left over blocks that are 12" wide and add fabric to the opposite sides to bring it up to the 15" size. Then I'd add more fabric or blocks to get to the 101".

If you have a quilt top that is 94" x 94" or smaller we also have a pieced backing idea sent in by our blog reader Ila that uses 6 yards of fabric plus a 14" square of fabric. [You can find that here.](#)

If you are really wanting to make a backing crazy pieced one of the easiest thing you can do is pick a width. Sew pieces the same width together until you have sewn a strip that is

the length of your quilt plus 6". Pick another width and do the same. Sew the strips together vertically. Keep quilting strips and adding them until you get a backing that is the width of your quilt plus 6".



There are other ways too. Here I had a sheet that wasn't wide enough. I bordered the entire thing with the blue fabric.



Here's something for a baby quilt. This was left over fabric from backing a different quilt. I took the main piece, cut it length plus 6" then added things until it was width plus 6".



Here's one Cheryl our charity quilt from Dallas did. That's and awesome back!!



This one I did using the #3 diagram.



This one I need just a smidgen wider so I did this.



The more backings you piece the easier it gets. Often times if you're having trouble draw it out on paper or start with one piece of fabric that is the length or width of the quilt and build on it.

I am putting a link to this post in the free patterns and tutorials section on the right hand column so you can find it back again.

I hope that answers that question. It's hard as often I don't know the depth a reader wants the question answered. If I missed a question or anyone has others, leave a comment and I'll get to it.