Among our most frequently asked questions is "How do I add borders correctly?"

Many new quilters simply cut strips of fabric, sew them onto the sides of their quilt without pinning, and trim the corners square. More often than not, they discover fullness in their borders, especially if more than one border is added all around.

Have you ever cut 2 strips exactly the same length and then sewn them together without pinning? Were you surprised to find that after sewing, they were no longer the same length? Well...this is because the feeddogs and presserfoot allowed one fabric to move faster than the other. You can prevent this by pinning the strips together before sewing.

This also happens when you add borders without measuring and pinning.

Pieced quilts can vary slightly in size across the width and length of your quilt. To control minor discrepancies and keep your quilts square and true follow the following steps.

**BUTTED BORDERS**

Measure your quilt top in 3 places. 
(Avoid measuring on the raw edges because the edges often stretch in handling, especially on larger quilts.)
Add those three measurements together and take an average. This is the length you will cut your first two border strips.

For this small wall hanging, my average measurement was 24". To insure that my border strips are the same length, I pin the two strips together and position them on my cutting mat. Then I trim both of the strips at the same time.

These are sewn to opposite sides and pressed toward the border. If the quilt is rectangular, I measure, cut and sew the longest sides first. If my quilt top had been much larger, say 80", I would have pinned two border strips together, placed one end at the beginning line on my mat and placed a pin at the 36" mark, then moved that pin back to the 1st line, and placed a 2nd pin at the 35" mark. Move that pin to the beginning line and trimmed at the 8" mark. 36 + 36 + 8 = 80.
Now that you have two borders sewn and pressed, you will again measure in 3 places, take the average measurement and cut your next borders at whatever that average number is. If there is fullness in your quilt top, pin carefully, distributing the fullness, and sew with that side to the feeddogs. This time, the fact that the feeddogs move the fabric faster, will work in your favor and ease the fullness in, keeping the top square and true to the borders.
Now your quilt looks like this:
1 - Measure the length and width of the quilt. Mark the 1/4" seam allowance on the back of the top at each corner.

Cut your border pieces for the top and bottom and add 2 times the width of your border plus extra 2 - 3" for safety.

2 - Mark the center of each side of the top with a pin. Mark the center of each border strip. Measure outward from the pin and mark 1/2" the length of the quilt edge on the border strip. Do not just hold it up and make it match. Measure with a ruler to insure accuracy.
3 - With right sides together, match pins on border strip and the quilt side. Work from the center pin outward and pin border to quilt. Border fabric will extend beyond the quilt corners. Sew, being careful NOT to stitch past the 1/4" seam allowance on each corner of the quilt. BACKSTITCH.

Repeat until borders are sewn to all sides. Press seam allowances toward the border.
4 - Working on one corner at a time, fold the borders as shown below. On the ironing board, lay the top border straight and fold the side border over it. Use your ruler to make sure the quilt is square at the corner. The weight of the quilt can be stabilized by pinning to the ironing board to prevent sliding. Lay your ruler with the 45 degree angle line on the straight edge and check to make sure the folded border is at a 45 degree angle, and the edges are square. Press this fold and carefully pin. Sew directly on the fold line. Start sewing from the quilt toward the raw edge. Backstitch, leaving the 1/4" seam allowance hanging free. Unfold the quilt to check that the corner lies flat. Correct stitching if necessary. Trim to 1/4". Press corner seam open to distribute bulk.

Position like this on ironing board:
Fold back until top border is even with bottom border:

Press the fold and carefully pin:
Sew on the fold line. Sew from the quilt toward the edge of the border.

Leave seam allowance hanging free:
Trim dog ear:

Success!