

Baby's Got Back

"Picadilly Square" front.



by GYLEEN X. FITZGERALD

"Picadilly Square" back.

"Sawblades" back.



"Sawblades" front.



Supplies

- 15" square ruler
- Rotary cutter and mat
- Paper and pencil
- Calculator

Why piece the back of your quilt?

First, let's think about it. If you're like me, you have lots of fat quarters in your fabric stash. A half yard of fabric is really two fat quarters, 1 yard is four fat quarters, and a fat quarter is, well, a fat quarter. Most quilters have plenty of fabric in their collections to make quilt backs of any size without going shopping if they would plan the backs of their quilts around fat quarters.

Second, if you calculate everything up front and then do the all cutting, you are set to speed sew without thinking about whether the back will be the right size.

Third, why not make your quilt backs as interesting and as fun to look at as the fronts? That way, whether you quilt them yourself or send them out to for quilting, you get double the viewing value for the time and money spent. Trust me — your friends peek at the backs when you're not looking! Why not surprise them with an unexpected visual treat!

Fourth, if you plan to use fat quarters, you can stop buying huge pieces of fabric for your stash because you might need them for quilt backs one day. Instead, focus on buying fat quarters of fabrics you love, and it won't matter whether you use them for the front or back of your quilt. With just a little planning and effort you can make wonderful two-sided quilts.

Gylen's Official Fat-Quarter-Pieced Quilt Back

Let's do the math, cut the fabric, and get ready to speed sew. Now that's what I'm talking about! It's easier to explain my technique by doing it; just switch your numbers for mine and you're all set. Also — this is easier to do if you don't think about it! Just trust me and follow the directions without using your brain.

For this example, let's say that I'm working with a 60" x 80" quilt top.

1. Measure the width and length of the quilt top, then add 8" for to the width and length for the quilt back. This assumes you will need 4" of backing on each outer edge so the quilt can be loaded on a long-arm machine.

Example:

Width of back: $60" + 8 = 68"$

Length of back: $80" + 8 = 88"$

2. Divide the width and length by 15" (the size of the square ruler) and round down to the nearest whole number. This is the number of whole blocks needed.

Example:

Number of blocks for width:

$68" \div 15" = 4.53 = 4$ blocks

Number of blocks for length:

$88" \div 15" = 5.86 = 5$ blocks

3. Now draw a grid (freehand is fine) which is 4 blocks across and 5 blocks down. The edge blocks will finish at 14.75" and the center blocks at 14.50". Add up the amounts of fabric used so far in both width and length.

Width of the edge blocks + width of the center blocks = width so far

Example:

Amount used in width so far:

$14.75 + 14.50 + 14.50 + 14.75 = 58.50"$

Amount used in length so far:

$14.75 + 14.5 + 14.5 + 14.5 + 14.75 = 73.25"$

- Subtract the width and length distances calculated in step 3 from the width and length of the quilt back (from step 1).

Width of quilt back - width used = total width for sashing

Example:

Total width for sashing: $68" - 58.50 = 9.50"$

Total length for sashing: $88" - 73.25 = 14.75"$

A note about sashing: I recommend sashing wider than 2" and narrower than 6.5". Anything else looks too skinny or too chunky to me. You may need to divide the sashing into strips or bump it up a tad to make it an easy number to measure.

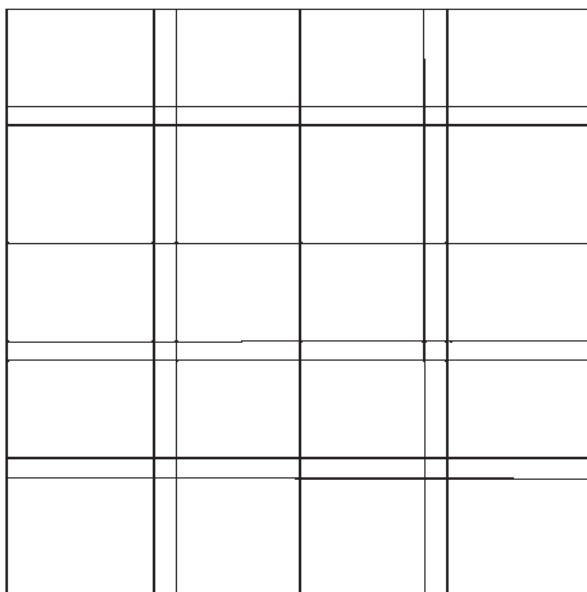
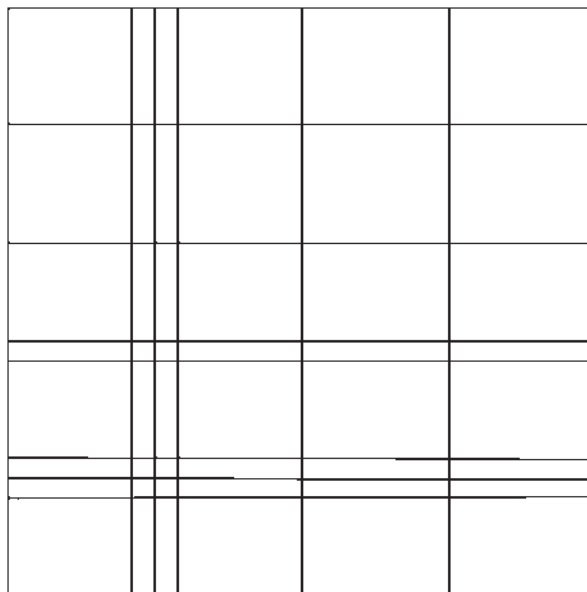
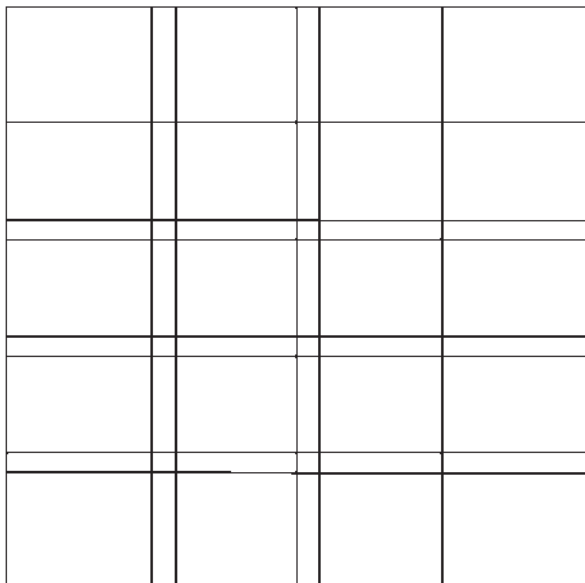
- Since you want the width of the sashing the same for both width and length of the quilt, I would bump up to 10" and 15". Both numbers are divisible by 5"; this is the finished width of each sashing strip. Add 0.5" for seam allowances for a total of 5.5".

Example:

Number of strips for width: $10" \div 5" = 2$ strips

Number of strips for length: $15" \div 5" = 3$ strips

- Using your grid sketch from step 3, draw two lines to represent the sashing in the width. And draw 3 lines to represent the sashing in the length. The sashing MUST be between the blocks and not at the outer edges of the quilt back. Where the sashing lines intersect, you'll create cornerstones – squares that connect the vertical and horizontal sashing strips. In this example, you end up with 6 cornerstones. The sketches shown here illustrate some options for positioning the sashing lines.



With me so far? Count the blocks; for this example cut:

- Twenty 15" x 15" blocks
- Twenty-two 15 x 5.5" sashing strips
- Six 5.5" x 5.5" cornerstones

- Lay out your fat quarters (I cut four layers at a time). Cut the 15" blocks first, using your 15" square ruler. The leftover pieces can be used for sashing or cornerstones. In general, the number of blocks you'll need is also the number of fat quarters you'll need.
- The last step is to lay out the blocks, sashing, and cornerstones, sew them together to form rows, then sew the rows together to complete the quilt back. Done, just like that! And Baby's Got Back!

"Tootie Fruitie"
back.



Gyleen was born in Philadelphia, PA, but grew up in Taiwan and Japan. During those formative years in the Far East, she developed her love for simplistic artistry. She began needlework at the very young age of 4, and later pursued artistic expression in drawing and quiltmaking.



For Gyleen, quilting is the passion that colors her world. Her quilts blend color, pattern and texture to impart a contemporary essence to traditional quilting. She shares her enthusiasm for quilting through interactive lectures and high-energy workshops. Her written works center around Haiku poetry, quilt patterns, and magazine articles; and, of course, the crème de la crème, children's books.

She opened Colourful Stitches in 1999. Its first subsidiary, FPI Publishing was launched in 2005 with the publication of her first two books, *The Dream* and *Poetry & Patchwork*.



"Tootie Fruitie" front.