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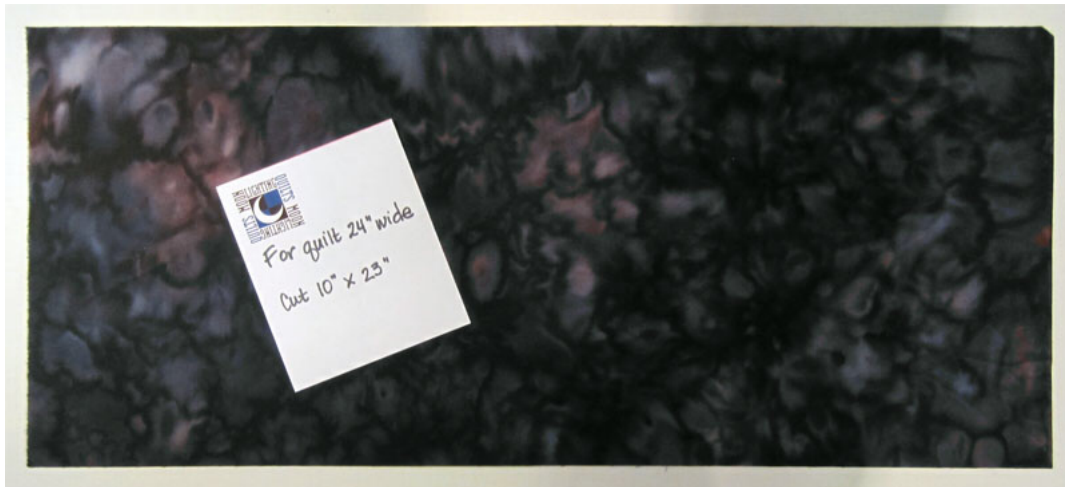
[In Defense of the Proper Quilt Sleeve \(...and how to make it in 6 easy steps\)](#)

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If your quilt is ever going to hang in a show with pipe-and-drape construction, then your quilt needs a proper sleeve. This sleeve needs to be a 4" tube, finished on both ends, roomy enough for the show pipes, and sturdy enough to hold up under the wear and tear of quilt show life. Here's how to make it.

1. Cut the Fabric

From a sturdy woven fabric, cut a strip 10" wide by the one inch less than the width of your finished quilt. If your quilt is 18" wide, then you would cut a 10" x 17" strip of fabric.



(<https://moonlightingquilts.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/step1cut.jpg>).

2. Finish the Ends

Hem the 10" ends of the unsewn sleeve by turning under $\frac{1}{4}$ " hem, pressing, turning under another $\frac{1}{4}$ " hem, and pressing again. Then, stitch in place. This covers the raw edges and creates a strong end for the sleeve. In case you care about thread color, this is the stitching that will show on your sleeve. Choose accordingly. The contrasting thread in the picture is for you, dear reader.



(<https://moonlightingquilts.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/step2finishends.jpg>).

3. Construct the Tube

Fold the strip **WRONG** sides together so that the hems are at each end and the tube is now 5" wide. I press at this stage to make things easier. Stitch along the raw edge side, taking a $\frac{1}{2}$ " seam allowance. Then, **BASTE** along the fold $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the edge. Yes, it sounds weird, but it's important to do this.



(<https://moonlightingquilts.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/step3constructthesleeve1.jpg>).

4. Finish the Sleeve

Press the sleeve so that the seam (raw edges) and the basting (folded edge) are nested together, one on top and one against the ironing board. I flip the seam allowance in one direction and the folded edge in the other direction. The task becomes more challenging for longer sleeves.



(<https://moonlightingquilts.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/step4finishthesleeve.jpg>).



(<https://moonlightingquilts.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/step4finishthesleeve.jpg>).

5. Attach the Sleeve to the Quilt Back

Pin the sleeve to the back of your quilt, centered left to right, about 1" below the top of the quilt. The raw edges should be toward the quilt and the basted fold should be away from the quilt. Do not take the shortcut of stitching the sleeve into the binding. Yes, it will save you time – unless you actually want to use the sleeve without it showing from the front. Resist the temptation.



(<https://moonlightingquilts.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/step5attachthesleeve.jpg>)

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Now, hand stitch around all four sides of the sleeve, including the ends where the sleeve is open. If you don't, the people who hang your quilt are likely to slip the pole between the sleeve and your quilt instead of inside the sleeve, leaving potential yucky residue on your artwork. When you stitch, try to catch the sleeve and the quilt backing only. If you go all the way through, your stitches will show on the front. If you catch too much batting, the quilt front could dimple a bit.



(<https://moonlightingquilts.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/step5aattachthesleeve.jpg>)

6. Finish the Sleeve

Now, rip out the basting that you stitched $\frac{1}{2}$ " away from the fold. This makes the outside of the sleeve a little longer than the side that's against the quilt back, creating ease to go around the pole. If you don't create this ease, the top of your quilt can appear rounded when the pole is in the sleeve. If you've seen this effect, you know why you want to avoid it.

Bonus Tip!

If you've decided not to bind the quilt, but use an escape hatch (or knife edge, pillow case construction, stitch and flip – whatever you want to call it) instead, cut the opening you use to “birth” or turn the quilt where the sleeve will go. The sleeve will cover the opening and your secret will be hidden. Laura Wasilowski calls this the trapdoor or encasement binding technique; check it out in her book *Fusing Fun! Fast Fearless Art Quilts*. Or [click here](http://fibermania.blogspot.com/2005/04/escape-hatch-finish.html) (<http://fibermania.blogspot.com/2005/04/escape-hatch-finish.html>) to read Melody Johnson's explanation of the escape hatch technique. I learned it from her at QSDS...but that's a story for another post.

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