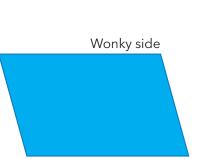# Tip of the Month

January 2017
Provided by Elaine Theriault of Northcott

Trimming a Panel

Panels come in various sizes and configurations. The original artwork is designed with straight edges, but the printing and finishing processes can throw some of the lines out of alignment. Panels can easily be squared up. Here are some tips to help make that happen.

If the panel is very wonky give it a stretch along the bias in the opposite direction that it's wonky. In this diagram you can see that the shape is skewed from the top left to the bottom right. In order to help bring it back to a rectangle, grab the top right and the bottom left and gently pull across the bias to help bring the panel back into the appropriate shape. See photo1.

Wonky side

Diagram 1

Photo 1

This may not fix the problem entirely but that's OK because the next step is to fussy cut the edges of the panel. Lay the edge of the panel that you want to trim about 5 inches in from the edge of your cutting surface, making sure the excess panel is hanging off the edge of the table. Place the edge of the ruler along the edge of the panel where you want to cut.

Photo 2

Photo 3

You can see in Photo 2 that the edge of the panel doesn't line up with the straight edge of the ruler. But I can tug the panel from underneath the ruler (because the panel is hanging off the edge of the cutting table) and line the panel edge up to make it straight with the edge of the ruler as shown in Photo 3.

Now I can use my rotary cutter to trim the edge. In this case, I'm cutting apart the pieces of a calendar panel, but this process works the same for the edge of any panel. Cut all four sides separately.

Photo 4

The corners may not be completely square but that's OK. When you add a border, make sure that you measure through the center lengthwise and add the same length of border to both sides and then measure through the center widthwise and add the same length of border to the top and bottom. That will help to square up the panel.

In Photo 4, you can see that my seam allowance is white. To help ensure that you don't get any white showing on the front of your project when you sew the borders on, instead of cutting a full ¼" seam allowance, cut the seam allowance slightly less than ¼". Then when you sew the ¼" seam, you won't have any white showing. Otherwise, I would recommend that you sew the border on with the panel side facing up. That way you'll be able to see the edge of the printed panel and sew on the edge of the printed panel to avoid any white showing up on the front.