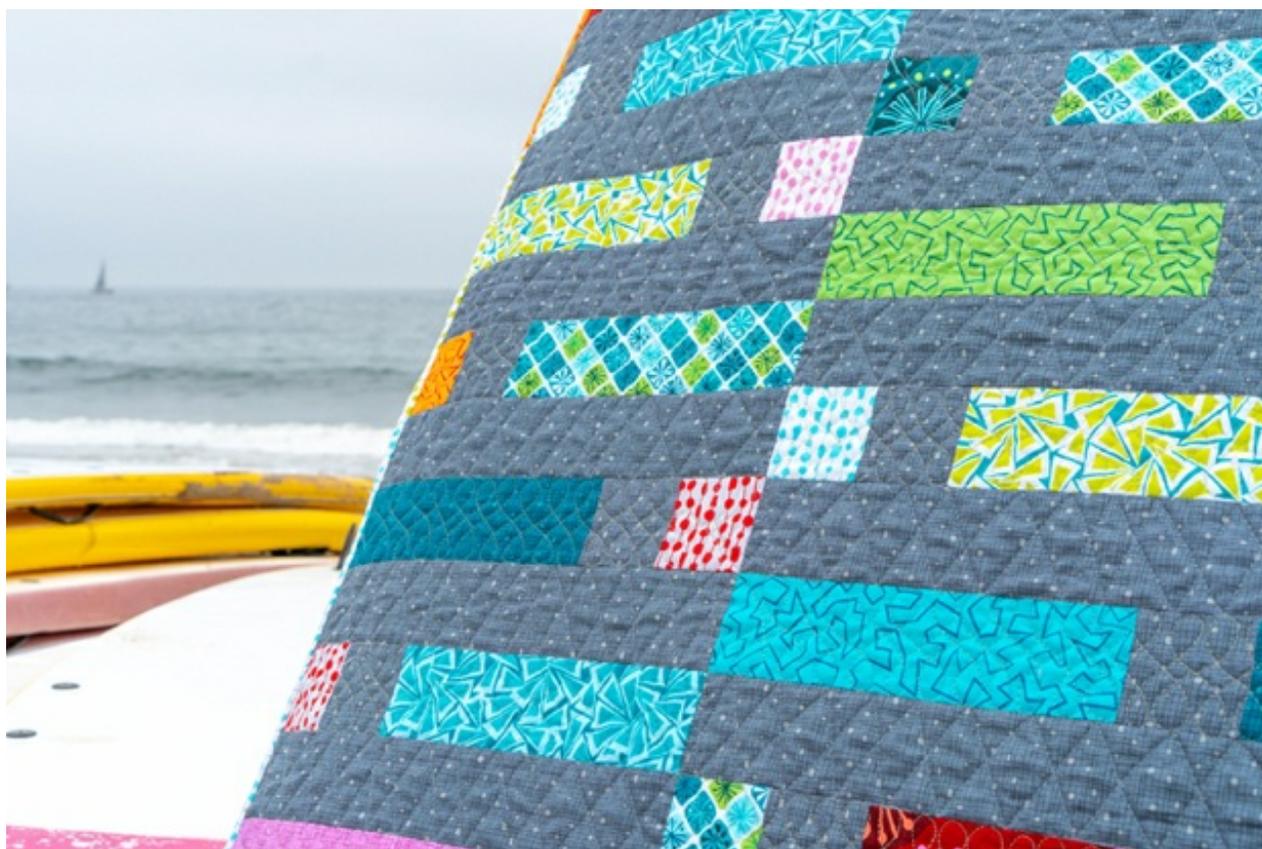


# Dot 'n' Dash Quilt Along Week 6 – Machine Quilting Part 1 SITD

[christaquilts.com/2018/09/21/dot-n-dash-quilt-along-week-6-machine-quilting-part-1-sitd/](http://christaquilts.com/2018/09/21/dot-n-dash-quilt-along-week-6-machine-quilting-part-1-sitd/)

September 21, 2018

Can you believe we are 6 weeks in to the quilt along?! The work you all are doing is fabulous and I'm excited to get to my favorite part – machine quilting!! This week we will Stitch in the Ditch (SITD) to secure the quilt for the jazzy free motion quilting we will do later. Many times, this crucial step is overlooked, and although it's not the most exciting part of machine quilting it's one of the most important steps for successful free-motion quilting.



*Machine Quilting Detail on Dot 'n' Dash Quilt. Stitching in the ditch allows you to break down the quilting into sections, which makes for more successful free-motion quilting later.*

## My Fave Machine Quilting Supplies

First of all, let me tell you about the needles I prefer to use for machine quilting. They are from Superior Threads and are called Topstitch needles. Look at the image below to see the difference between a Topstitch needle and a Universal needle. The Topstitch has a slightly sharper point which is helpful for penetrating the fabric. But the most important feature is a slightly longer eye (the hole) so that your thread won't shred. I love these needles so much that I use them for piecing as well.

I buy the needles in the blue package as they are most economical for my projects:

Next, the thread I use for piecing AND machine quilting is 50 weight 100% cotton from Aurifil. The 50 weight is thin, yet strong so that it will blend into your quilt. I'd rather see the overall texture of the quilting rather than the individual stitches, and quilting densely helps me mask any mistakes. After all, the easiest way to hide imperfect stitches is to surround them with more imperfect stitches!





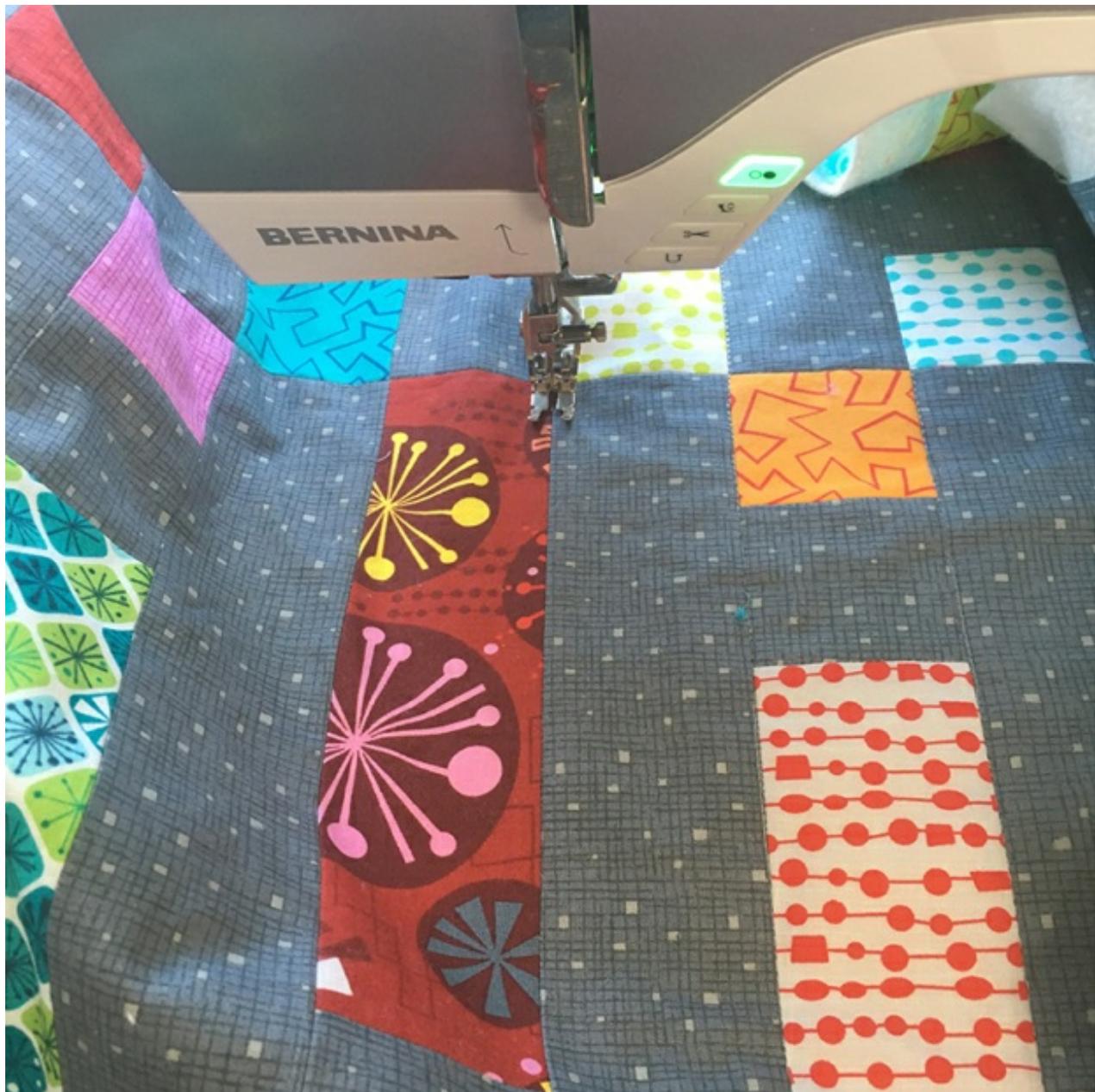
For this quilt, I'm using the medium gray #2605 from my [Piece and Quilt Neutrals thread collection](#). (My neutrals box also includes a lighter gray and a darker gray so that you're covered, no matter which shade of gray you like!)

## Stitching in the Ditch

Whenever I do any custom quilting, I will always "anchor" the quilt by stitching in the ditch first, in key areas of the quilt. For Dot 'n' Dash, it made sense to stitch in the ditch between each long row. I recommend using a walking foot, or a machine that has a built in dual feed system (such as the [BERNINA 770 QE](#) that I'm using).

The nice thing about pressing seams open, is that you can actually stay in the ditch, and you don't have to worry about switching thread colors for the low vs. high side of the ditch. Contrary to popular myth, stitching in the ditch with seams pressed open will NOT weaken

your seams. I've been doing it for years with no problem, and I find it actually strengthens my quilts and adds more stability. (Just think about it – if stitching over a previous line of stitching would cut your threads, then you'd never be able to backtrack over a seam, right??)



*I use the terms walking foot quilting and dual feed quilting interchangeably.  
Stitch slowly , so you can stay in the ditch as much as possible*

The built in dual feed turns my 1/4" patchwork "D" foot into a walking foot, feeding the quilt through evenly with no puckers. I recommend quilting with a slightly longer stitch length (3.0 instead of 2.5) to help compensate for any drag on the quilt. I also recommending reducing your presser foot pressure when doing walking foot/dual feed quilting (but not for FMQ).

Because you are making contact with the quilt on every stitch, this puts a lot of pressure on the quilt which can lead to tucks and puckers, especially when crossing seams. By reducing the presser foot pressure, it enables you to quilt with a lighter hand (or should I say foot?) on

the quilt.



*Look how nicely the gray thread blends into the blue Modern Marks print on the back.*

When stitching long straight lines across the quilt with a walking foot, I recommend stitching in one direction only, from top to bottom, rather than going back and forth. This will keep the quilt flatter, with less torque on the quilt. Many times, “whiskering” – or lots of little creases will appear if you stitch lines back and forth.



### *Scrunching and Smooshing in Progress*

To deal with the bulk of the quilt under the machine, I scrunch and smoosh it out of the way however I can, and only focus on one area of the quilt. I start on the right side of the quilt and work my way across the quilt, stitching one line at a time.

When I get to the center of the quilt, I'll rotate the quilt 180 degrees and keep going from the middle to the edge of the quilt. This allows you to deal with the least amount of bulk at a time, and by the time you get to center you know that the bulk will get less and less as you quilt the other side.



*Detail of stitching in the ditch*

Once either side of the strips has been stitched in the ditch, your quilt is fully secure to add more quilting. Note that I'm only SITD along the long rows, not in between the smaller squares. That would be too much starting and stopping for my taste! And don't worry, even if your ditching lines veer off a little bit, you won't notice it once you add more quilting.

## Quilting Homework

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Finish stitching the rows in the ditch and then get ready for free-motion quilting next week! Because we are taking our time and spending 3 weeks on machine quilting, you'll have plenty of time to ease into it.



*Next time we quilt, all we have to do is think about smaller sections, one row at a time.*

You could always stop right here and call it finished, but I can't wait to show you how to add more yummy texture next week! Be sure and share your progress and ask questions or get any trouble-shooting help over in my [Christa Quilts Facebook group](#), or on instagram [#dotndashqal](#).

[Click here for the start of the quilt along with supply list and links to all of the QAL steps.](#)