

Beginning Free Motion Quilting

Getting Ready:

Make several quilt sandwiches for practice. A quilt sandwich is to pieces of fabric top and bottom with a piece of batting in between. Secure the three layers with pins or basting spray. 12” to 18” square is a good size to start with. Solid colors will let you see your stitches easily. Cotton batting is good to start with, it sticks to the fabric.

Setting up your machine:

Have your machine manual close at hand. Keep your machine clean, This is important when free motion quilting. Every time you change your bobbin, brush out your bobbin case. Clean around and in between your feed dogs. A clean machine means better stitches and fewer problems. Remember free motion quilting is not like sewing. With sewing you stop and start machine frequently with pinning, piecing, or ironing in between. Quilting, your machine is running constantly for longer periods of time. Cleaning and maintaining is needed more often.

You will need your free motion or darning foot (refer to manual for letter or number of foot). You also need to drop your feed dogs. Your sandwich should glide smoothly under the foot. If not you may have to adjust foot pressure.

Helpful Tools:

Marking tools, water soluble markers (tested on fabric), chalk based markers, frixion pens, your favor choice.

Supreme Slider works very well. Sticks to machine and fabric glides under the needle.

Gloves , there are many different kinds of gloves. Most quilters find gloves mandatory. There are other devices, such as a quilt motion halo, to help move the fabric under the needle.

An extension table is very helpful. It makes your sewing area flat and reduces dragging of fabric. It helps support the weight of the quilt and reduces strain on your body. If you plan on doing ruler work this extension is a must.

Good lighting and a comfortable chair is important.

Begin Quilting:

Place your free motion foot on

Thread machine and bobbin

Lower your feed dogs

Check presser foot tension

Start with quilt sandwich and progress to small projects, such as panels, table runners, placemats

Needles and Thread:

Start with 80/12 topstitch needle and 50 wt polyester thread, top and bobbin to start with. Always use good quality threads made of long staples for less lint.

Tension:

For less problems use the same weight thread for top and bottom. Stitches should be lying in the middle of the quilt sandwich. If bobbin thread is showing on top, the loosen tension. Top tension is too tight and pulling bobbin thread to top. If top thread shows on the back, then tighten tension. Thread is too loose and being pulled to the back by bobbin thread.

Increasing numbers on dial will increase tension. No numbers, righty-tighty, lefty-loosey

MAKE SMALL ADJUSTMENTS AT A TIME.

Some Good Advice:

PRACTICE! PRACTICE! PRACTICE!

Pen and paper is one of the best ways to practice. Place your pen down on paper and draw with a continuous line like quilting. Draw circles, swirls, meandering lines. Just doodle.

Free motion skills are muscle memory skills. You just have to encourage your muscles to memorize the movements.

The more you practice the easier it gets. You don't have to sit for long periods of time, frequent short sittings work well also. Keep your machine set up with practice sandwich near and just sit for a few minutes in between chores. Begin with small projects that are "finishable". Enjoy the process! See your improvements. Set small goals and you will be surprised how quick things come together.

NOTES: