

# Quilters Corner

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## Free-Motion Quilting

### • Quick Tips:

Always wear quilting gloves. I know this sounds ridiculous but it relieves the pressure on your fingers when you are free-motion quilting. I also use a glove on my left hand when putting on larger borders and binding. It helps control the quilt.

- Thread breaking? Start trouble shooting by changing your needle. Try different needles if it keeps happening. I start with a quilting needle, progress to Microtex then topstitch. Make sure your machine is threaded correctly. Even if you think it is, re-thread it.
- Have you cleaned out around your bobbin case lately? I take a brush to mine ever time I put in a new bobbin. You'll be amazed how much lint there is.
- Use a practice sandwich of the same fabric and batting before beginning. Check your tension on front and back. You shouldn't see the 'loops' of the top or bottom thread. Adjust your tension if you are. If the loops are on top, lower your tension. If they show on the bottom, raise your tension. Some machines work best with a single-hole needle plate.
- Use a surround table if you have it. This makes life easier! You have to make sure none of your quilt catches on anything while quilting. This will make your stitches long and uneven. The surround table helps with the weight of the quilt. You also should have the space around the table cleared. Anything the quilt catches on will effect your stitches. I don't have a long table out in front of my machine, so I place my ironing board there to help take the weight of a big quilt.
- If your stitches aren't even; for example, you have some long ones, then a bunch of small ones, there are a few things you could be doing wrong. The first is the quilt could be catching on something...see the step above. Most likely you are either moving the quilt too fast for the speed you are going or you are going too fast for the speed you are moving the quilt.
- Doodle it! If you doodle on paper and don't lift the pencil, you are basically doing the same action as free-motion quilting. Practice this - it makes your brain remember and it will be easier to quilt. Try all different kinds of patterns. Meandering, loops, stars, hearts, leaves....you get the idea.
- Don't quilt when you are really tired.
- Have some chocolate.
- If you are having difficulties with something, take a sample of it along with your machine to your local shop and ask for help. They may be able to trouble-shoot for you.
- Take a class. If you don't have the time or inclination for that, try Patsy Thompson's Fast & Free DVDs on Free-Motion quilting. They are fabulous and you will always be able to review with them. She is a goddess.
- Practice, Practice, Practice. I know it sounds lame and you've heard it a lot, but this is the only way. Sorry.

I don't know how hot a tip this is, but I was recently quilting a quilt for someone who had used a higher loft polyester batting. It was just a small quilt and she had spray basted it for me and left it here at the shop for me to do. I didn't get to talk to her beforehand but knew what she wanted, so off I went to quilt it. I have to tell you, it was harder to quilt than a queen-sized quilt I did recently. The loft kept popping up next to the stitches I had just quilted so that I had to use my right hand to keep it down while I was stitching. I also had to put more stitches in it than I normally would have because it puffed up any place without stitches. Not only was it difficult to quilt but because of the issues, it took me longer. When I got to the border, things got even more out of hand with the loft.

The moral of this story is use good cotton, wool or bamboo batting. I love Quilters Dream mid-loft or low-loft. It doesn't have the problems with a higher loft and drapes beautifully when you are finished.

Hope this helps in some way. Don't give up, everyone gets frustrated. Trust me, it will get easier with some time. Once you get the hang of it, you'll be amazed at how much you'll be able to get done!