

Quilting Arts *presents* FREE-MOTION MACHINE QUILTING

How to Make a Quilt— 67 Machine Stitching Tips and Motifs



3 TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FREE-MOTION MACHINE QUILTING, PART 1
FRIEDA ANDERSON

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FRIEDA ANDERSON

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ROBBI JOY EKLOW

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ROBBI JOY EKLOW

You've heard the old adage about drawing, right? Practice makes perfect! The same goes for free-motion stitching. It takes time, patience, and commitment to get those stitches smooth and even, and your motifs to look impeccable.



In this eBook, two highly respected quilt artists, Frieda Anderson and Robbi Joy Eklow, share their knowledge and expertise for successful free-motion quilting. We hope you enjoy this compilation of exercises, tips, techniques, and motifs to help make free-motion stitching fun and enjoyable.

You'll find a lot of useful information packed in this booklet. I highly recommend printing it out to keep near your sewing machine as a handy reference guide.

Happy stitching!

Pokey

Pokey Bolton
Editor-in-Chief

Quilting Arts

MAGAZINE®

QUILTING ARTS *presents*
FREE-MOTION
MACHINE QUILTING
How to Make a Quilt—

67 Machine Stitching Tips and Motifs

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QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE® explores *ideas*, textiles, and techniques related to *embellished and contemporary art quilting*. Inside, you'll find design inspiration, *step-by-step* directions, gorgeous photography, and *motivation* for developing your personal style, at all skill levels.

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ALL THE right moves



"Sun Dance" • 28" × 26"

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FREE-MOTION MACHINE QUILTING, PART 1

BY FRIEDA ANDERSON

Back in 1984 I started a king-size Ocean Waves quilt for my sister's second marriage. It was machine pieced and hand quilted. She didn't receive it until after her third divorce. At that time I realized I needed a quicker way to finish quilting my quilts, so I started machine quilting. When I began machine quilting, I started right in on a queen-size quilt. I did mostly stitch in the ditch and outline quilting around the elements of the block patterns I was making. But I soon branched out and started doing

basic stippling. Once I got bored with that, I began to do all over free-motion quilting, which is quilting without marking designs first, creating my own and copying any free-motion designs that I saw. I learned mostly by trial and error, looking at other people's machine-quilted quilts and then going home and trying to duplicate what I had seen. I take a lot of photographs of machine quilting when I go to quilt shows, and I am still always looking for new ideas. What I have included here are a few simple tactics that I have discovered that will help you to be more successful with your free-motion machine quilting. I am happy to share my discoveries with you.

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

There are five basic elements that I think will make machine quilting more enjoyable for you.

FIRST YOU NEED SOME BASIC EQUIPMENT

- A sewing machine with the ability to drop the feed dogs is essential. You cannot do free-motion machine quilting well if the feed dogs on your machine do not drop. You can

cover up the throat plate, but that will create drag, and drag is one of our biggest enemies. So, if your machine does not have feed dogs that drop, treat yourself and buy a new machine that does.

- You also need to have a darning or embroidery foot on your machine.

Your machine should come with one, but you might want to purchase a new, clear one that has the front of the foot open. This makes it easier to see where you are going while you are working. Check with your sewing machine manufacturer for this item.

- I recommend getting a single-needle throat plate for your sewing machine. This has a smaller hole where the bobbin thread comes up to help create a smoother and flatter surface for the quilt to glide over.
- An adjustable chair is essential, like an office chair that will allow you to sit up high so that you are looking down on your quilting, not sitting in a hole. You should be able to rest your arms on your sewing table surface. You don't want to have to hold your arms up while you are machine quilting. They will get heavy very quickly, so you will get tired very fast, and that will affect your quilting.

SECOND, YOU NEED THE RIGHT NEEDLE

There are several kinds of sewing machine needles that work well, but you should be sure to use the one most appropriate for the fabric and thread you are using. This can make a big difference in both the appearance and ease of your quilting. These are the four needles I use the most:

QUILTING NEEDLE – This needle is designed to work through multiple fabric layers and across intersecting seams. It is best to use cotton quilting thread.

EMBROIDERY NEEDLE – This needle has a larger eye and special scarf (groove above the eye) to protect decorative threads from shredding or breaking. This needle is good for use with rayon and acrylic fabrics and threads.

MICROFIBER/

SHARP – This needle is best for silks, microfibers, and for penetrating densely woven fabrics.

METALLIC – This needle is larger and has a specially coated eye that accommodates metallic thread flow at all stitch speeds. A large groove in the shaft protects the thread and helps prevent shredding.

THIRD IS THREAD

The kind of thread you use will give your work a distinct look, so experiment; there are so many different threads on the market now. I suggest you use a lighter weight thread in your bobbin than in the needle, because this will help keep the bobbin thread in the middle of the quilt sandwich where it belongs. Or, if you are using a very thin thread in the top, then the bottom thread weight should match what is on the top. I also match the color of my

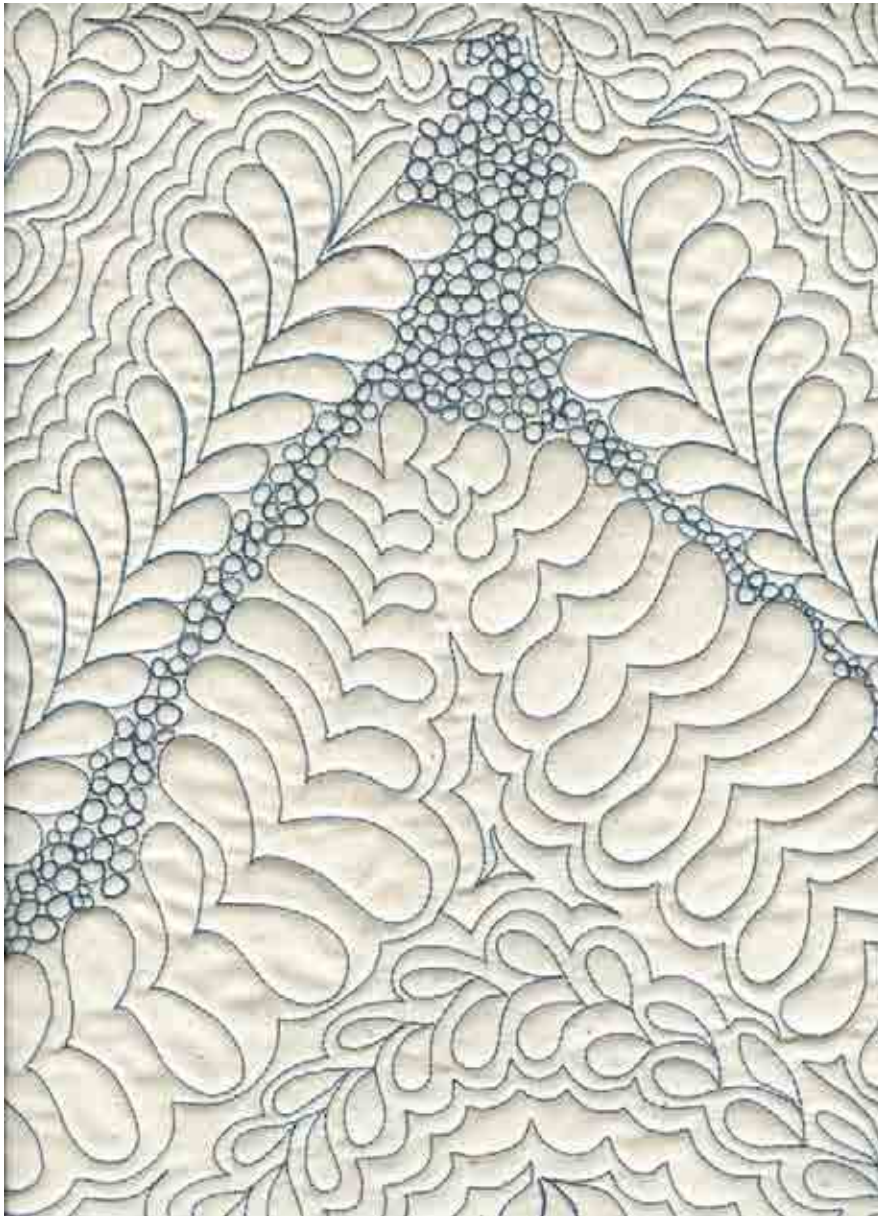


"Tall Trees" • 50" x 50"

thread in the top with that in the bobbin. I personally use a heavier weight thread most of the time, such as a 30 in my top thread, but I always use at least a 50- or 60-weight thread in the bobbin. Again, experimentation is the key. Remember, the thicker the thread the smaller the number. The weight of the thread is printed on the spool.

FOURTH, YOU NEED A FLAT WORK SURFACE

You will need a flat surface for your quilt to rest on as you work. I have an area that surrounds my sewing machine that is flat for at least two feet and extends all around the sewing surface of my machine. This is especially important for larger quilts. Drag happens very easily when your project rests on different heights, so it is best to have the surface all around you be the same height as your sewing



surface. Drag will cause you to be jerky in your motion and will create tension in your shoulders and arms. It is extremely important to have your arms supported and relaxed. Your arms should rest on your sewing surface, and you should use your hands like a hoop to move the quilt around. I have found that you should avoid pushing or pulling the fabric through the needle, but rather move it as if moving the fabric under the

needle, like paper under a pencil. I position my hands on either side of an area no larger than a dinner plate and, by grasping the quilt on either side, I move the quilt around. Once I have filled that area, I reposition the quilt and my hands, then start quilting again in a new area. I always try, when possible, to work my quilting away from myself. This allows me to see where I am going. It isn't always possible, but it is a general principle

to help you be more successful while free-motion quilting. Roll your large quilts so that they will fit nicely as a package inside the arm of the machine.

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST...

The fifth and most important factor in successful machine quilting is quite simple: practice, practice, practice. You cannot get any better if you don't quilt! The person who has a positive attitude and works hard at trying to improve will be the person who succeeds. There are a lot of books out on the market about machine quilting, and I suggest you read them. Don't just look at the pictures, but actually read them and try some of the exercises in the books. Everyone brings their own quilting expertise and has some little trick that you might find is just the thing to help you get better at machine quilting. Only by experimentation and practice can you discover what works best for you. The more comfortable you are with your quilting and your setup, the better you will become. Keep quilt sandwiches by your sewing machine to practice on. I always make a small sandwich of the fabric that I have in a quilt, and I use that sandwich to try out threads and needles and patterns before I begin quilting on my finished quilt.

A PATTERN FOR SUCCESS

What follows are some basic patterns for you to create. By starting with simple shapes and moving into more complex designs, you can learn to

draw with thread, just like drawing with a pencil, using free-motion machine quilting to quilt your creations. If you think of the needle as your pencil and your quilt as the paper, you will move the paper with your hands under the pencil to create the design on your fabric. It is important to develop a rhythm between your hands and your foot to make smooth stitches. Consistency is what you are striving for. By moving your hand to the speed of the needle, you will make clean, smooth stitches. You don't have to have "artist" abilities; you just need to practice, be consistent, and try hard.

If you are having trouble working a design without a pattern to follow, draw out your designs ahead on a piece of paper and place the paper on your sewing machine without thread in the machine and practice going around the pattern. Get used to the rhythm of the stitch. Start out making small projects to quilt, working yourself up to larger projects. Go beyond stippling.

In order to go beyond stippling, you need to be able to create good pivot points and sharp, tight right angles that are not rounded and wimpy. I often find that when I am working a design, I count to myself. By counting out the design I know when to change direction. When you change direction don't hesitate, just switch direction.

START QUILTING

Okay, let's start quilting. Keep these things in mind when you begin:

- Bring the bobbin thread to the top of your quilt. Hold your bobbin thread and top thread in your left hand and press down on

the presser foot of your sewing machine. After you have started moving, release the thread and with your left hand grab the fabric. Later, when you have stopped, tie a square knot and bury the thread in the same hole it came out of in the quilt sandwich, pulling the knot tight to make it pop into the sandwich.

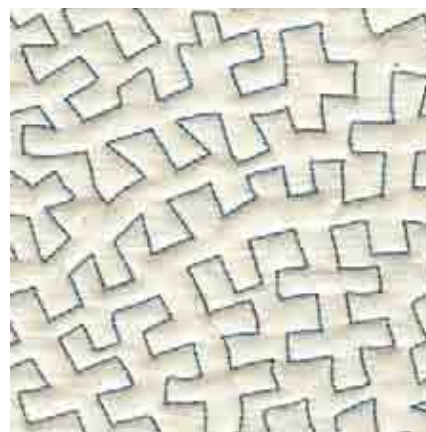
- Start out at a steady speed with the machine, one that you can control. Visualize the design you wish to make. Start moving the fabric under the needle to create the design. Move your hands at the same speed as your foot is making the needle move. Try to always work your pattern away from you. Look ahead to where you are going, just like when you drive a car.
- Remember to think about spacing. No matter what the size or shape of the design, there needs to be consistent spacing to create the best look. If your spacing is consistent, then you can change designs while you are quilting and no one will notice.
- Try not to let the needle go up and down in one place as this will create knots on the back of your work.
- Work back and forth and up and down, filling in an area about the size of a dinner plate. Once you can no longer move the fabric comfortably without stretching your arms and shoulders into an uncomfortable position, stop. If you have the option of needle-down on your sewing machine, use it. If not, when you stop, take a moment to put the

needle in the down position, with the needle inserted into the quilt. Readjust the quilt and your hands, and then begin to quilt again.

SOME SHAPES TO TRY

SQUARE STIPPLING – Try to turn your rounded stippling into squares. Make your corners crisp and clean; just keep moving. You can make this into triangles and stars. Inevitably someone asks in my machine quilting classes if it is okay to cross lines while machine quilting. My answer is this: it is okay as long as it is part of the design.

ME, ME, ME – It's all about "me." This is my friend Laura Wasilowski's favorite pattern, a series of Ms and Es. The



Squares



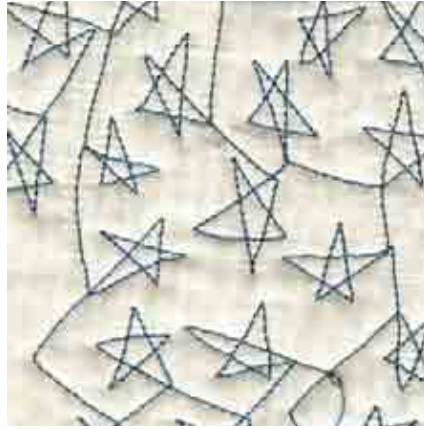
"ME"



Leaves

pivot point is very important in this all-over design.

LEAVES – All kinds of leaf shapes can be made very easily with free-motion quilting. They can be linked together with lines, clustered on top of each other, or connected top to bottom.



Stars

FEATHERS – Feathers need to be made from the outside in. Repeat to yourself: outside in, outside in. I tell my students to think of big Roger Rabbit ears. They need to be floppy and hang over a little. If you don't make the ears floppy, you will make hearts. Hearts are okay, but for feathers you need

floppy. You can even leave a little space between the feathers for a different looking design.

Feathers



Triangles

Many great quilting designs can be found just by looking at the world around you. The upholstery at the local coffee shop can be the perfect pattern to re-create in machine quilting. The pattern in the carpet at the hotel might be just what you are looking for. Visit the library often and look at books on all kinds of design and art. Take lots of field trips to interesting places and open your eyes. You never know where a great idea is going to come from. 🌿

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- To help the quilt sandwich slide smoothly over the surface of your sewing area, use spray sizing when you iron the backing of your quilt. This keeps it slick.
- Use Clover Non-slip Finger on your hands instead of gloves. This keeps your fingers tacky so you hold the fabric better.
- Try different battings, making samples and quilting them to see how you like them. At the big quilt shows you can often buy small samples from batting vendors.
- Change your needle often. Most needles only last for about eight hours of sewing time.
- Keep your sewing machine cleaned and oiled. Get in the habit of cleaning your machine after each project. Remove the needle plate from your machine and clean out the lint created from machine quilting. Follow the directions in your manual.
- Have your machine serviced at least once a year by a reliable dealer.
- Keep your machine covered when you are not using it. Dust and animal hair are a sewing machine's worst enemies.

ALL THE right moves

Adapted from
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TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FREE-MOTION MACHINE QUILTING, PART 2

QUILTING

Once you are comfortably seated at your flat surface, with your arms supported and relaxed, use your hands like a hoop as you move the

quilt around. Move the quilt under the needle as you “draw” your motifs, thinking of the needle as your pencil. I position my hands on either side of an area no larger than a dinner plate, and by grasping the quilt on either side, I move the quilt around. Once I

have filled that area, I reposition the quilt and my hands, then start quilting again in a new area.

When you are quilting, try to have the work move away from your body, so that you can always see what is right

in front of you. If you do it the opposite way you can't see behind the presser foot very well, and you may run into things, such as already quilted areas or design elements that you don't want quilted. It's like driving a car; you want to have your eyes more on where you are going next, not on exactly what you are doing. You should be looking in front of the needle, because that is where you are going next.



BY FRIEDA
ANDERSON

*“Georgy Porgy Puddin
in Pie” • 24" × 24"*

*Modern Baptist Fan**Traditional Baptist Fan**Individual Motif*

MORE FREE-MOTION STITCHING SHAPES TO TRY

CLUSTERED DESIGNS – Almost any shape can be clustered. Go from making very simple clamshell designs into bigger, bolder flower shapes. You start a new design on either side of the shape you just finished.

MODERN BAPTIST FAN – The traditional version of this motif looks very rigid

and straightforward, but you can throw in a few curves and variations to create a modern version of an old favorite.

INDIVIDUAL MOTIFS – This is one place you might want to actually mark your designs on the surface of the quilt. I always use chalk or soapstone to mark individual designs on the surface of my quilts. That way I just need to use a damp cloth to remove the marks after I've finished stitching. Individual

motifs are usually surrounded by some kind of simple stippling or filler design.

As you continue to work at your quilting, remember it takes lots of practice. Look all around you for inspiration—study the machine quilting when you attend quilt shows, read books, take classes, and watch for designs in your everyday surroundings. ♦

Clusters I*Clusters II**Clusters III*

For some people, quilting is a means to hold the quilt together. For me, the opposite is true: the quilt is there to keep the quilting thread from flying off into space. My quilts are made from hand-dyed fabrics that I have put together using fused raw edge appliqué, and because my quilt tops are generally pretty simple, I rely on intricate free-motion machine quilting to draw the viewer in closer.

My free-motion quilting designs consist of motifs that are generally about 1" square, with a different motif being used in each shape. More complex motifs, such as flowers, are slightly larger, maybe 2" square. I coordinate the color of the thread to the color of the shape on the quilt, and change both color and motif when moving from shape to shape. I avoid using the same motifs on adjoining shapes: if one shape has a motif with curves, the shape next to it has one with straight lines.

To practice these methods, gather the following supplies:

- **TWELVE 9" × 12" RECTANGLES OF FELT, ANY COLOR** Before I start quilting one of my fused quilts, I warm up on either a sample square, or on two pieces of felt, stacked together. Felt makes an excellent practice surface since it's cheap, allowing you to throw it away without feeling badly. Felt pieces are also perfect for testing new motifs.
- **SEWING MACHINE** All your machine has to do is move the needle

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BY ROBBI JOY EKLOW "Groovy Guitars"

IT'S polite TO stare

FREE-MOTION QUILTING MOTIFS
THAT INVITE A CLOSER LOOK



up and down and give you good tension. Set it up for free-motion stitching. I drop the feed dogs; if you can't or don't want to, just set your stitch length to zero. You will be controlling the stitches, not the machine. It's as if the machine is the pencil, and you are moving the paper. If you have a straight stitch plate, now's the time to use it. It helps avoid skipped stitches.

- **FOOT** You will need either a free-motion embroidery foot or a darning foot. I prefer a foot with an open circle (on a Bernina, foot #24). The open toe lets you see what you are doing and you can back up if you have managed to sew your foot into your quilt. Make sure your foot clears the surface of the quilt when the needle is up; some feet still put pressure on the quilt, but you want to be able to move the quilt freely when the needle is not sticking into the quilt.
- **THREAD** I prefer polyester or rayon machine embroidery thread, 40-weight. Wind a bobbin full of the same thread you will use in the needle. I like to use a thread stand to allow the thread to feed off the top of the spool. I have been having good success with Isacord Polyester Embroidery thread; it comes in a myriad of colors and the spool stands up on its own.
- **NEEDLE** I use both the Schmetz Embroidery needle, size 75, or Organ Titanium Sharps, size 12. Both of these needles help keep the thread from shredding.
- **EYE PROTECTION** I wear my bifocals while quilting. I'd rather not have a needle come flying into my eye.

SAMPLE 1

This is the easiest and most versatile of all the motifs. Start at the upper left corner, move down, move over to the right, go back up, move over to the right. When you've done about an inch square, change the proportions, so the longer lengths are going vertically. If you aren't in a good place to start another square, stitch a straight line along the outside of the squares you've made until you get to where you want to be.



SAMPLE 2

A square turned into a spiral. Start at the upper left, move right to the edge of the square, and move down just short of the edge of the square, leaving enough room for the line of stitching on the return trip. Then turn left, leave enough room again for the return trip, and go back. Each time, leave room for the return trip. When you get to the center, turn around and come out between the "lane" you left before (Figure 1).

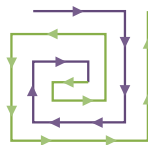


Figure 1



SAMPLE 3, CURVED SPIRALS

Same as Sample 2, but moving in a circle. The trip into the center is clockwise; come out

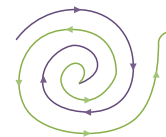


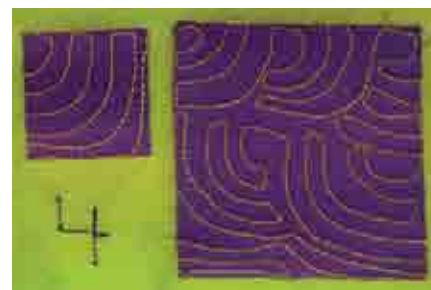
Figure 2

counterclockwise (Figure 2). You can fill almost any shape with a spiral—just follow along the edges, leaving room for a return trip. You can also make the return trip squiggly.



SAMPLE 4, FANS

Similar to Sample 1, you are just curving the long lines. Start at the center with a short arc, and make them longer each time. When they get too long, they get messy, so do only about six arcs, and then start a new fan, using the edges of the quilt shape and the last line you quilted as boundaries for the arcs.



SAMPLE 5

I call this “garlic.” Start at the upper left corner, make a small clockwise loop, then switch directions and make a counterclockwise loop around it. Then repeat. Start a new “garlic” whenever you want. I don’t have the loops all go back to the beginning of that specific motif; they “bounce” off earlier loops (Figure 3).

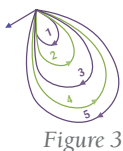


Figure 3



SAMPLE 6

This is the same as Sample 5, except the tops of the loops are pointy.



SAMPLE 7

This leafy design reminds me of waltzing: you take one step forward, one step back, then one step forward through the center of the shape you just made (Figure 4).



Figure 4



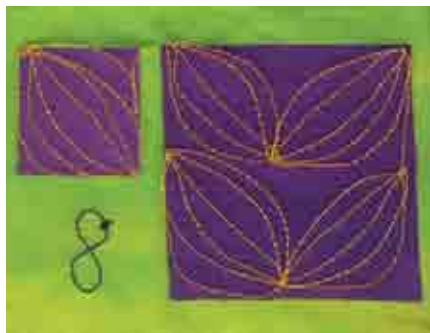
some tips

BEFORE YOU START

- Start quilting in the center and work your way to the edges, then trim the quilt to size when you are done. As I use small motifs and only concentrate on a small portion of the quilt at a time, I don’t have to move the entire quilt from top to bottom or side to side while I work. I am only concerned with the 3" or 4" area I am about to quilt. I bunch the quilt up and shove it into the machine, leaving just the working area free.
- Grip the quilt with your fists. I don’t use my hands flat on the work surface, as some people do. Because I can get a good grip on the quilt, I don’t need special gloves or a free-motion quilting guide. The quilt does not have to be flat on the surface of the machine—the only part that has to be flat is what is directly under the needle, and the foot takes care of that.
- Devise a way to support the weight of your quilt (like a long flat table) so that the weight of the quilt is not pulling against the needle.
- Don’t worry about a consistent stitch length; this comes with practice. Concern yourself more with striving for a smooth, rhythmic line. Also, don’t worry about crossing stitch paths. I cross them all the time.
- For thread, I choose to have the needle thread and the bobbin thread match. Even when the tension is adjusted perfectly, you will see both threads. I don’t ever use clear thread; I like the thread to be visible.
- When you are in the middle of the quilt, it’s easier to move the quilt up and down than from side to side. I usually start with a vertically oriented pattern. On patterns with corners, I find myself using one hand to control the “up-down” movement, the other to move the quilt from side to side.
- I space my free-motion lines about ¼" apart. You might want to work a little larger. It takes me about an hour to fill up a square foot of quilting. You can use the edge of your presser foot as a guide, and glide it along the edge of the shape or along the last line quilted. That is one reason I prefer a smaller foot to a larger foot.
- Don’t look at the needle when you are quilting; look at the line you are drawing on the quilt. And please do not look at this article while you are running the machine. Look at the picture, and then look at your quilt while you sew.

SAMPLE 8

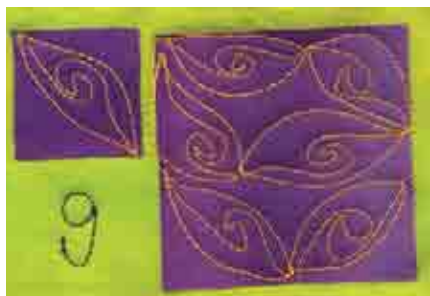
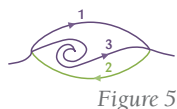
This is similar to Sample 7; just take the back and forth steps a few more times before moving on.



SAMPLE 9

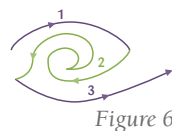
Same as Sample 7, except this time, make a spiral during the last forward step.

You can vary this motif infinitely by doing all kinds of interesting things within that shape created by the first two steps (Figure 5).



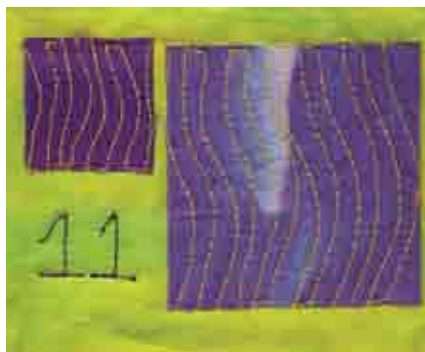
SAMPLE 10

This is similar to Sample 9, except the spiral comes in the second step. You can make this follow a line. Echo the outline to get back to the beginning of the line if you want to do another row (Figure 6).



SAMPLE 11

Curved lines are easier to repeat gracefully than straight lines.



SAMPLE 12

Make the ends of the lines pointy, then start curving them enough to “bounce off” the last line. Work in sections going up and down.



SAMPLE 13

Combine a spiral with straight lines to make flowers or suns.



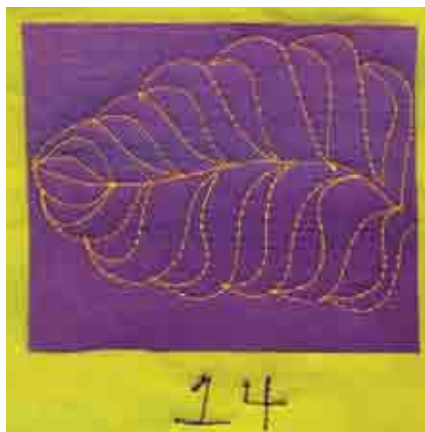
WHAT I DO COULD BE CALLED
“ORGANIZED MEANDERING.” I DON’T
DO ANY MARKING OR PLANNING AHEAD
OF TIME.

NO ONE EXCEPT YOU KNOWS WHAT YOU MEANT TO DO. THIS IS NOT BILLIARDS WHERE YOU HAVE TO SAY WHAT YOU PLAN TO DO BEFORE YOU TRY TO DO IT.

IF YOU ARE STRIVING FOR A MOTIF AND IT MORPHS INTO ANOTHER SHAPE, GO WITH IT. IF YOU GET BORED FILLING SPACE WITH ONE MOTIF, THEN SWITCH TO ANOTHER. THE FINAL EFFECT IS ALL THAT MATTERS. SOMETIMES I TRY TO MAKE A FEATHER AND END UP WITH A FLOWER. THAT'S FINE WITH ME.

SAMPLE 14

The spiky lines in Sample 12 can become a feather. Draw a curvy horizontal guideline from left to right, with a chalk marker. Start this feather at the center left edge, making spiky curves running along the line. Make them bigger as you move towards the right. This creates the top of the feather. When you are at the right edge, stitch right along the drawn line, then form the bottom of the feather by making spiky curves along the bottom half. After a while you won't need the guideline. You can also use the edge of a shape as a guideline and move up and down it, building up the design to fill space.



SAMPLE 15

Make more flowers. Form a center spiral, and make the spiky lines go back and forth around the spiral.



SAMPLE 16

Combine curved long lines and leafy shapes to make a design that looks like wood.



Practice and see what new motifs you can come up with. Next, we'll cover free-motion quilting for borders, playing with variegated thread, and combining motifs in a more complicated fashion. ♦

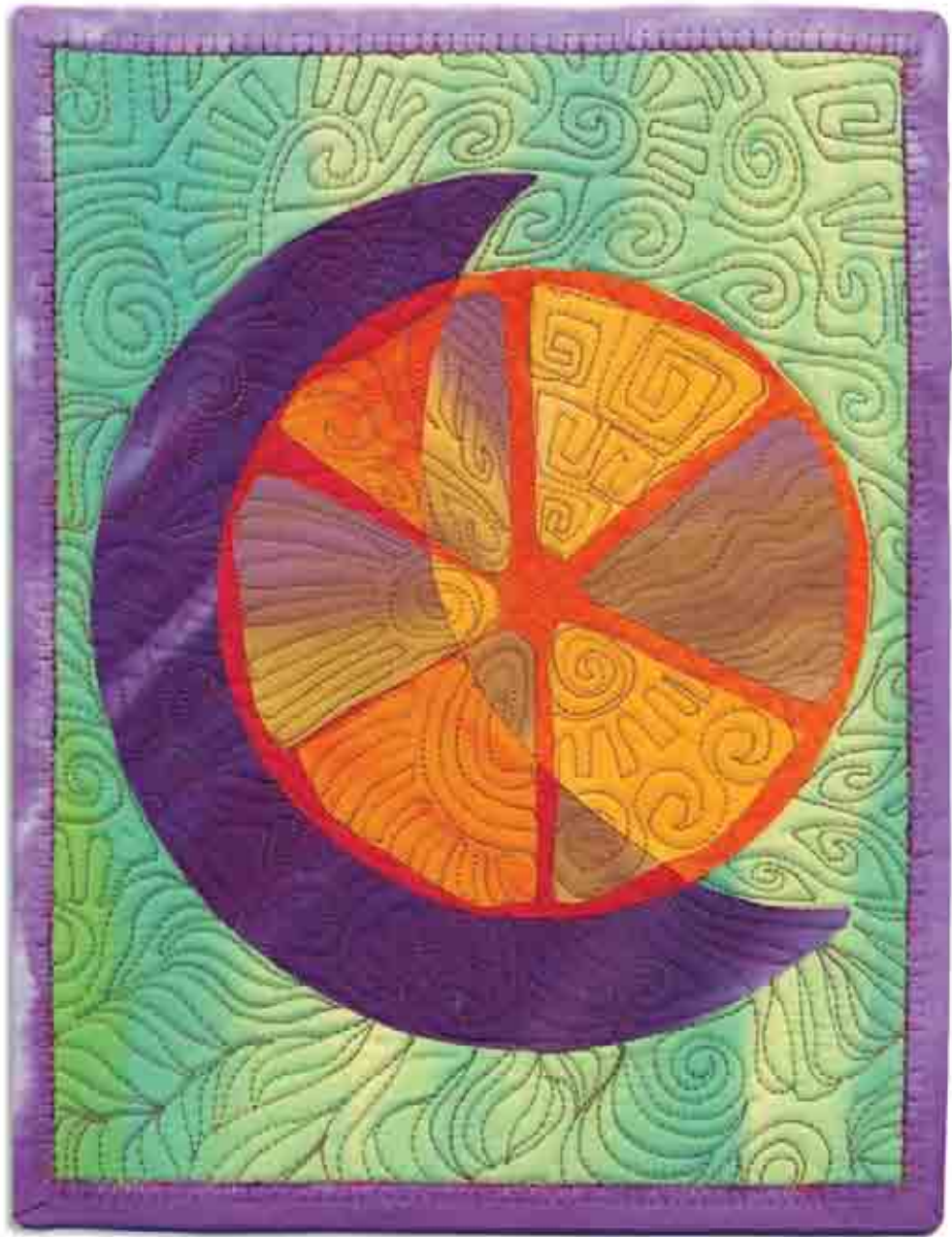
IT'S (still) POLITE TO stare

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VARIEGATED THREADS FOR FREE-MOTION EMBROIDERY

I love to use variegated embroidery thread. I think it makes a much nicer line on the quilt, and the change in color breaks up the line—your eye is more occupied with the color and doesn't see as many flaws. Have a look at a sample of the same motif done with solid color thread, and with variegated. (Sample 1)

Variegated thread comes in many types of fibers: rayon, polyester, metallic, and cotton. The rayon threads usually have a consistent “variegation” or color change. In other words, the length of each color on the thread is consistent. My understanding is that polyester thread is not as consistent. If you have a thread that is consistent, there are “games” you can play as you quilt.



BY ROBBI JOY EKLOW

“Citrus Moon”

Sample 1. Left shows solid thread, right shows variegated thread.



First, try isolating a color with a motif. (Sample 2) Start putting down a motif, and when you see the thread color change, start a new motif right away if you can. Eventually, you'll have filled a space with leaves or whatever, with each one stitched in one color. Don't worry that it takes a while to get it going. No one will notice you didn't get them all; they'll notice the cool mosaic effect of the ones that worked.

Another game to play is what I call "musical thread chairs." (Sample 3) I pick two motifs — let's say square spirals and round spirals. When the thread is one color, I quilt "in the round" and when the next color comes up, I switch to the square motif. I usually have to group two

colors together in one motif. When the second color comes up, it's time to work my way out of the center of the spiral. Again, don't worry if you can't separate the colors in the beginning.

Try a twin or even a triple needle to free-motion quilt. If your machine doesn't have two spool pins, use a thread stand for the second spool. Thread the machine putting one thread on each side of the tension disk. (If you have tension problems, try threading them together on one side of the disk). You may have to increase the bobbin tension if you are using two different thicknesses of thread and the bobbin thread comes up. Newer machines have a twin needle limitation that keeps the needles from swinging too far to the left or right; activate that if you are

using twin needles with any stitch that is not the straight stitch.

Remember that when you are moving the quilt, your motions to the left and right will create a skinny line with both threads going along that line, while forward and backward movement creates two separate lines. Think of this as similar to calligraphy, where the thickness of the line is changed by the directional movement of the needle. Use two different colors, two different types of thread, perhaps a rayon and a metallic, or whatever seems entertaining. (Sample 4) One downside to using a twin needle is that you will have a zigzag line on the back of the quilt. Decide if that bothers you or not.

You can free-motion quilt using other settings on your machine besides



Sample 2



Sample 3



Sample 4



Sample 5



Sample 6

the straight stitch. Set the machine up for zigzag, drop the feed dogs as you normally do, and move the quilt towards and away from you; moving the quilt sideways doesn't produce very good results. The beauty is in having the machine move the needle left and right while you vary the forward and backward motion. You can make an effort to line the patterns up next to each other, or just go for whatever feels good. One stitch I love to use is the "elastic" or "stretch" stitch. It's a three-step zigzag — three stitches towards the lower left, and then it zags. (*Sample 5*) You can also try this with a twin needle. (*Sample 6*)

FILLING IN BORDERS

When quilting a border, I start in the lower right corner, with the bulk of the quilt on the table instead of in my lap, and sew along the border as if I were driving along a narrow road.



Sample 7

Sometimes I like to have a wavy motif move along the borders of the quilt. To get some regularity, I will mark a center wavy line around the border, and "bounce" motifs along that line. That line becomes a divider between motifs. I can do "garlics" all oriented upward and to the left, on the inside of the line, all the way around the quilt. Then I go around doing garlics pointing up and to the right. The finished border resembles a feathered cable. (*Sample 7*) You can also change



Sample 8

the motif. For example, make flowers that fit in the space to the left of the line and garlics to the right, or even straight lines running from the wavy line to the edge of the quilt. Sometimes I will use one thread color to the left of the wavy line and another on the right. (*Sample 8*)

You can also mark circles along the border, fill them in with flowers or some other round motif and go back and use a rectilinear motif to fill in the space between. (*Sample 9*)

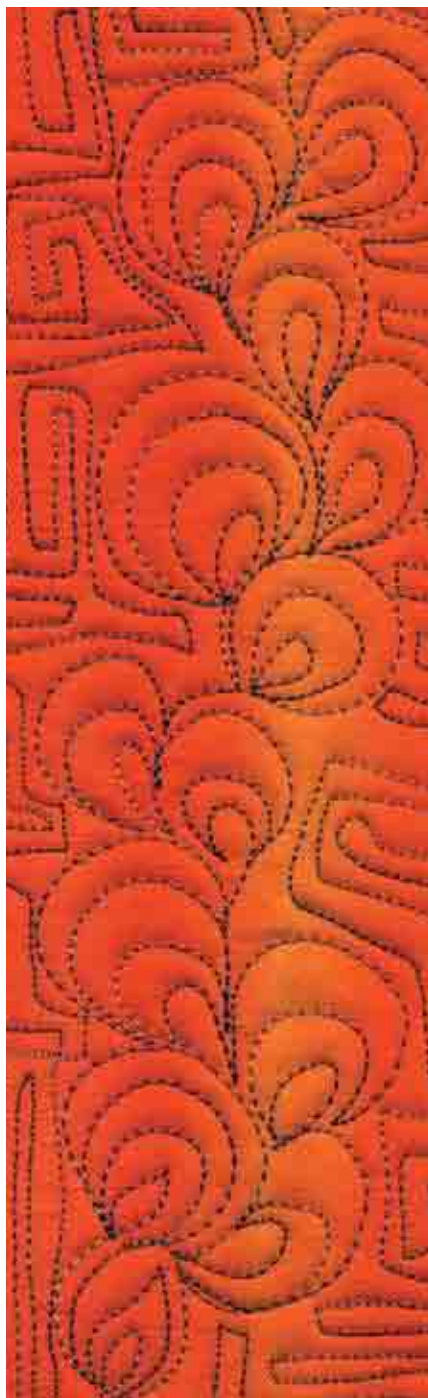
COMBINING PATTERNS

If you have a large area to fill, one way to make it more interesting is to combine two or more patterns. I will start out with a curvilinear pattern, such as garlands, and move it along in

one direction, imagining a line drawn on the background. Then I'll go back and fill in around it with a rectilinear pattern; when I get bored with that, I'll switch to a third pattern, or even a fourth. (*Sample 10*)



Sample 9



Sample 10

The more patterns you use, the more interesting the quilt will be to the viewer. The viewer doesn't know what patterns you were intending to use, so feel free to switch around and try new things as much as you want. Keep your eye out for patterns that you can translate to free-motion quilting. 🌟

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