

# Free -Motion Quilting

*Instructions by Craft Apple*

The beauty of free-motion quilting using meandering stitches is that it doesn't require drawing a pattern on the quilt top. Meandering stitches help blend the fabrics beautifully together. The meandering paths that the stitches take can be very close together, or farther apart. Consider practicing on a scrap piece of fabric to determine which works best with your fabric print scale. Use the simple steps below to practice free-motion quilting until you are comfortable quilting in this manner on your quilt sandwich.



- Make a mini quilt sandwich ~ 10" x 10" using scrap pieces of fabric and batting: Layer batting between 2 pieces of pressed fabric. Spread top and bottom fabrics out flat with hands. Pin if necessary to keep layers in place.
- Attach a darning foot to your machine.
- Set presser foot pressure to zero.
- Lower the feed dogs (consult your machine's manual on how to do this if necessary).
- Put on quilting gloves, if available (rubber gloves are a good substitute).
- Starting in the center, make one stitch, ending with needle up. Using the top thread, pull the bobbin thread all the way up through the top of the quilt (a pin may be helpful in pulling up the bobbin thread). Stitch in place over the ends of the thread for 3 stitches. Snip thread tails.
- Place both hands on fabric with thumbs pointing toward each other forming a three-sided box around the needle. **Remember that the quilt sandwich should not rotate.** It will simply glide up, down, side to side and diagonally.
- Start sewing, moving your quilt sandwich left, right, up and down. Practice diagonals and loops. Practice writing your name or drawing stars.
- Practice meandering stitches as shown above. Note: The diagram above is meant only to be a guide. Meandering stitches are meant to be random.
- Listen to the rhythm of the machine and try to move your fabric at a consistent speed. Pay attention to your stitches. Are they longer than you'd like? Try decreasing the stitch length by moving the fabric more slowly. Are they shorter than you'd like? Try moving the fabric more quickly under the machine, increasing the stitch length. As you become more used to stitching this way, you'll find your rhythm and refine your technique.
- Pay attention to your posture. It's easy to hunch over in concentration but quilting this way for any length of time can strain your back and neck.
- Consider winding up several bobbins before free-motion quilting on a quilt. Free-motion quilting uses a lot of thread and having several bobbins filled prevents the sewer from having to stop to refill a fresh bobbin.