

General tips for Beginners

Choose a busy backing fabric to remove the focus from the quilting on the back of the quilt.

Condition or moisturize your thread in Calgary's dry climate. Put thread in a small plastic bag with a damp sponge or paper towel the day before you want to use it.

Use the same thread in both the top and the bobbin to hide any small inconsistencies in tension.

Use a stitch length of 0 or lower your feed dogs before free motion quilting.

Choose an appropriate needle for the size of your chosen thread. A good general choice is Schmetz Top Stitch 90/14. This has a larger eye and accommodates many slightly heavier quilting threads to minimize breakage. The sharper point penetrates the three layers of the quilt sandwich. Don't use a dull needle; this can cause skipped stitches.

A 40 weight thread is a good choice to have the quilting show while avoiding problems that can come with using a heavier thread. A lighter weight (perhaps 60) would work better for a background stipple.

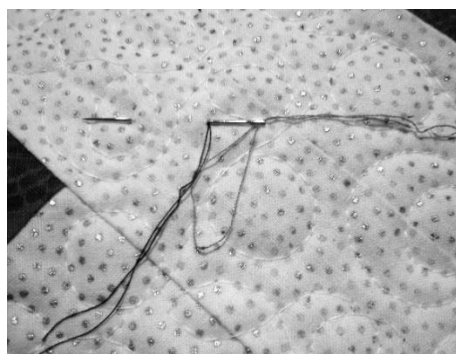
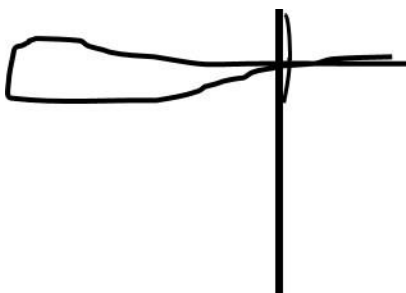
Use quilting gloves or Easy Liner shelf liner to get a better grip on your quilt and to move it more easily as you free motion quilt.



When starting a line of free motion quilting, take one stitch and pull the bobbin thread to the top to avoid tangles on the underside of your quilt. You can bury the tails once the quilting is completed.

Try this technique for burying thread tails. Take a 10" length of thread (regular polyester works well – you don't want a lot of thickness) and double it. Take the doubled thread and thread it through a needle with a largish eye so that you have a loop on one side (use the smallest needle that you can thread with the doubled thread).

When you want to bury quilting threads, simply put the quilt thread ends (shown in black) through the loop (grey) and put the point of the needle at the point where the threads are attached to the quilt. Take a large stitch through the quilt top and batting, but not the backing (at least 1/2") and come back out to the top of the quilt. Pull the needle through and the loop will drag your quilting threads through as well. At this time you can cut off the ends of the quilting threads, leaving a 1/2" tail buried in the quilt. You can keep using the same length of thread many times before it breaks.



Press'n Seal for Quilting Templates

Free motion quilting can be made easier by using pre-drawn templates and simply following the lines of the template. Golden Threads Quilting Paper is one product that can be used for making your own templates. This paper is somewhat see-through so that it can be placed properly on the quilt, but it must be pinned in place before stitching.



Another useful product is Glad Press'n Seal. Use a ball point pen to trace your pattern onto the non-tacky side of the Press'n Seal. Let the ink dry before using the marked plastic. Some quilters prefer a fine Pigma pen. Once you have marked your template, place it on the area to be quilted with the marked side up. The slightly sticky side will adhere to the quilt – no need for pins! The plastic can be easily re-positioned or removed.

Quilt along your marked lines right through the plastic. Once done, tear the plastic away. Try using a lint roller to pick up stray bits of plastic after you have removed as much as you can by pulling it away from your stitches.



Use only simple, open patterns so that the plastic can be easily removed after the quilting is done. For a more complicated design it might work well to use the Press'n Seal for the main outline and then add details after the plastic has been removed.

A template of an open, continuous design for an 8" block has been provided on the next page. You are welcome to try this design or re-size it to suit a different block.

