

Kickstart your Quilting Creativity by Deonn Stott

Everyday Quilting

You've made a quilt. You've asked the questions to determine the purpose: Who is it for? How will it be used? You want the quilt to be lived in, used, loved and worn out. It's going to be a soft, warm hug-of-a-quilt. Maybe it's a baby quilt. Maybe it's a lap quilt or dorm quilt. Could even be a wedding quilt. You've chosen the batting, the backing, the thread. The quilting machine is all set up and ready to go. What's next?

I) Set yourself up for Success

- A. Tools—new needle, good thread, grippy gloves or something to help your hands to grip the quilt.
- B. Basic Designs (Design your own)
 - 1. Find your own stipple signature.
 - a. Quilt with markers on newsprint, holding it the way your hands will be when you're quilting—grab the marker in a fist as if holding the handles of a longarm, or keep hands flat and put the marker between two fingers. Practice the motions of Freemotion quilting to build muscle memory.
 - b. Quilt comfortably—ergonomically correct
 - c. Try for a consistent stitch length. Domestic machines: you are the stitch regulator. Longarm machines normally have a stitch regulator built in.
 - d. Strive for a balanced design with generally equal distances between motifs.
 - 2. Try a stipple path, only this time, add loops. Some people find this easier. Don't flow all in one direction, go up, down, side to side and back and forth to keep the quilting balanced.
 - 3. Add a shape to the path, such as a star, a flower, a butterfly, a leaf, a heart, etc. — build skills.
 - 4. Create new shapes for any occasion, use motifs from the quilt or fabrics within the quilt.
 - 5. Quilting should enhance the look of the quilt, not compete with it.

II) Building Skills— Edge to Edge designs

- A. Quilt a shape, then echo the line.
- B. Add to the shape, echo, travel, repeat the motif. Fill the space randomly or chalk a mark to plan out where you want a specific motif to land.

III) Fuss-Free Feathers

- A. Chalk a spine
- B. Quilt teardrops with a long tail along one side of the spine.
 - 1. Fill space by echoing the motif to the edge of the block
 - 2. Variations
 - a. Leafy vine
 - b. Half-hearts on each side of a vine.
 - c. Ferns—pointy
 - d. Curlicues instead of a teardrop
 - e. Add texture to the individual feathers.

1) Set Up for Success

Quintessential Quilting Essentials: Tools: (Snippets) Zipped Bag, Pin holder, Thread-catcher, Needles and screwdriver, oil, paintbrush, EZSnips, chalk/chalk pencil and rulers: straight, curvy, slightly curved. CD holder to chalk circles for feathered wreath, arcs, etc.

Favorite nippers to clip threads (but not clip the quilt— EZ Snips: www.embroiderthis.com/ezsnipecursci.html

Quilting Designs: Start doodling! Markers, newsprint. Hold the marker the same way you'll be holding the machine handles. Start with a large meander: puzzle pieces, reverse directions, bump, bump, travel... Fill in the blank spots, change directions. Use some item as a reference: your thumb, Styrofoam popcorn, etc. You will come to develop your own stipple signature. Aim for consistent spacing. Now add a shape to the line: circle, leaf, (something for any season or occasion) heart, flower, butterfly, star, boat, pumpkin, holly. Take a clue from a motif in the fabric for a new shape. Even if you never use a meander stitch or stipple again, practice traveling on the same path as a meander for a puzzle-like fill; get used to making the shapes forward, upside down sideways, backwards, any direction. Do not leave large areas of the quilt un-quilted. Practice to get good muscle memory. Make the motifs small for an interesting fill design. Stitch them all in a row for a fun border. And just like driving a car, look up, look ahead to see where you need to travel. Now take your design to the machine. Use the chalk to mark where you want your motif to land, or to indicate the direction you want it to travel. Get some good resources for ideas, then practice doodling them out in a continuous line: teddy bear, racecar, dinosaur, etc. Relax your shoulders, tuck the elbows in, remember to blink, breathe and swallow. Put on some music and go to town! Practice, practice, practice. When you practice, you improve.

2) Casual Quilting for Everyday Quilts. Mark a line, make a shape, then echo that shape. Big, loose, "less-dense" quilting. A less-dense motif allows the loft of the batting to come through to make a soft, warm hug of a quilt, more apt to be used, lived-in and loved. Quilt a shape, echo, reverse the shape, echo, etc. Start on one side and make your way around the quilt and back to the beginning. Begin with one shape, then build on it. Practice making the motifs right, left, up, down, sideways, alternating directions, filling in as you go. Use an echo of your line or shape to travel. Again, try to be consistent in your spacing. Do not leave large areas of the quilt un-quilted. Quilting smaller shapes with more density makes interesting background fillers as well. This casual echo also works well in a border.

3) Fuss-Free Feathers. Chalk a spine. Determine which direction you want the feathers to travel, then quilt large, loose teardrops with a long tail that follows the chalk line. Don't stitch the spine, these are "spineless" feathers! Leave a space between the feathers themselves, about 1/8" to separate. It adds texture, separates the feathers, and eliminates the need to retrace lines. Decide if you want the feathers fit the edge of the area you're quilting, or make them a consistent width on either side of the chalked spine, then echo the edges to fill. Use clumps of feathers as an overall design. Echo the motifs to travel to the next clump. Practice making them in different directions, shoot off in odd angles; combine a couple of motifs to add interest. Use feathers for a border or specified area. Chalk a curvy spine around the perimeter of the quilt and go to town. Try different variations. Make the feathers wavy for a leafy look—make them pointy for a nice fern. Allow a little more space between the ferns to create the illusion of twice as many leaves. Throw in an odd curlicue and pointy feather at the top and you have a peacock feather.

Above all, HAVE FUN QUILTING!

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