

The Joy of Quilting

With Your Long-Arm Quilting Machine



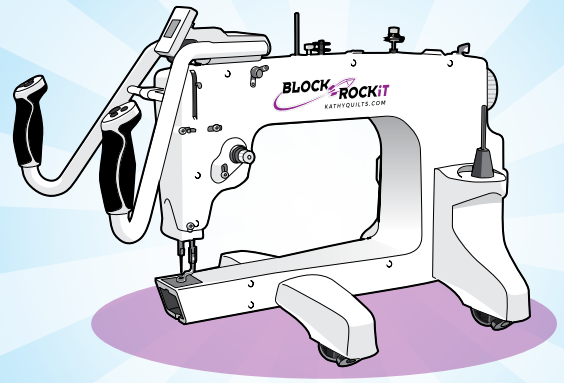
KATHYQUILTS
QUILT BETTER

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The Joy of Quilting with your **Block Rockit**



Introduction

Machine quilting has been a part of the Kathy Quilts family for many years. We are excited to share our passion for quilting with you by offering the Block Rockit Long Arm Quilting Machine. For the past 20 years, because of our commitment to quality, we have exclusively sold quilt frames from the Grace Company. Recognizing a need in the quilting industry, we began working with the Grace Company to design and create a quality, long arm quilting machine that would be affordable for every budget. After 5 long years of engineering and testing, the Block Rockit was ready. We are truly grateful for the opportunity to present a quilting machine that is more accessible to everyone. We absolutely love the Block Rockit and we know you will too!

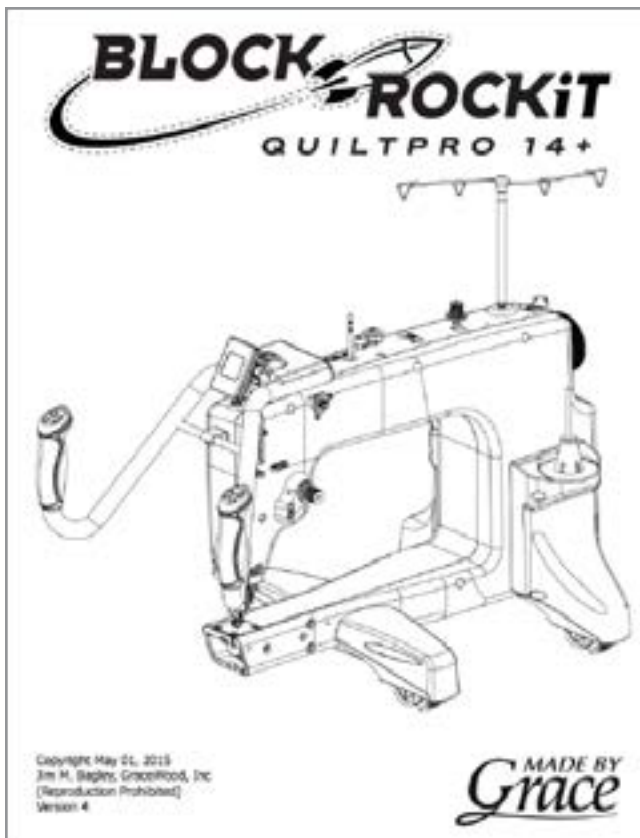
Traditionally, long arm quilting has required both a lot money and space in your home, making it difficult to have as an everyday hobby. The Grace Company developed its frames to meet the increasing demand for smaller, more affordable, home quilting machines. Initially, they were designed to be used with a domestic home sewing machine. However, it is very difficult to quilt large quilts when the machine has a small throat space. The Block Rockit fits on these frames with the added bonus of having enough throat space to quilt full size blocks to the very end of your quilt.

Purpose of this book

This book is divided into four lessons:

1. Basics of the Quilting Frame
2. Basics of the Block Rockit
3. Getting Ready to Quilt
4. Quilting Above and Beyond

The Block Rockit and frame users manuals will give you very good details on the different parts and functions of your set up. It is very important to read everything in your manuals BEFORE you set up! THIS book is a supplement to the manuals, adding a candid perspective from Kathy Quilts. Referring to this book often will help give you new insight as you improve your quilting skills and learn how to better care for your quilting equipment.



the easy to follow Block Rockit users manual is always good to have near your work area.



How can YOU benefit from reading this book?

We want to help you improve and master your machine quilting skills. Whether you are new to machine quilting or you have had your frame for a while and feel like you haven't progressed past stippling or meandering, we are here to help you become a more skilled machine quilter.

At times, stippling has its place as a way to fill empty space. But your handcrafted quilt is not just empty space to fill; it's an expression of your creativity. Your quilting should bring out the personality and beauty of any quilt you are working on. More than simply stitching thread on fabric or creating a unique design, machine quilting requires that you know the proper care of your machine and frame and how to develop the right mindset and work environment that will enhance your creativity.

Like any skill, quilting requires practice, problem solving, patience, and stretching yourself in order to see steady improvement. Our goal is to help you understand the different aspects of quilting and help you find more enjoyment as you learn new ways to express your creativity in each and every quilt.

In Lessons 1 and 2 we describe how to set up, use, and care for your frame, your working environment, and Block Rockit. In Lessons 3 and 4 we describe the basics of quilting and we dive deeper into quilting with your own personalized style.

Remember to learn from your mistakes! Consistent practice and a positive attitude can change quilting problems into quilting perfection. So become familiar with your new Block Rockit, and prepare to quilt better!

1

Lesson One: Quilting Frame Basics

Having sold thousands of Grace quilting frames for over the past 23 years, we really understand what features a quilting frame should have to help enhance the quilting experience. The Grace Company is the world leader in quilting frame manufacturing. Grace has three quilting frames that offer a great quilting solution for almost any situation. We are proud to offer them on KathyQuilts.com. The [Q-Zone Queen](#), [Q-Zone Hoop](#) are entry level steel frames and the [Contium](#) is a professional grade steel frame that is available in 8, 10, and 12 foot lengths. Click the links for more information on these frames. Each frame has unique characteristics to fit different quilting needs. The Contium is the frame we recommend most but if you can't fit at least a five foot frame in your space you might consider the Q-Zone Hoop frame which require about five feet of space.



When considering which frame you want to purchase think of the largest quilt you might ever do so your frame won't be too small. Space is also a factor when ordering your frame. Measure your quilting space so that Kathy Quilts can help you decide what will work.

In this chapter, we will discuss how to properly set up and care for your frame, leaders, and work area. Doing so will help remove distractions, increase your comfort, and make your quilting experience much more enjoyable.

Make sure your frame is level

Your frame should be level, meaning it must be completely flat across the top, and the rails and ends should be completely parallel with each other. A level frame will help you avoid many potential problems while quilting, such as losing tension, skipping stitches, or a drifting carriage on the frame. If you are experiencing any of these problems, be sure to check that your frame is level. The Gracie Queen, Gracie King, and Launch Pad frames have height-adjustable legs to help level the frame. After adjusting the legs, use the manual foot levelers that come with all the frames for micro adjustments to fine-tune your frame's height.[1]

We recommend using a level to check all sides of your frame to see where adjustments might be needed. If you do not have access to a level, you can test to see if your machine/carriage drifts in any direction when you let go of the handle. Move the machine toward each end of the frame, and also the middle of the frame, let go of the handle and see if it stays in place. Adjust the foot levelers so that the machine will stay in place if you find it is drifting one way or the other.

HELPFUL VIDEO: [How to Level Your Frame](#)



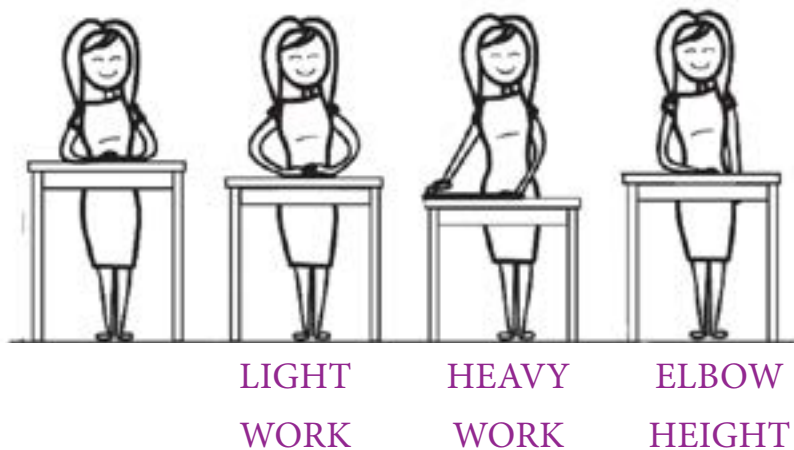
KATHY SAYS: Having your quilting frame perfectly level is very important to your quilting experience. You will know how level your frame is once you put your machine on it. It is really easy to level up your frame. If your machine coasts to one side or another raise the foot levelers on the corresponding leg of your frame. Watch the video when in doubt.



The importance of frame height

It is important to adjust the frame to its proper height for ergonomic reasons. Working (especially sewing or quilting) can be hard on anyone physically, so it is important to have optimum comfort while you quilt to avoid stress or injury.

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), “Tables should be adjusted so the work is at elbow height and wrists are kept straight. If the table is too low, workers will have to hunch forward, putting strain on the back, neck, and shoulders. If a table is too high, workers will have to raise their shoulders to get their arms high enough to work. This posture tires the neck, shoulder, and upper back muscles and may result in muscle pain.” [2]



consider these
guidelines
as you decide the
height
to set up your Frame

Precision work while standing should be done about 2 inches above elbow height, allowing your elbows to have support when needed. Precision work is usually specified as writing or small assembly. Thus, precision quilting (smaller/more intricate quilting) could fall under this category if you are planning on doing very detailed and intricate quilting.

Achieving the proper height of your frame for your body type may take time to be perfectly adjusted. If you are having any pain from quilting, have someone watch you as you quilt, or film yourself and evaluate. Watch for any awkward neck, shoulder, elbow, or wrist movements. Even the smallest wrong movement performed over and over can cause a lot of pain, and you should always have a pain-free quilting experience.

All of the current model Grace Machine Quilting Frames come with height adjustable legs. However some of the older frames are not height adjustable (The SR2). In that case, you can find bed risers to fit under the legs of your frame or have some sort of risers built for your frame.

If the frame is too high for you even on the lowest height setting possible, it would be wise to stand on some sort of platform that spans the entire length of the frame so that you can comfortably quilt for extended amounts of time. You may also try stacking ergonomic standing mats instead of building a platform.

Frame Height Checklist:

- [x] You can see what you are quilting.
- [x] Your body position is natural and comfortable (you don't feel like a contortionist when you quilt).
- [x] You are not hunched over or your neck is not straining forward.
- [x] You can see your workspace. Consider wearing reading glasses if you can't.
- [x] Your wrists feel comfortable while holding onto the quilting handles.
- [x] Your elbows are at the right height.
- [x] You don't lift shoulders repetitively, which would cause pain around the shoulder blades and upper back.

Remember, if quilting doesn't feel comfortable now, it won't feel any better after hours of quilting. It can be frustrating having to adjust your frame several times, but in the end, it will really help the quality of your quilting. Please also remember that we are not professionals when it comes to ergonomics, but we have shared the information that we have found helpful. If you find that a different frame height works for you, then by all means, use it! Just always take into consideration how well you feel when quilting.



KATHY SAYS: Find the frame height that feels best for you. I had to raise my Gammill several times before I finally got it right. I find having higher gives me better posture and I can see what I am quilting. :)

Cloth Leaders

Cloth Leaders allow you to quilt all the way to the end of your quilt. Without them you would have to have the quilt back be several inches longer so you could quilt all the way to the end of your quilt. The Grace Company Continuum frame includes Start Right Cloth leaders.



KATHY SAYS: Before you put your leaders on the frame, mark the center of your rails and the center of your leaders. Make sure these centered markings are always aligned, especially when you will be pinning a quilt to the leaders.

If you make your own leaders, make sure to get leaders made of sturdy, durable fabric that will maintain the tension on the quilt. If the leaders stretch excessively, the quilt will not be tensioned evenly.

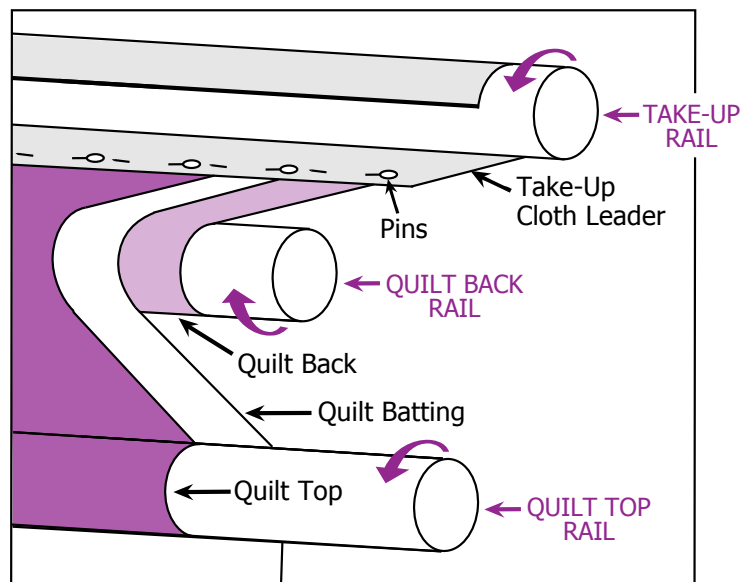
Some Grace frames, like the Continuum, have leaders that are installed by being glued and taped onto the rail for use (the first time you install them). Older Grace frames come with the Fabri-Fast system for cloth leaders that allow you to slip a tube into one side of the leader, which then clips into the groove of the rail. After your leader is clipped into the groove of the rail, you can pin a quilt on.

HELPFUL VIDEO:

[Installing Leaders on Continuum](#)

[Installing Leaders Fabri-Fast Rails](#)

Read the instructions that come with your quilting frame so you know the sizes of the leaders for each frame rail



Setting Up your work area

Organization and comfort in your workspace help to have a better quilting experience. Here are some suggestions for your workspace:

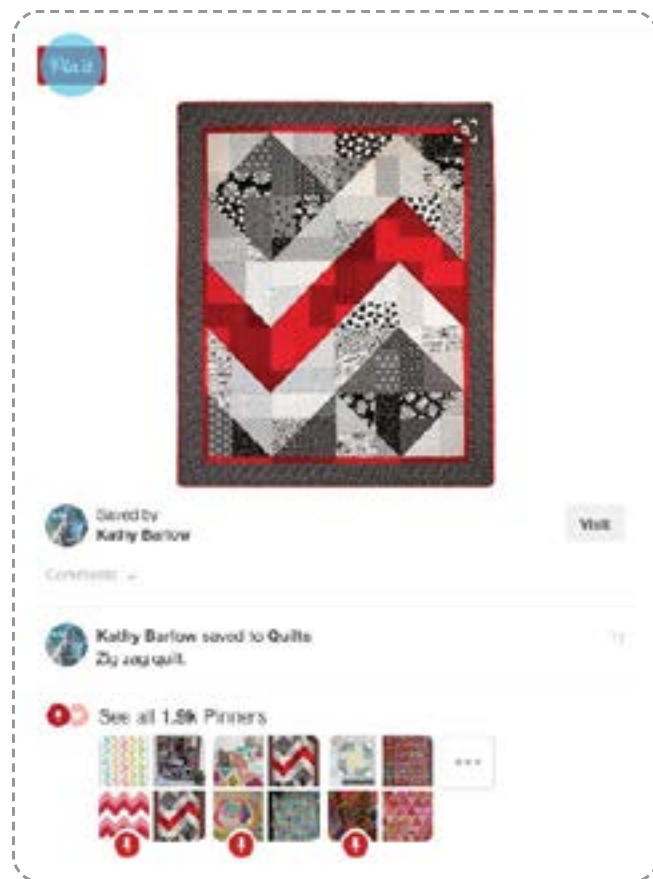
- **Space:** Make sure you have enough space to move around your frame freely. For many people, this is not possible simply because their frame is in a room that does not have much available space. However, using casters or furniture movers can help move your frame further into the room while you are quilting and then allow you to slide it back to where you store it when you are finished. Also, the right frame can help you when you're limited on space--the 12 foot Grace [Continuum frame](#) can be set up at 5, 7, 10, or 12 feet so it might be a frame to consider. You only need to be able to get around one end of the frame so it is best to have at least two feet more space than the length of your frame.
- **Pressing Station:** Use an ironing board or a pressing table to press the quilt before pinning it on the frame. If you do not have a pressing table, you can make one by using an old door, or piece of wood and placing it on a table, dresser, or ironing board. Cover it with 100% cotton batting and duck cloth for high heat resistance. Remember that well-pressed seams are easier to quilt over.
- **Wastebaskets:** Keeping a wastebasket at each end of your frame will keep you from walking across the room every time you need to throw something away, allowing you to stay more focused on your work.
- **Floor Mats for comfort:** Standing for long periods of time while quilting can be hard on you physically. Some sort of anti-fatigue mats laid along the length of your frame will help reduce stress on your limbs and joints and allow you to work and stand for longer periods of time.
- **Footwear:** Wearing the right shoes is key. Shoes should give adequate arch and heel support and cushion, providing comfort for the wearer.



KATHY SAYS: When you are on your feet for 12 hour stretches, shoes are all about comfort over cute. My personal favorite shoes to quilt in are Crocs :)



The Internet is full of
amazing quilting ideas!
Check out
our Pinterest boards for
some
added inspiration!



Note From Kathy:

I LOVE my quilting room. Whether you have just a tiny corner of your spare bedroom or whether you get to quilt in a dedicated quilting studio, you can still ROCK that quilting area.

First thing, if you are quilting a quilt, make sure it's nice and square. PRESS that quilt! Your finished project is directly related to how well you prepare beforehand. So get yourself a nice pressing area. I personally use a very old, sturdy ironing board of my grandma's, and I purchased an inexpensive flat door to put on top of the ironing board. I covered it with cotton batting, and covered it with some heavy duty cotton fabric (duck). I stapled it onto the door, and now I have a nice flat area to press my quilt. Once my quilt is pressed, I put a pin in the center of the top and bottom of the quilt top and back. Then, I need a place to put the quilt while I get ready to mount it on the quilting frame. I'm so blessed to have a great husband (Lynn) that will build me cool things to help me with my job. He took an old five panel door that we had in our old house, added a newel post to each side, and made me a beautiful "on deck" quilting station. It's a door turned on it's side, so that I have a spot to lay all the quilts carefully until they are ready for their turn. Since I quilt professionally, I'll press all my quilts for the week on Monday morning, then lay them on that door while I get my quilting machine ready.

Next to my 'on deck' pressing door is my quilting frame. It faces north, and there is great natural light while I'm quilting, which really allows me to see the true colors of threads on each quilt. To the side of my quilting frame,

I have a bookcase where I keep only quilting books. I keep all my reference books there, so if I ever get stumped for ideas, I can just pull out my books, look at my reference pictures and go through the handwritten notes I've made.



KATHY SAYS: Whenever an idea for a quilt pops into your head, stop what you're doing and write it down or make a sketch of it. These moments of inspiration come to us for a reason :)



My computer is also in this room. The computer is a great quilting tool. You can watch videos, get great quilting ideas, or even design quilts on this fantastic tool. I have pictures of every quilt I've finished saved on my computer for quick and easy reference. One hint that I give to everyone is to take pictures of every quilt you finish (front and back depending upon if you can see the stitching or not) and to store these on the computer or on the Cloud, so that you can go back and reference them. Then there are my machines! (you don't even want to go there!) I'm able to sew and piece (and embroider, etc.) Love my quilting room!

My favorite part of the room is in the very center. That great husband once again made me my dream cutting table. It's 4'x8', with a rotary cutting mat of that same size. There are drawers on both ends of this table to store my stabilizers, rulers, patterns, pens, pins, etc. Underneath the table, I'm able to store three rolls of batting and it is on wheels, too, so that it can be moved if I need the floor area for some reason.

I also have great things in my quilting room to look at while I'm working to give me inspiration when I quilt. My walls are painted a cool pastel blue/green. Very calming. And I need windows to gaze out. Of course I have a clock on my wall in my quilting studio. A BIG one with easy to read numbers. I have a few framed antique quilt pieces and a display rack for my Fat Quarters - arranged by color of course. On an empty wall, I have a quilt hanger where I can change the quilts to match my moods, or the seasons, or my favorite color at the time, or just my newest quilt. (currently I have a Wizard of Oz quilt on it, with beautiful pastel prints). I also have many smaller quilts on the walls for variety.

My 'jelly jar' cabinet (closed, to reduce dust) is where I store my hundreds of cones of thread. they are sorted by color - lightest colors on the top shelves with darkest colors on the bottom. my bobbins are also stored here so they don't collect dust in case they



On top of my quilt hanging shelves I display things that make me happy--little baskets and quilting and sewing nick knacks like a jar filled with my mother's buttons and an old sewing kit. I have mini antique toy irons, a set of Gumby and Pokey figures from the 60's, a few quilt kits that were arranged so pretty that I display them, and of course pictures of all my children at different times of their lives. Lynn and I travel a lot so we have pictures of our off-road adventures, cruises, and other fun places.



Cleaning and Maintaining your Frame

Keeping your frame clean will lengthen its lifespan and help you produce higher quality quilts. Dirt on the wheels and tracks of the Block Rockit, carriage, or frame will make quilting less smooth or even cause bumps or erratic stitches as you quilt.



To keep your frame clean, dust it often and remove lint, especially from the tracks and the cogs of the rails. Wipe down the tracks and wheels weekly with a damp cloth or small alcohol cleaning wipe to

keep your machine moving over the tracks smoothly.

Keep the tracks on your frame clean and lint-free. This will help you keep that smooth Block Rockit feel that we all

love!

g the love! are on your frame once or twice a month is essential in preventing any unseen problems from happening. Ensure that the nuts and bolts are tight as the vibrations from the machine may cause them to loosen. Take time to really study your frame, its design, and mechanics. This will help you understand how it works. The more knowledge you have, the easier it is to fix and troubleshoot any problems or concerns that may arise.



Lesson Two: Basics of the Block RockiT

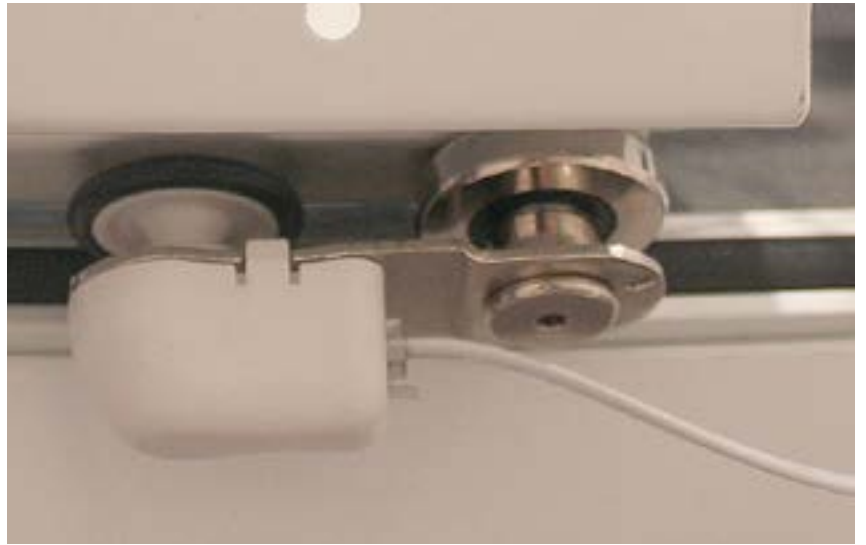
The Block Rockit 15R is the first high-quality quilting machine with built-in stitch regulation to be offered at such an affordable price. It is a simple, smooth, lightweight, powerful machine that produces a beautiful stitch. It is the perfect machine for beginners working on their own quilts or for more advanced quilters starting out in the quilting profession. This lesson on the Block Rockit serves as a supplement to the instruction manual and give you advice on how to care for your machine so that it, too, will continue to perform well over the years.



Remember, please read the entire instruction manual before you do anything with your machine. This is very important. It will save you time in the long run of working with your quilting setup. We've had many customers contact us with simple questions that would already be answered had they read the manual before calling us. So please, we cannot emphasize enough, take time to read the manual and you will not regret it.

First Install Encoders

The encoders of the machine enable the stitch regulator to function properly. This is done by a set screw that holds a spring in place which gives the encoder wheel pressure as it moves along the track. This secure connection to the track lets the stitch regulator know precisely how you are moving the machine. If the encoders



are not installed correctly you may experience a variety issues with your stitching. Before installing the encoders you need to first read the user manual describing how to install them. Next, we suggest watching our helpful video that demonstrates how to properly install them.



KATHY SAYS: This section will provide some additional guidance to help you properly install the encoders. If you still have questions after reviewing these resources, please feel free to contact us! Encoders are quite simple to install, even if it may seem difficult at first.

HELPFUL VIDEO:

[Installing Your Encoders](#)

MATERIALS:

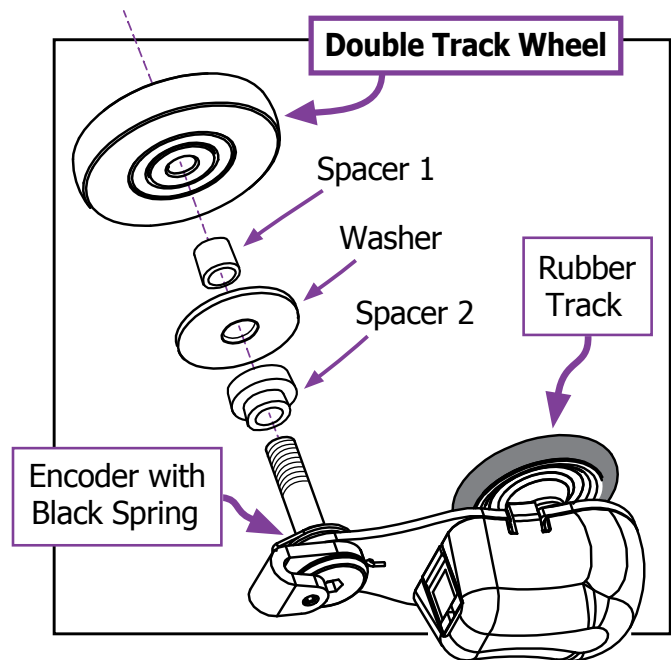
- long cord encoder (for the frame)
- short cord encoder (for the machine)
- 4mm Allen wrench
- 2mm Allen wrench

Encoder For A Dual-Wheeled Carriage (Launch Pad frame)

INSTALLATION

- Remove the back, right outside wheel with the 4mm wrench
- Grab the long cord encoder.
- Before putting the long cord encoder on the carriage, first loosen the set screw.

- **IMPORTANT:** The set screw will make the wheel of your encoder have pressure pressing down onto your track. Without this screw, you will not have the pressure on the wheel that is needed for the encoder to function. If you don't loosen the set screw before you put the encoder on the carriage, the spring of the screw will break. Loosen the set screw first with the 2mm Allen wrench.
- Remove the cord.
- Put the wheel onto the encoder.
 - **NOTE:** One side of the wheel has a raised portion called a "spacer." It looks like a washer that is actually part of the wheel. The other side of the wheel is flat. You want the spacer closest to the carriage, not the encoder.
- Use the 4mm Allen wrench to put the wheel back onto the carriage with the encoder hanging from the wheel (for now).



Encoder For A Single Wheeled Carriage (Q-Zone frames and older Grace Frames)

INSTALLATION

- Remove the back right wheel.
 - **NOTE:** If there are any spacers on the wheel, make sure to put them back on when you put the encoder on. You'll have to use a 10mm open-ended Allen wrench to remove the single wheel.
- Grab the long cord encoder
- Follow same instructions as above for the dual wheeled carriage.

Encoder for Machine:

INSTALLATION

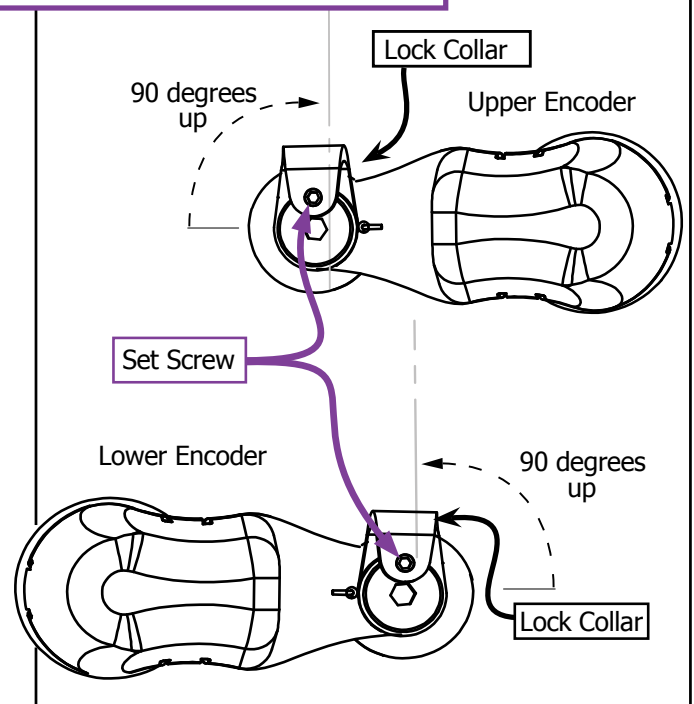
- Carefully set the machine on its side
- Use the 4mm Allen wrench to remove the back outside wheel
- Grab the short cord encoder
- Before you put it on the machine, you need to loosen (but DO NOT completely remove) the set screw with the 2mm Allen wrench.
- Grab the wheel and make sure the spacer is facing toward the machine (away from the encoder)
- Tighten the wheel and encoder to the machine with the 4mm Allen wrench

Setting the Spring with the Set Screw

MACHINE ENCODER:

- Hold the encoder toward the front handles of the machine (parallel to the throat of the machine) with your left hand.
- Insert the 2mm allen wrench into the set screw.
- While holding the encoder with your left hand, bring the set screw and 2mm wrench down with your right hand until it is pointed down (at least 90 degrees from the encoder's wheel) and then tighten the set screw so that it is hand tight (DO NOT over tighten).

Encoder Spring Tensioning



CARRIAGE ENCODER:

- Set the carriage on the frame (you will be standing at the back of the frame).
- Rotate the carriage to the right so the wheel with the encoder on it is off the track hanging off the frame.
- Insert the 2mm allen wrench into the set screw.

- Move the set screw so that it is facing toward the left while the encoder (in your right hand) is facing down and then tighten the screw.
- Make sure the encoder is underneath the carriage riding along the track freely and down toward the track.

Place the Block Rockit machine on the carriage:

- Make sure the machine encoder is springing down toward the track and rolling freely and facing toward the front of the machine.

Attach the encoder cords:

- The short cord is for the encoder on the machine. Plug it into the top green section. The long cord is for the bottom encoder on the carriage. Make sure it is securely snapped in to the encoders, and then snap the other end into the back of the machine.

Setting your Block Rockit 15R on the frame

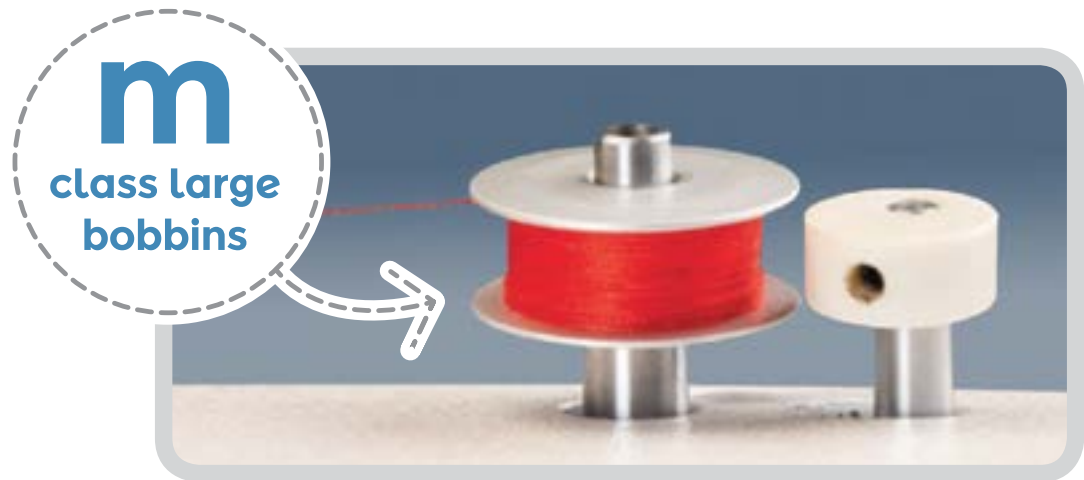
The Block Rockit comes with the wheels and front handles already attached. Once you have installed the two encoders (for the Stitch Regulator) you are ready to set your Block RockiT and carriage up on the frame--it weighs about 39 pounds, so you may need assistance. You will also need to attach the thread mast, and display screen before you start quilting.

To set up the Block Rockit on the frame, first unhook the Take-up rail, then set the machine on the frame. Next, put the rail through the throat space of the machine and lock the rails to the frame.

All the wheels must be in contact with the tracks, which is why the instruction manual has you loosen the set screws. If a set of wheels is not touching the track after you set up the Block Rockit, you can loosen the black set screw just above the wheels on all four sets of wheels with a 3mm Allen wrench. After you loosen the bolts, adjust the wheel slightly so that all sets of wheels have good contact with the tracks. Once they do, roll the Block RockiT back and forth to make sure the wheels stay on the track at the front of the carriage and at the back also, then tighten up the bolts so that the wheels do not lose alignment.

Bobbins

The Block Rockit uses a size M bobbin, enabling you to quilt for a longer period of time without having to change the bobbin. The bobbin winder on the Block Rockit has its own motor so you can refill your bobbin without unthreading your machine. For instructions on filling the bobbin and installing the bobbin case, refer to the Block Rockit's user manual.



A COUPLE NOTES ON FILLING THE BOBBIN:

- If the thread is not filling as the bobbin spins, wrap the thread around the bobbin case a few more times so that the thread is tighter and will catch as the bobbin starts to spin.
- Make sure the thread on the bobbin is wrapped very tightly. The thread should not be loose. If it is, it will affect the tension as you quilt. When the thread is wrapped tightly, it will be hard on the side; if it is loose, it will feel soft and move around. If the thread is loose, make sure the bobbin winder is threaded correctly and that there are no obstructions to the thread, and then fill it again.

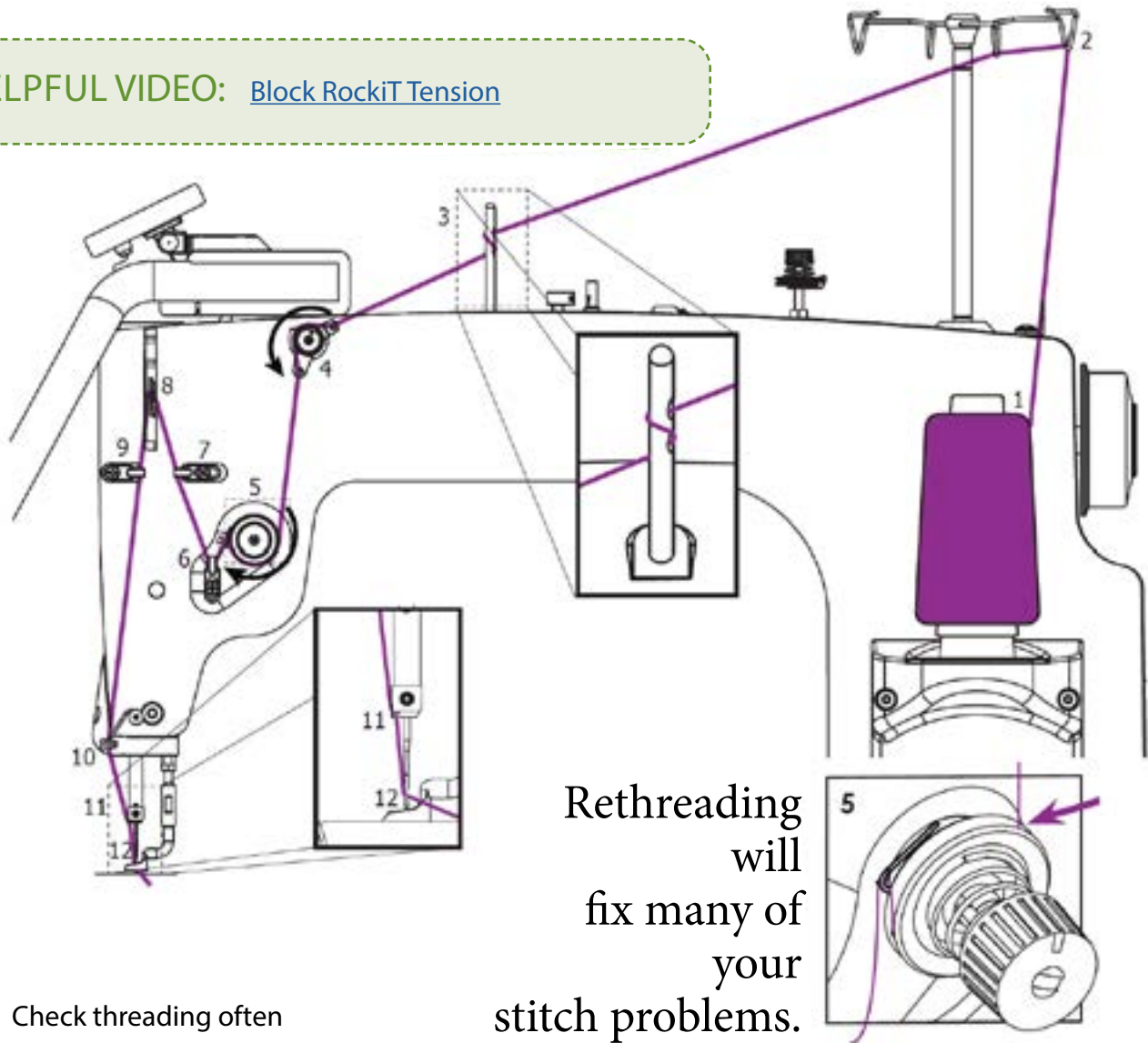
automatic bobbin winder

Saves time as it automatically winds your bobbins and turns off when bobbin is full

Threading your Machine

Properly threading your machine is essential to having a good stitch. Improperly threading your machine will cause loops in the stitch, break the thread, or tangle the thread into a 'bird's nest', causing your machine to seize up. Threading your machine correctly directly affects thread tension so watch this video:

HELPFUL VIDEO: [Block RockiT Tension](#)



Rethreading
will
fix many of
your
stitch problems.

- [X] Check threading often
- [X] All thread guides caught
- [X] No obstructions to thread path
- [X] Tension discs free of lint
- [X] Thread snug securely between tension discs
- [X] hole in the shaft above the needle threaded

Be sure to clean
between the
tension disks
with canned air
whenever
you thread your
machine

A NOTE FROM RACHEL:

As I worked as an operator in an industrial sewing factory, we would put hours and hours into sewing on our machines. There were some days when my machine would be working perfectly, and other days that the thread would break over and over, or I would have issues with my stitches or needles breaking. Instead of calling for a mechanic as soon as we had issues, we were required to first check a few of things.

First, we had to check our threading. Second, we had to check our needles, making sure they were in straight and all the way. Third, we had to make sure our machine was oiled. And fourth, we had to make sure our machine was clean and free of any lint in the tension knobs.

If all of these were ok, and the machine still did not work, then we were able to call the mechanic to come look at our machine. It was surprising how many times the issue was incorrect threading or our thread being caught on something on our sewing table. It's very important to go through these troubleshooting steps with any sewing machine, especially your Block Rockit, and many times your problem will be solved quickly!

Thread Type

Block Rockit machines can use any type of quilting thread; there is not a specific type you must use with this machine. Choose what works for you! Don't go cheap or you might not like the results.

Understanding Thread

In thread weight measurements, higher numbers equal lighter or thinner thread. However, in length measurements, higher numbers equal heavier or thicker threads. Keep in mind that you may need to change the size of the needle or adjust the tension with different types of thread. As a rule of thumb, the diameter of the eye of the needle should be 40% larger than the diameter of the thread. Higher number threads (thinner, lighter) may need the tension tightened, while lower number threads (thicker, heavier) may need the tension loosened. When changing the type of thread, be sure to sew off on a piece of scrap fabric before sewing on a quilt to make sure the tension is correct for the type of thread you are using.

The Block Rockit instruction manual has a great breakdown and explanation on different thread types.

KATHY'S THOUGHTS ON THREAD:

I LOVE thread! The Block RockiT loves it too. It seems to love every kind of thread, too. When purchasing a new thread only one a small amount to see how it works. If you have trouble getting it to work then stick to threads you know work. You can play with the tension and get any thread to work but you need to decide if it is worth it or not.

First off, I like a good brand of thread (as opposed to a cheap thread. A good deal is often a headache in the making.) Think of it as an investment for the future. Superior is a great brand of thread. Omni (a polyester thread) comes in a huge variety of colors, and you'll want to stock up on a few 6000 yard cones. I use white, eggshell, and a few blender colors. Funny thing is that not many quilts call for Gray! I've had cones of gray thread for 20 years now. A 6000 yard cone of thread will last you through MANY quilts. Get two cones of the colors you use the most, so that you can use one as a dedicated bobbin winder thread.

Venture out and try a new thread. We've found that Superior Metallic is a great thread to quilt with. Try their neon thread. Variegated thread is usually a little thicker thread.



KATHY SAYS: Always test quilt a sample sew off piece before you use a new thread on a quilt. Check underneath your quilt to see how the tension looks. Tweak the tension tighter or looser by half a turn or so if you see loops or tightness.

Do NOT use a serger thread (that's only a 2-ply thread), and don't use Coats & Clarks thread. These threads are probably fine for sewing with, but not quilting. If you've gone to the expense of piecing a quilt, and even purchasing a Block RockiT or other quilting machine, please please purchase a good name brand thread to quilt it with.

When I am quilting for myself or a customer, I always keep the top and bobbin thread colors the same to avoid any seeing of the top thread color on the underside of the quilt or vice versa. It's something that I have found works the best for my style of quilting.

Machine Thread Tension

As you quilt, you will need to adjust the tension of your Block Rockit. Don't be afraid! Many sewers and quilters have been taught to not touch their machine tension, but this is the wrong mentality to have. Thread tension issues seem to be the first problem that Block Rockit quilters face, so don't be concerned when this happens to you. Learning to properly adjust the tension will help you create a beautiful stitch with any type of thread or fabric, and it will help you bridge the gap from beginning to advanced quilting. Play around with the tension when you first get the machine so you can see cause and effect and how to solve problems when tension issues arise.



Bobbin Tension

At times, you may need to adjust the bobbin tension. Start out by leaving the bobbin tension the way it is when you receive the machine, with the expectation that you will be adjusting it to the correct tension. The Block Rockit bobbin case has hardly any tension on the bobbin but with different thread types, lint, and general use may change the tension, causing problems (or thread breakage) as you sew.

For directions on how to adjust bobbin tension, refer to the Block Rockit user's manual. The section they have written really helps with understanding how you can adjust the tension for the bobbin case. Keep in mind that the smallest adjustments in the bobbin case tension can give you your desired results, so start off by making tiny adjustments and testing those first. Also, keep in mind, bobbin tension is different than the top thread tension, and the top or bobbin tensions will need to be adjusted independent of each other.

The first time you adjust the tension, make a note of what the number is on your tension. If you have an older machine then your top tension will not have numbers but finding the good tension is not hard.

You will not often need to adjust the bobbin tension. If you change the bobbin thread type, you can re adjust the bobbin tension to get it right for that thread, then adjust the top tension as needed.

IMPORTANT NOTE FROM THE BLOCK ROCKIT MANUAL P. 31:

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO MAKE SURE THAT THE BOBBIN TENSION IS PROPERLY SET FIRST, SEE PAGE 16 FOR DIRECTIONS ON SETTING THE BOBBIN TENSION. AS LONG AS YOU HAVE YOUR BOBBIN TENSION CORRECT, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIX THE TENSION BY ADJUSTING ONLY THE TOP TENSION. IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO FIX YOUR TENSION BY ONLY ADJUSTING THE TOP TENSION YOU MAY NEED TO RE-ADJUST THE BOBBIN TENSION.

Top Thread Tension

To tighten the tension, turn the tension knob clockwise. To loosen the tension, turn the tension knob counter-clockwise.



When you are first learning how to adjust the tension, practice sewing on a scrap fabric sew off piece. At times, you may need to make smaller adjustments to get the tension just right, or you may need to adjust it a lot by turning the knob in large increments. How much you adjust the tension depends on how hard the top and bottom threads are pulling on each other. To create the “ideal” stitch, the top and bottom threads need to pull on each other with equal force. Adjusting the tension changes the force that the top and bottom threads exert on each other. If the top tension is pulling harder on the bottom thread (the bottom thread will be pulled up through the top, causing small loops), then you will need to loosen the top tension. If the bottom is pulling harder on the top thread (the top thread will be pulled down to the bottom, causing small loops), tighten the top tension.

COMMON SIGNS OF BAD TENSION ARE:

- Loops – the stitch doesn't lie flat against the fabric, but bubbles out.
- Bobbin thread shows through the top of the quilt.
- Top thread shows through on the bottom of the quilt.
- Thread breaking.



KATHY SAYS: If you're using two different colors of thread for the top and bobbin then you will most likely be able to see the contrasting color on the opposite side, unless you are using a thicker poly-batting. Try to keep the bobbin and top colors similar if not the same.



HELPFUL VIDEO:

[Adjusting the Top Tension](#)
(full video)

COMMON CAUSES OF BAD TENSION ARE:

- Different weight thread on top or bottom
 - Whichever thread is heavier is going to pull harder on the other thread. If the top thread is heavier, you should loosen the top tension to make it even with the bottom. If the bobbin thread is heavier, you should tighten the top tension to make it stronger.
- Batting
 - If you use batting in some quilts but not others, or if you change batting type between quilts, you may need to adjust the tension. To test the tension before sewing on your quilt, first sew on a piece of scrap fabric with batting and see if the tension needs to be adjusted.
- Fabric
 - Changing fabric type may necessitate tension adjustments. To test the tension before sewing on your quilt, first sew on scrap fabric to see if there needs to be tension adjustments.
- Thread not correctly in tension disks
 - Always make sure your thread is secure and deep down between the tension discs and that the machine is threaded correctly. Oftentimes loops and poor stitches come from having the machine incorrectly threaded.



Use a small practice piece of quilt to test/adjust your tension before moving on to your actual quilt

A NOTE FROM LYNN ABOUT THREAD TENSION:

Thread tension is very simple to adjust on Block RockiT machines. When you get ready to quilt use a sew off piece of quilt, two scrap pieces of fabric and some batting in between that you can move around to get any oil off the needle after oiling and to check the thread tension. It is so much easier to quilt on this little piece with the machine on the side of the frame than to unpick your quilt because you didn't quite have the tension adjusted correctly. Stitch on your sew off piece in circles, forward and back then stitch off the edge, stop your machine and flip the sew off piece over and check out the stitches. If you have nubs, or looping tighten the top tension knob by turning it clockwise (lefty loosey righty tighty). Keep increasing the top tension until the nubs or loops go away.

If you find that no matter how much you increase the top thread tension it doesn't change you have something stuck in you tension disks. I get in the habit of having my canned air close by my frame so I can spread the top tension disks apart with them thumb and forefinger and blow it out with my canned air. I you know you have thread that is especially linty then I would blow out the tension disks every two to three rows.

When I start a new row I like to bring my bobbin thread up to the top of the quilt and hold both the top thread and bobbin thread at the 10 O'Clock position before I start to stitch. After I have stitched about 10 stitches I stop to cut the thread tails. I also take this opportunity to rub my fingers on the bottom of the quilt on the stitches I just made to see if I feel any nubs or loops. If I do feel any looping then I blow out the tension disks again then I will stitch a few more stitches to see if that fixed it. If I need to I tighten the top tension a quarter turn. If the tension still is not quite there I will take a small piece of lint free fabric and fabric, white is a great color, then I fold it in half and floss the tension disks. If you get any extra debris or lint out you will see it on the white fabric. If you are proactive about keeping the lint build up out of your top tension disks you will find that you have to unpick a lot less. All longarm machines have this issue to some degree so

staying ahead of lint build up will make quilting on your Block RockiT a lot more fun

Thread tension can be a little frustrating but if you understand how to adjust it you will find that it is very simple. The top tension knob does about 95% of adjusting. If you find that you get loops on top of your quilt every now and then check your bobbin case for lint in the spring. This is the flat curved part where the thread clips under it when you put a bobbin in the bobbin case. Take a straight pin and lift up on the spring and blow it out with canned air or just blow on it. If the looping doesn't go away tighten the big screw on the bobbin case a quarter turn. Sometimes it is a matter of playing with the top and bottom tension to get it just right. If you find you have a problem then do all your stitching and adjusting on a sew off piece so you don't have to unpick your quilt

Thread Breakage/Skipped Stitches

While thread breakage or skipped stitches can result from a number of reasons, they are usually caused by only a few main factors. The following list might help you identify the cause:

CHECK THE THREADING.

Is the machine threaded correctly? Is the thread caught in all of the thread and tension guides?

CLEAN.

Clean the lint from the bobbin case area, the tension disks, and other parts of the machine that might collect lint.

CHECK OR CHANGE THE NEEDLE.

Is the scarf of the needle facing the back of the machine? Is the needle in the machine all the way?

Does the needle have any burrs on the end?

CHECK THE BOBBIN AND BOBBIN CASE.

Is the bobbin wound tightly? Is the bobbin case tension correct?

CHECK THE THREAD TENSION.

Is the tension correct for the type of thread you are using? Do not be afraid to tighten or loosen the tension if needed.

HELPFUL VIDEO:
[Cleaning Your Machine](#)

Make sure you check out the “Troubleshooting” pages of your instruction manual under the section of “Thread Breaking” for causes and solutions to your thread breaking.

Machine Needles

It is important to know the different parts of the quilting needle to get a beautiful stitch with your machine. Poor stitching is often the result of a needle that has either been installed in the machine incorrectly or needs to be changed. The needle could be installed incorrectly when it is not in the machine all the way, it is not straight, or the scarf of the needle is facing the front of the machine head instead of the back.

HELPFUL VIDEOS:

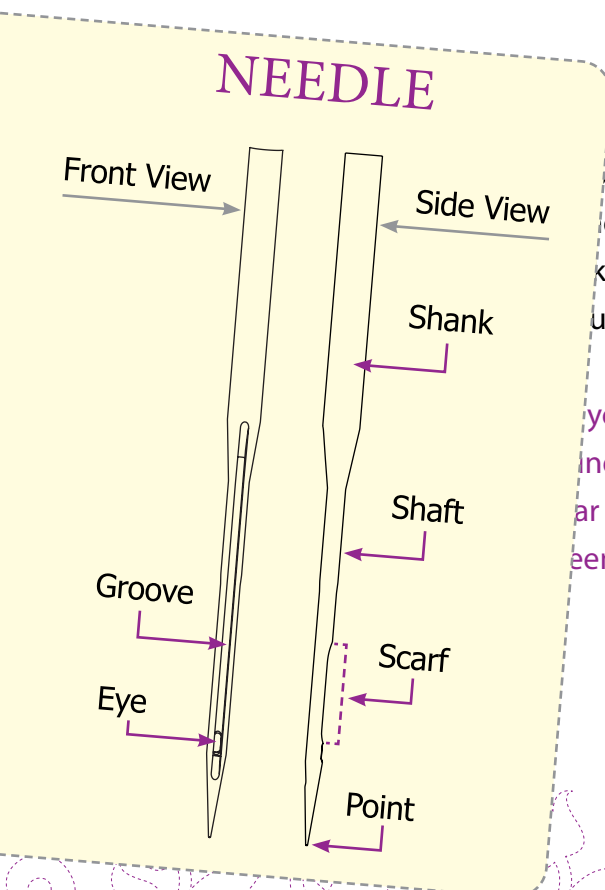
[Changing Your Needle](#)

[Checking Bobbin Case](#)

The Block Rokkit comes with 11 needles. You can also purchase extra size 16 and size 18 needles from KathyQuilts.com. These are generic needles and will work in any quilting machine. A size 18 needle will work best on thicker quilts (including denim) as it is larger than a size 16.

Needles wear out as you quilt--replace them often if you are doing a lot of quilting. If you hear a “popping” or “clunking” noise as you are quilting, it is time to change your needle. This means your needle has either developed a burr on the end, which can cause the stitch to be thrown off, or it has been bent. Pay attention to how your machine sounds when it is stitching. When problems arise. You will be able to hear when they happen quickly and fix the problem as soon as it happens. Watch this quick example of changing your needle.

If you're quilting on a batik fabric because the weave is tighter and the thread as you stitch, so you'll want a smaller needle. You'll use a needle out faster than cotton. Wool batting is thicker and seems to make them last longer.



Oiling and Warming Up Your Machine

Oiling your machine often will help it last longer and quilt smoother. Your

Block Rockit User Manual has good instructions on where to oil your machine.

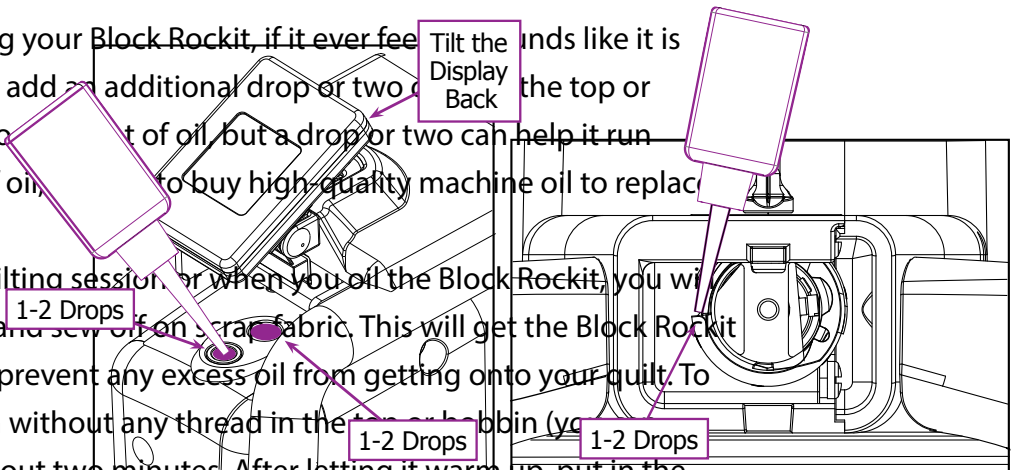
We recommend that you oil it every time you use it,

if possible. Also, as you are using your Block Rockit, if it ever feels like it is running rough or loud, you can add an additional drop or two of oil to the top or bobbin area. You do not want too much oil, but a drop or two can help it run smoother. When you run out of oil, be sure to buy high-quality machine oil to replace

Every time you begin a new quilting session, or when you oil the Block Rockit, you will want to warm up the machine and sew on scrap fabric. This will get the Block Rockit ready for hours of quilting and prevent any excess oil from getting onto your quilt. To warm up the machine, let it run without any thread in the bobbin (you can remove the bobbin case) for about two minutes. After letting it warm up, put in the bobbin case and thread the needle. Then use two pieces of scrap fabric (about 10" X 10") with batting in between and start sewing them together like you would a quilt. This will give your machine a chance to get any excess oil off and give you a chance to adjust the thread tension and make sure you and your machine are ready to quilt. Once you are ready and have the machine settings just how you want them, you can begin quilting. We suggest warming up your machine at the start of every new quilting session.

If you already have a quilt setup on the frame at the beginning of your quilting session, pull the machine off to the side of the frame and warm up the machine to the side of the quilt. This is a helpful technique that will allow you to warm up your machine and keep your quilt setup between sessions.

Machine Controls



The Block Rockit User Manual has detailed instructions of the machine controls and settings for your reference. If it is difficult to remember which buttons to use while you quilt, we suggest marking the buttons with a marker or small sticker to help you remember which buttons to use. As you become more familiar with the machine, you will get use to the buttons and menu options. Also, if you want to change the machine controls from right to left handed, you can do so in the menu.

Quilting Modes

The Block Rockit has four quilting modes: regulated precise, regulated cruise, manual, and baste. For basic instructions on what each mode does, refer to the Block Rockit User Manual.

Start with Regulated Precise Mode

For most beginning quilters, regulated precise is the easiest setting to use while you become familiar and comfortable with the machine; it is the most “forgiving” mode in that the stitch keeps up with the pace at which you move the machine. When you are just learning to quilt it is important to get a good feel for the movement of the machine and frame--the regulated precise mode is the best mode for this. It will also allow you to do most types of quilting, from large stitches to fine-tuned, detailed designs. Once you become more comfortable with your Block RockiT it is a good idea to experiment with the other modes.

Keep in mind that even in the stitch-regulated modes (regulated precise and regulated cruise), you cannot move the machine as fast as you want and always maintain a uniform stitch. If you move the machine too quickly, the stitches will start to spread apart. When you are first learning to use the machine, you can refer to the green circle on the display screen. When you move the machine too quickly to maintain uniform stitches, the green circle will turn red. You can even set the Block Rockit to have an alarm sound go off when you are moving it too fast so that you do not need to look at the display screen. Using these guides, you can get the feel for the machine and know how fast to move it. Once you get the feel for the machine speed, you will not likely need to refer to the display screen to know how fast to move it.

Some quilters prefer to quilt in manual mode more than the stitch regulated modes because they can sew as quickly as they want. These tend to be more experienced quilters, but everyone should try out this mode and become familiar with it. In manual mode, you can do more intricate and detailed designs in your quilt as the needle can make stitches very close together.

We recommend that you try out all different types of quilting modes and see which ones work best for you. You do not need to limit yourself to one quilting mode, but you can learn their functions and use them when needed. Having prior practice with all the modes will help you create your own unique quilting designs.

Installing and using the Rear Handles

Rear handles are a great accessory to have when you want to quilt while using a pantograph pattern. They enable you to work from the back of your machine so a pantograph can be laid on the tabletop of your frame which can then be followed with the laser. The controls for the rear handles are exactly the same as your front handles. The display screen can move from the front of your machine and be placed at the back near the rear handles while you are working with them. Watch our video on YouTube.com called "Installing Rear Handles on the Block Rocket" for easy installation.

TIP FROM KATHY: What mode should I use?

FREE MOTION QUILTING

Quilting beginners should start out in Precise Mode. Practice until you are comfortable, then try Cruise or Manual.

PANTOGRAPH PATTERNS WITH LASER

Use Precise or Cruise

PATTERN PERFECT/PATTERN BOARDS

Use Precise or Cruise

STRAIGHT LINE QUILTING

Use Precise or Cruise

MICRO QUILTING

Manual is best because your machine is not moving a huge distance and you will have smoother corners and circles. Although it is possible with the precise/cruise, it just may be easier in manual.

MATERIALS:

- Rear Handles
- Rear Handle Display Hub
- Display Controller Cable
- 4 mm Allen wrench

INSTALLATION

- Remove the backplate of the machine (under the on/off switch)
- Using the same bolts from the backplate, attach the rear handles
- Remove the ribbon cables from each of the rear handles
- Plug the ribbons into the sides of the display hub, plug facing towards you
- Plug the display controller cable into the back of the display hub
- Plug the blue end of the display controller cable into the machine
- Snap the display hub to the machine

HELPFUL VIDEO:

[Installing Rear Handles on the Block Rockit](#)

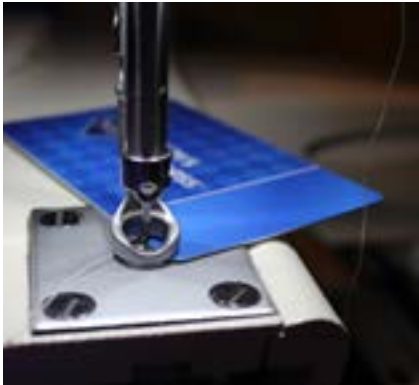
OPTIONAL: PUTTING THE DISPLAY ON THE REAR HANDLES (YOU CAN STILL USE THE HANDLES WITH THE DISPLAY ON THE FRONT OF THE MACHINE)

- Twist the hanging end of the cable 180 degrees
- Thread the end of the cable through the hole of the hinged part of the display
- Plug the end of the cable straight down into the top of the display hub
- Plug the plastic hinged part of the display into the display hub

We strongly suggest practicing from the front side of your machine first before moving to the rear handles, especially if this is the first time you have ever quilted. It is a lot easier to see how the different modes of stitching work from the front side of your frame than from the back. When you feel comfortable quilting from the front, quilting from back will be more natural. It is important to remember that using the rear handles takes time and practice but once you feel comfortable with them you will be more capable of following pantograph patterns. Quilting a pantograph pattern will be addressed later in this book.

Adjusting the Hopping Foot

The hopping foot of the machine can be adjusted when needed as addressed in the user manual. For a standard cotton quilt top and bat, you want to make sure that you have a credit card's width between the needle plate and your foot. PICTURE Or, as the instructions in the Block Rockit manual state, use eight pieces of paper stacked on top of each other.



You should adjust the foot when you are quilting a thicker quilt-top or a quilt with thicker batting. You can do this by using two credit cards stacked on each other and having the foot rest on top of these, or by using 16 pieces of paper, as stated in the manual.

It is adjusted correctly, as it can interfere with the top and up and completing a nice stitch.

TIP FROM KATHY: When quilting denim or a heavily appliqued quilt, avoid running your machine over thicker seams. The thickness can break or bend your needle, which can sometimes throw the timing of your machine off. Quilt designs around these seams and your machine will keep a nicer stitch.

Make sure you have a credit card's width between the

Keeping Your Machine Clean

Keeping your machine clean can drastically increase its lifespan and the quality of work it is able to perform. Lint build-up, dirt, and other debris can cause a lot of problems to your machine. In order to keep it clean and running optimally, we recommend the following:

- Use a brush, canned air, or air compressor to remove dirt or lint.
- Clean the machine before every use.
 - This can be a simple cleaning, blowing away any lint or removing debris.

- Examine the bobbin area, needle and needle area, and thread and tension guides for any lint that may need to be removed.

Yearly Maintenance

Take the side case off of the machine and clean lint out of the inside of the entire machine

- Unplug the machine before opening it up
- To open the machine, unscrew the 8 screws on the outside of the case (Picture).
- Keep the screws in a safe area so that you do not lose them
 - Use canned air to blow it out or paint brush to remove lint
 - Once you have removed lint on the inside, put the side case back on and tighten the screws so that the machine does not rattle as you sew.

Machine Timing

Proper timing on your quilting machine is essential in keeping the machine's parts in sync to avoid skipped stitches. If the timing is thrown off (this can happen from running over thick seams, or bending/breaking a needle), it should be fixed immediately.

When you find you are getting skipped stitches even after you have rethreaded and changed the needle etc., it is a good idea to re-time your machine. The Block Rockit user manual gives instructions on retiming the machine, and KathyQuilts has a YouTube video demonstrating this as well.



Lesson Three: Getting Ready to Quilt

In this lesson, we will discuss preparing your quilt, loading it on the frame, and actual quilting. The goal of this chapter is to help you learn foundational skills that will lead to more advanced and technical quilting, which we will discuss in Lesson 4. We strongly recommend that you first quilt on “practice quilts” rather than beginning on hand-pieced or expensive quilts, as you will likely make mistakes as you are learning. Do not, we repeat, DO NOT start quilting on a real pieced quilt that you have sewn unless you have completed practice quilts!! This is very important. Learning how to use a new machine takes trial and error and you do not want to experience that while you are trying to quilt a project that you have put a lot of time into. PRACTICE FIRST, and you will not be sorry.

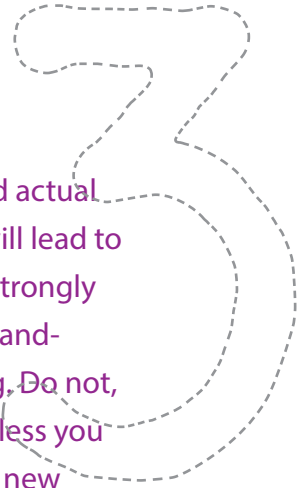
We suggest using two whole pieces of scrap fabric sandwiched together with batting in the middle. Practice quilts are great to learn on as you can make mistakes and practice new techniques. These are also great to donate to charities, animal shelters, or to keep in your quilt collection as a beginning keepsake. Practice using the Block Rockit’s different modes and settings as you quilt and try new designs until you are comfortable with the feel of the machine. Quilting requires a lot of practice, patience, and trial and error. Plan on spending several days, weeks, or months, as needed, practicing. As you gain experience you will be able to execute beautiful quilting on the projects you have been saving.

Preparing your Quilt

It is important to make sure a quilt is sewn and pieced together properly in order for it to be quilted with ease. Here are some important steps to incorporate in the piecing process, which will help in the quilting process.

1. Cut all the pieces of your quilt precisely.

Make sure that everything is squared up as you measure and cut. This is especially true as you cut longer pieces of fabric, like your borders; they need to be equal along the whole length and width of the strip. If the edges are not square and the lengths and widths are not equal, it will cause distortion as you attach them to your



quilt, thus giving you a flared border.

2. Keep an accurate quarter inch seam while piecing.

If this is not consistent throughout, a small inaccuracy can eventually lead to great changes in how the quilt measures.

You can use a quarter inch quilter's foot for an accurate guideline (some even have a guide on the edge to ensure an exact seam), or you can place tape at your quarter inch seam allowance on the throat of the sewing machine. Keeping an exact quarter inch seam allowance will also help in the next step of preparing your quilt.

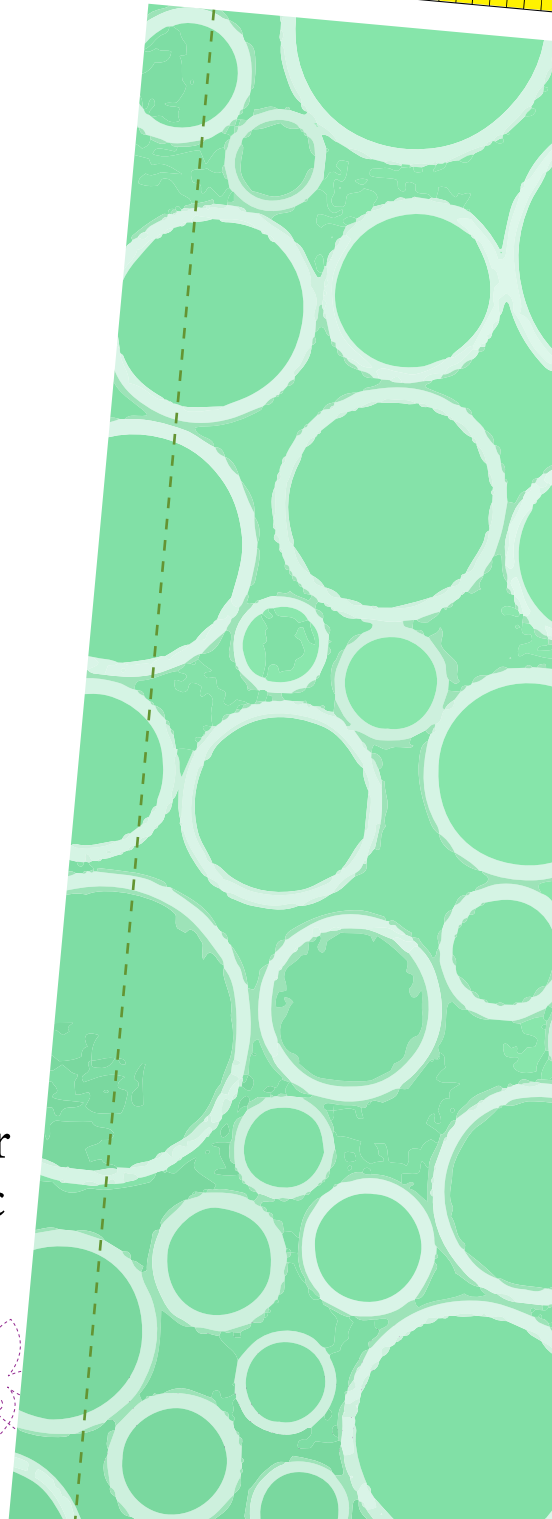
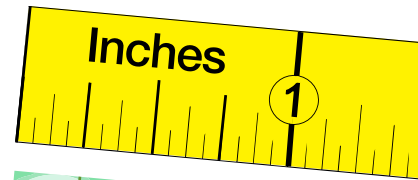
3. Eliminate flared and wavy borders.

This can be a common problem especially for new quilters. If your quilt has a flared border, it will not lay flat, thus causing puckers and tucks as you quilt it on your frame. If you have a quilt with flared borders, you can try to ease it flat as you quilt over it, but it is easier to avoid the problem in the first place as you piece the quilt, as described below.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ATTACHING BORDERS TO A QUILT: SIDE BORDERS:

1. Measure the length of the quilt at its center.
2. Measure the length of the quilt at each end of the quilt.
3. You should now have three measurements. Average these figures, giving you the average lengthwise measurement of your quilt. If you pieced the quilt perfectly, these measurements will all be equal.
4. Cut the two side borders of the quilt to equal the average measurement.

When it comes to cutting your fabric just remember... it's hip to be square!



5. Mark the center of the borders from top to bottom. Mark the center of the quilt from top to bottom. Line up the center of the border and quilt and pin them together. Pin the ends of the border to the ends of the quilt.
6. Sew and ease the border to the quilt making sure the ends and center each stay lined up while sewing (a walking foot is very helpful in this process).
7. Press
8. Follow these same steps to attach the top and bottom borders to the quilt.

KATHY SAYS:

The measurements on each end of your quilt should all be equal. If you find that you have a quilt that does have flared borders (it will look like an hour glass shape), it is much easier to unpick the borders and attach them correctly, saving yourself a lot of frustration and time when you begin to quilt.

4. Cut the right size of backing and batting for your quilt.

The quilt back needs to be at least three inches wider on each side of the quilt and four to six inches longer than the quilt. This will be helpful for when your quilt top stretches differently than the back, thus making sure you will have enough quilt back to cover the entire quilt by the time you have reached the end.



Loading a quilt on the frame

After you have set up your frame and machine, it is time to quilt! The following are two ways you can load your quilt on the frame. We prefer floating your quilt top (instructions below) because it is a fast, simple way to set up your quilt on the frame. However, the alternate way (pinning all the layers) does not take much more time. It is personal preference. We recommend that you try loading a couple practice quilts on the frame both ways to see which method you prefer. Watch

TIP FROM KATHY: Before you begin loading your quilt, make sure your leaders are marked (with a marker) at the center as discussed in Lesson 1.

Floating a quilt onto a frame in 4 steps

Important: Find the center of your leaders (you previously marked), then use pins to mark the center of the quilt top, and quilt back.

1. Pinning on the quilt back:

- Pin the bottom edge of the quilt back to the edge of the leader labeled “quilt back,” starting at the center then working along the edge, keeping the pins parallel to the edge. Make sure that the edge of the leader and the bottom edge of the quilt so that they form a seam-like ridge; lay the quilt on top of the leader and pin them together.
- Pin the top edge of the quilt back along the edge of the leader labeled “take-up rail,” starting at the center then pinning along the edges, keeping the pins parallel to the edge. When finished, leave the pin that is marking the center (you will use this center pin to line up the center of the batting and quilt top).
- Roll the rail with the leader labeled “quilt back” (the rail that you first pinned the quilt back to) until the fabric has some tension on it.

HELPFUL VIDEO:

[Floating Your Quilt Onto a Frame](#)

2. Pinning on the quilt top:

- Pin the bottom edge of the quilt top to the leader that says “quilt top,” matching the center markings and then pinning across the edge of the quilt, with the pins parallel to the edge.
- After you pin the edge, let the quilt top rest on the floor and then roll the “quilt top” rail away from you, rolling it up just a little so it’s not hanging on the floor.

3. Inserting the batting:

- Lay the top edge of the batting on the top edge of the quilt back near the pins
- Next lay the bottom edge of your batting in between the “quilt back” and “quilt top” rails. Let it rest on the floor.

TIP FROM KATHY: As described in “Preparing Your Quilt,” make sure that the batting is wider and longer than the quilt top.

4. Stitching the bottom, top, and batting together:

- Pick up the top edge of your quilt top and lay it evenly on the top edge of your batting matching the center of the quilt top to the center of the quilt back.
- Start your machine on the left side of the quilt and serpentine stitch*GLOSSARY across all three layers on this top edge, making sure to secure the quilt top to the batting and quilt back.
- Roll the “quilt top” rail until your quilt is flat and has even tension (IMPORTANT: you do not want it to be too droopy or too tight, but allow the quilt top to have a little bit of give)
- Secure your bungee clamps on each edge of your quilt
- NOW YOU ARE READY TO BEGIN QUILTING!

Traditional Method of Loading a Quilt

Instead of securing the quilt top with a serpentine stitch, pin the centers together and then proceed to pin all three layers to the “take up rail” leader along the top edge

Both methods allow you to quilt up to a quarter inch away from the edge. You may choose to float your quilt top if you have a scalloped edge of a quilt, thus making it harder to pin to the leaders and maximize your quilting area. Both methods are good ways to secure your quilt to the cloth leaders so it really is a personal preference with which option you choose.

TIP FROM KATHY: Pin a few inches apart at first then go back through and fill in the spots that are pinless—you want it to be very secure for good tension

Rolling your quilt and keeping quilt tension

Keeping correct tension on your quilt is very important. As you progress from the top of your quilt to the bottom, it is important to keep the quilt top and back smooth without tucks, especially as you are rolling the rails. The rails need to be tight enough that your quilt is not drooping, but not so tight that you could bounce a coin off the quilt top. There needs to be a little give. This will help avoid breaking needles and thread.



Using the bungee clamps while quilting will also help maintain the proper tension you are looking for. The clamps need to be secure enough that they are keeping the quilt flat, but not pulling or distorting the sides of the quilt.

When the time comes to proceed to the next row of quilting be sure that the “take up” rail (with the rolled quilt on it) is not resting on the throat of the machine. This is very important! *Picture This will cause drag and may result in breaking thread or needles. There always needs to be a finger width between the rolled quilt on the “take up” rail and the throat of the machine. *PICTURE This can be done by raising the take up rail as demonstrated in your frame’s instruction manual. Be sure to keep the rail even as you raise it up.



HELPFUL VIDEO:

[Rolling Your Quilt](#)

Some of our customers have purchased “tiger tape” to put on the side of their frames. This tape is pre-marked with quarter inch lines. This helps them to raise their take up rail a quarter inch each time they roll their quilt, helping them keep the rail even and level on both sides of the frame. This can be found online, or in some craft or



Apron:

Machine quilting can get dirty in some circumstances (oil, thread, lint, etc). Wearing an apron with pockets will protect your clothes as your work and keep your tools close by.

Thread Catcher:

A piece of batting or felt pinned to your apron is a good place to put all the thread ends that are trimmed, allowing you to continue your quilting without walking back and forth to your waste baskets.

Scissors and Retractor:

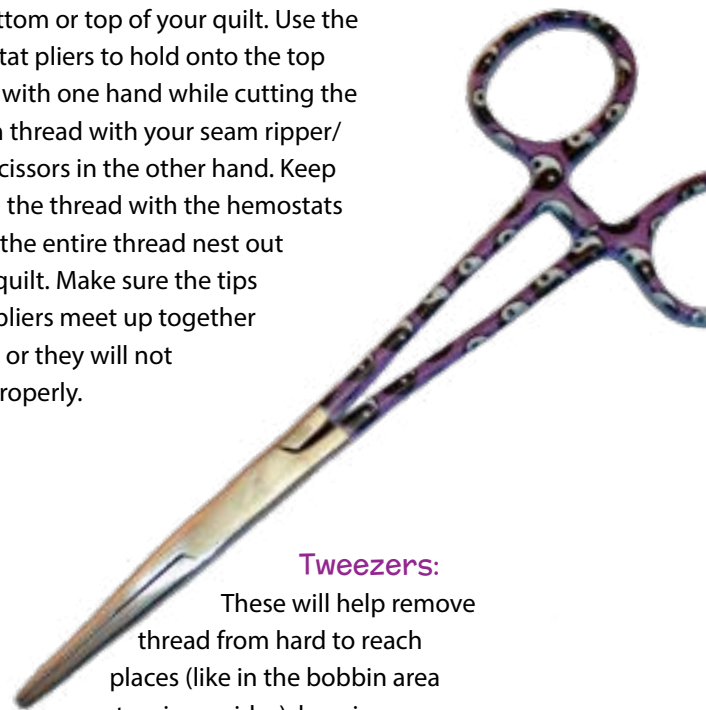
Keeping a small pair of scissors close by (in your apron pocket, or on a retractor) will help you continue your quilting process without being interrupted.

Seam Ripper:

Do not be afraid to unpick your mistakes! Mistakes will happen, and it is good practice to be ok with fixing them. Unpick as you go while your quilt is still on the frame. You can do this simply from the quilt back side. Unpick your mistake from the rolled quilt on the take up rail, either while reaching across your frame or stepping to the backside (this is the easiest place to reach from). Unpick every couple of stitches from the quilt back then unroll the quilt to pull the top thread away from the section you need to re-quilt. Kathy has unpicked entire quilts before (if a customer was not satisfied, or if she was not satisfied with the quilting), so it is possible if you don't like how your quilt turned out. When you need a tool and cannot find it, it is frustrating. Having a seam ripper with a nice large handle and small cutter, but any concentration is key in helping your quilting skills progress, and being organized will

Hemostat Pliers:

Locking Hemostat Pliers (surgical instrument, found either online or in your local drug store) are very useful for when the tension is off and the thread creates a large "birds nests," either on the bottom or top of your quilt. Use the hemostat pliers to hold onto the top thread with one hand while cutting the bobbin thread with your seam ripper/ small scissors in the other hand. Keep pulling the thread with the hemostats to pull the entire thread nest out of the quilt. Make sure the tips of the pliers meet up together evenly, or they will not work properly.



Tweezers:

These will help remove thread from hard to reach places (like in the bobbin area or tension guides), keeping your machine thread and lint free. Make sure the tips of the tweezers meet up and the points are even.

120-Inch Tape Measure:

It is vital in quilting to be able to measure the quilt top, back, and batting with ease. Because large quilts are often longer than your standard measuring tape measure, a 120-inch tape measure will allow you to measure the entire quilt. The Dedicated time and effort to find the right fabric/craft store or online

Reading Glasses/Magnifying Glass:

These help when doing precision quilting, unpicking, or threading your needle. If you do not use reading glasses, a magnifying glass is useful.



Tissues:

Tissues are helpful when you need to wipe any excess oil from your machine after you oil it. If you do not use tissues, then keep clean rags near by.

Pins:

Extra pins are handy when you load your quilt on the frame. We recommend (and sell) larger quilting pins, or corsage pins for thicker material. They are some of the strongest pins you can find, and will be able to pierce through the many layers you will be pinning as you load your quilt on the frame. Corsage pins are two inches long, thus you will need less than the normal amount of pins to keep your quilt on the frame. Magnetic pin grabbers will help keep all of your pins in one convenient place.

allow you more quilting time. While quilting, find what tools and accessories help you to be more efficient and stick with it.

Movement of Your Machine While Quilting

Standing in front of your machine quilting from left to right produces the best stitches because this movement follows the natural feeding process of the machine. This will help decrease broken thread or tension problems as you quilt. Of course, your Block Rockit can quilt

Canned Air or Compressor:

Lint can be very troublesome in machine quilting. Cleaning your machine with canned air or an air compressor will help you avoid lint buildup. Clean your machine often to keep it functioning well. Follow the instructions on the canned air to avoid any safety hazards. If you do not have these tools on hand, use a soft, stiff paintbrush to remove lint from your machine.

Machine Oil:

Oil your Block Rockit according to the instructions, and be sure to use the oil included with the machine. Replacement oil (for when you run out) should be a high quality machine oil available online or in your local fabric or craft store. DO NOT forget to oil your machine! Just as a car needs oil to run, so does your machine—keep it oiled so it will run smoothly and beautifully.

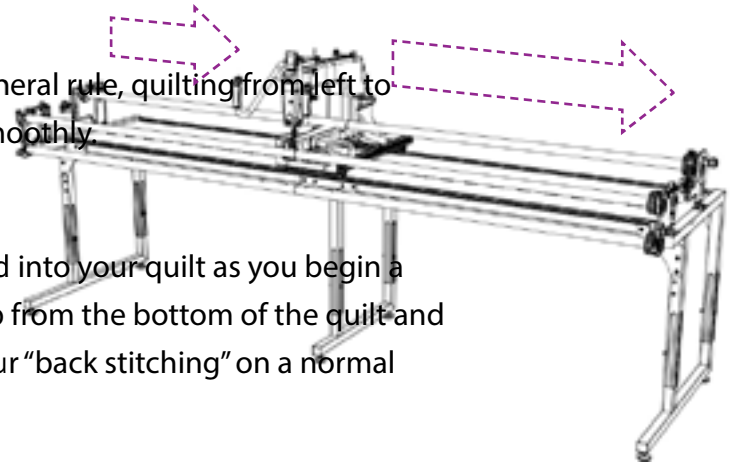
Disappearing Fabric Pen or Chalk:

You can use these to mark and measure your quilt. Be sure to test the fabric pen and chalk before you use them on your quilt to make sure they are removable. Crayola Ultra Clean Washable markers are typically good fabric pens to use; the “ultra clean” version of the marker is very easy to remove from fabric.

Tool Box:

This is great for keeping your tools or spare machine parts in a single location. It can be a normal, small toolbox, or any other kind of container that will be easily accessible

any design and can move in all directions, but as a general rule, quilting from left to right will help your machine and quilting run more smoothly.



Securing your stitches

In order for your quilting stitches to be securely locked into your quilt as you begin a new stitch, the bobbin thread needs to be brought up from the bottom of the quilt and sewn over and anchored. (Think of this process as your “back stitching” on a normal home sewing machine)

- 1- Move machine where you want to to start quilting. Press needle up/down button to lower your needle while holding the top thread in your other hand.
- 2- Bring the needle back up and move the machine about an inch or two to the side. The bobbin thread will come up through the hole you just made.
- 3- Hold both the top and bobbin thread in one hand and move the machine back to the hole. You will begin stitching at this hole. Turn the machine on, and take a couple of stitches. Turn the machine off, trim both threads you were holding, and then continue quilting. Your threads have been anchored.



Every time you stop quilting and cut your thread, follow these steps to start quilting again so that your stitches will be anchored into your quilt.

Practice free-motion quilting before any other type of quilting to become familiar with the machine and its movement. Free-motion quilting

following a pre-drawn pattern, and it is the fastest and most confidence in using your machine and knowing how it feels. Consistent motions while quilting, and free motion quilting when if you plan on following pantograph patterns with

HELPFUL VIDEO:

[Securing your stitches](#)

your laser on the majority of your quilts, first learning how the machine feels will give you greater control and precision as you use a laser.

Note From Rachel:

As an operator in the industrial sewing area, I relied heavily on muscle memory while sewing. Every day I practiced the same process repeatedly, and over time my operation became natural and I did not have to consciously put forth as much effort as I did when first learning. It took me a long time to gain this muscle memory, but over time, and with patience, it came to me and to my hands. I became more efficient and had fewer mistakes as I gained this natural muscle memory. As you put in consistent and diligent effort, over time, quilting will become natural to you. I haven't left my industrial sewing operation for years, but I am confident that if I were to go back to work today, my hands would remember all the steps of the process and it would all come back to me quickly.

It's not about being perfect,
it's about being confident

Getting into a creative groove

Create an atmosphere that allows you to concentrate on your quilting and think of new ideas. You will get into a rhythm with practicing the designs and techniques you've wanted to try. This will significantly help your quilting skills progress as it will increase the quality of the time you spend quilting. Here are some suggestions that can help you create this kind of atmosphere:

- Schedule your quilting time. Let family/friends know you will be working at that time.
- Before you begin quilting, make sure you have all the tools and materials on hand that you will be using.
- Keep your tools nearby and in an easy to reach place.
- Stay organized. Create a space for all your tools so that nothing gets lost.
- Listen to music that allows you to block out distractions and concentrate. If audio books do not distract you, these can also help you get into a creative groove.
- Remove distractions. If you have work, tomorrow's busy schedule, or what you're going to make for dinner taking away your attention, either try to get those things out of your mind or take care of them first so that you can concentrate on your quilting.

- Make your quilting space comfortable. Set up your favorite pictures, decorations, furniture, or plants that will make your area more pleasant.
- Use good lighting. This will help you better see what you are working on, and it will keep your eyes from getting tired from straining to see.
- Have fun! Just like any hobby, you will enjoy it more when you have fun, and you will learn better when you enjoy it.

Note from Kathy:

A new quilt machine can be intimidating, but if you remember it's just a tool, and YOU are the boss, you'll be just fine. The great thing is, quilting with the Block RockiT becomes easier and more enjoyable every time you use it. So just keep on quilting!

Now, how do you get in the groove? Sometimes we return from a long time on the road, and I know I have quilts ready to go, but I sit and look at the frame and wonder if I can start. A few things that seem to help me get ready to quilt are:

- Looking at pictures of award winning quilts
- Pressing a quilt and getting it ready to quilt. As you touch the fabric, let it give you quilting ideas. Once it's nice and flat, put it on the frame and start laying thread on it to get the best colors.
- Oil up your machine, do a little test quilting on the side... bite the bullet and start.

I love to listen to an audio book on headphones while I quilt. Others like music in the background. Maybe you want to listen to a baseball game on the TV. If they get a good hit, they will play the rerun over and over, so you can watch. Get excited about the finished product. My favorite is the actual quilting.

Learning from Your Mistakes

Mistakes and difficulties will happen in quilting. Realize that everyone, even very experienced quilters, makes mistakes while quilting. With a positive learning attitude these can be good learning experiences if you evaluate the mistake and try to improve. If you, for example, are having loops or birds nests under your quilt, stop and evaluate why this may be happening. As stated earlier in the book, the first thing to check is the threading. You may think you have it right, but be sure to reference the

diagram and video in this book or instruction manual. And then continue through the other troubleshooting steps if your problem is not solved. If you become frustrated or angry, take a break and come back to the problem with a calm and clear mind. This will help you solve the problem more effectively.

Over time you will come to know the workings of your machine and what to do right away when you have a problem, but it does take time and patience to get to that point. Discouragement will lead to disappointment, and the joy that should come from quilting will be lacking.

KATHY SAYS: Make the choice to be positive in the beginning stages of quilting as it will help you confidently work your way through any troubleshooting you may have to do with your machine and frame. At KathyQuilts, it's our goal to help you through these discouraging times, so please know, as you contact us, we are always there and happy to help you as you quilt.

Position your sewing machine after quilting



Never leave your machine in the middle of your quilt after you finish quilting. This could cause oil to drip on your fabric. Be sure as you finish quilting that you move your machine to one side of the frame where it will not drip oil on the quilt. You can even open a cloth under the foot as the machine rests to catch any excess oil that may drip while you are not using it.

Lesson Four: Quilting Above and Beyond

We will now look at different ways to set goals, practice, and develop new techniques as you become a more experienced quilter. The goal of this lesson is to teach you how to further your quilting skills so that you can progress over time. As you practice these techniques, your level of quilting will improve, and you will learn how to continue developing your skills over time.

Practicing with Perseverance

Practice your quilting consistently to achieve the results you desire! One of the definitions of “practice” is to perform or work at a task repeatedly to become proficient. No matter what your skill level was when you purchased your machine, practicing will always improve your technique.

Practicing with other quilters, especially more experienced ones, is an effective way to learn and improve. Ask them questions to get ideas of how you can improve. However, avoid comparing your work to others'. While it is good to learn from others, comparing your work can decrease your confidence and desire to quilt. Some are born with a natural ability to sew, craft, or quilt. Then there's the rest of us. But this is a good because you can learn valuable lessons from those with more experience, practice, and skills. Incorporate the new ideas and skills you learn from others into your quilting, and you will be amazed at how your growth.

Setting Goals

As you practice, set goals of new skills you want to learn or ways in which you want to improve. Establishing clear, measurable, and reachable goals is one of the most effective ways to improve your quilting. Here are some suggestions to help you get started:

WRITE DOWN YOUR GOALS IN A JOURNAL OR NOTEBOOK



Review your journal to remind yourself of your goals and gauge your progress. Writing down and keeping track of your goals will help you turn your dreams into reality.

SET SPECIFIC LONG-TERM, MID-TERM, AND SHORT-TERM GOALS

Long-term goals might be for a year or more in the future. Mid-term goals could be for several months. Short-term goals could be days, weeks, or a couple of months. Make sure your goals are clear, have a specific outcome, and have some way of measuring. For example, instead of setting the goal, “I want to become a proficient quilter,” you could set the goal, “by the end of this year, I want to quilt rose designs into a quilt for my friend’s birthday.”

SET MILESTONES

For long and mid-term goals, set milestones that you can achieve every couple of weeks or months in order to keep you on track of achieving your overall goal. For example, in order to finish a quilt for a friend by the end of the year, you could set the following short-term goals:

- Piece the quilt together by the end of the month
- Practice the rose design on practice quilts at least 3 hours a week for the next four weeks
- Practice unpicking stitches for 20 minutes every week

RECORD YOUR PROGRESS IN YOUR JOURNAL

This will help you see your progress and areas where you can improve. It is difficult to see improvements from day to day. However, as time passes, you will be able to see your progress over time. Seeing improvements can significantly increase your confidence in your quilting abilities and make you more excited for future progress.

When you notice mistakes or skills you would like to improve, set goals with specific times you will work on them and keep track of your progress. Correcting mistakes will also increase your confidence in your quilting skills.

BE FLEXIBLE WITH YOUR GOALS AND READJUST THEM AS NEEDED.

Don’t rush just so you can meet a specific timeline. If a goal takes more time than you anticipated, take that extra time. The purpose of goals is to help you grow, not to



simply cross them off your list.

Proper Techniques

The goal in creating beautiful quilting designs should be smooth and constant movement. Eventually you do not want to start and stop all the time to get your design just perfect but you want to be able to have a continuous flow of quilting from one side of your quilt to the other when you are creating a fill pattern. As you develop this continuous flow, the precision and intricate quilting you will be doing will come more naturally as you skills improve.

- Have good posture – don't hold up your shoulders or be hunched over
- Relax – try not to tense up
- Smile – quilting with the Block RockiT is fun

Skill-building Designs

When first learning to quilt, we recommend quilting simple, large patterns and then filling in the space with more detailed designs. Starting out with larger designs will help set the bounds of where you will quilt the smaller designs, and it can give you a smaller area to work on within the quilt. As you quilt larger designs, you will gain better, consistent control over the Block Rockit, which will help you when filling in the spaces. Stippling (pattern that looks like puzzle pieces) over an entire quilt was a fad for quilters as machine quilting started to become more popular and has since become a more outdated design. There are far better designs to learn that will help with your foundational skills. We suggest continuous loops, stars, hearts, leaves, and swirls as you begin your free motion quilting. And remember to try variety in your designs. Don't get in the habit of quilting the same patterns over and over or you will not have as much fun when you quilt.

Fill pattern ideas

The following are ideas for fill patterns. These can give you ideas of variations or other patterns you would like to try.

ECHO: An echo is a good way to practice following a pattern and keeping your designs properly spaced out. To "echo" a pattern, set the first stitch a quarter inch (the width of the hopper foot) away from the edge of the design, then quilt the same



design, but keep the stitches consistently a quarter inch away from the original design. You will end up with a repeated, slightly larger design that encircles the original. Echoes will help you gain more control over the machine. As you gain more experience, you can put the stitches closer together to create more intricate designs. Echoes can be applied with any of the following designs, and virtually any design you can think of.

LEAVES: Group three leaves together and use loops as vines to move to the next group of leaves. Flowers can be easily added to this design. Try big leaves and smaller ones. Another option is to quilt a leaf and then continue to echo the design a few times before you move to another leaf.

PEACOCK FEATHERS: Create an oblong circle-like teardrop and echo this design as desired before continuing to another feather

SWIRLS: These can be large or small. For a pattern that covers the entire quilt, create big swirls that can be connected by smaller loops or swirls. These can also be quilted very small and are great for backgrounds of appliqued quilts.

WATER: Quilt back and forth horizontally keeping the edges rounded when you change direction, as if you were creating a river or flowing water. You can incorporate swirls to make it look like more rolling water.

You get the idea; fill patterns are easy-to-replicate patterns that do not require minute attention to detail. These will be good patterns to practice to get you warmed up and ready for more advanced designs. They should also allow you to practice smooth, consistent motions to build your technique, as we discussed earlier in this lesson.

Quilting Design Inspiration File

Always keep an eye open for designs to inspire your quilting. As you are out and about, look for designs on walls, tiles, artwork, floors, etc. that will inspire ideas and that look fun to quilt. As you do so, you will develop an eye for patterns, and you will constantly have new ideas to try out. Keep a notebook, paper, phone, or tablet close so you can draw these designs or take pictures for future reference.



Drawing with pen and paper

Quilting with the Block Rocket is very similar to drawing. Sketching and doodling on paper will help develop your continuous and flowing muscle memory used for creating designs. The next time your doctor's office puts you on hold, you're waiting in the car for your kids to get out of school, or you have a free moment at home, practice sketching some designs you'd like to try quilting.

Quilting Cookbook

Brainstorming and preparing quilting patterns for future use will give you a good reference tool if you ever don't know what to quilt. And if you're thinking, "don't worry, I won't run out of ideas," just remember, it can happen to the best of us. Just like those days when dinner time rolls around and you find yourself eating a bowl of cereal because nothing in your fridge jumped out at you, there will be times when you may find yourself staring at your quilt not sure where to get started. So think of this exercise as creating your personalized "Quilting Cookbook."

To create your Cookbook, draw a design on individual pieces of paper. As you see new designs you like (as discussed earlier), you can add them to your Cookbook. Try to make as many as you can so you're always ready with fun ideas. This will give you more variety to choose from when you come upon a project that you just can't figure out how to quilt.

Stay Educated

We encourage you to join discussion groups online that not only help you understand your frame, machine, thread, or tension, but also groups that talk about quilting designs and ideas. This can be a great resource to learn different perspectives. There are also many blogs, books, magazines, and classes that can help teach you the art of beautiful quilting. Always continue to apply and practice as you learn new techniques



Keep a Portfolio

Keeping a quilting portfolio or journal is an important step of quilting. Take photographs of all of your quilts and keep a record of which thread, batting type, and design you chose for each quilt and why. As you continue in your quilting, you can look back on previous projects for ideas and ways to improve.

Similarly to a journal of your quilting goals, a quilting portfolio will also serve as a reference of your progress over time. Small, incremental changes are hard to see at times, but after several years, they more noticeable. Seeing your improvements documented in your portfolio will strengthen your confidence in quilting and make you more excited to progress in the future.

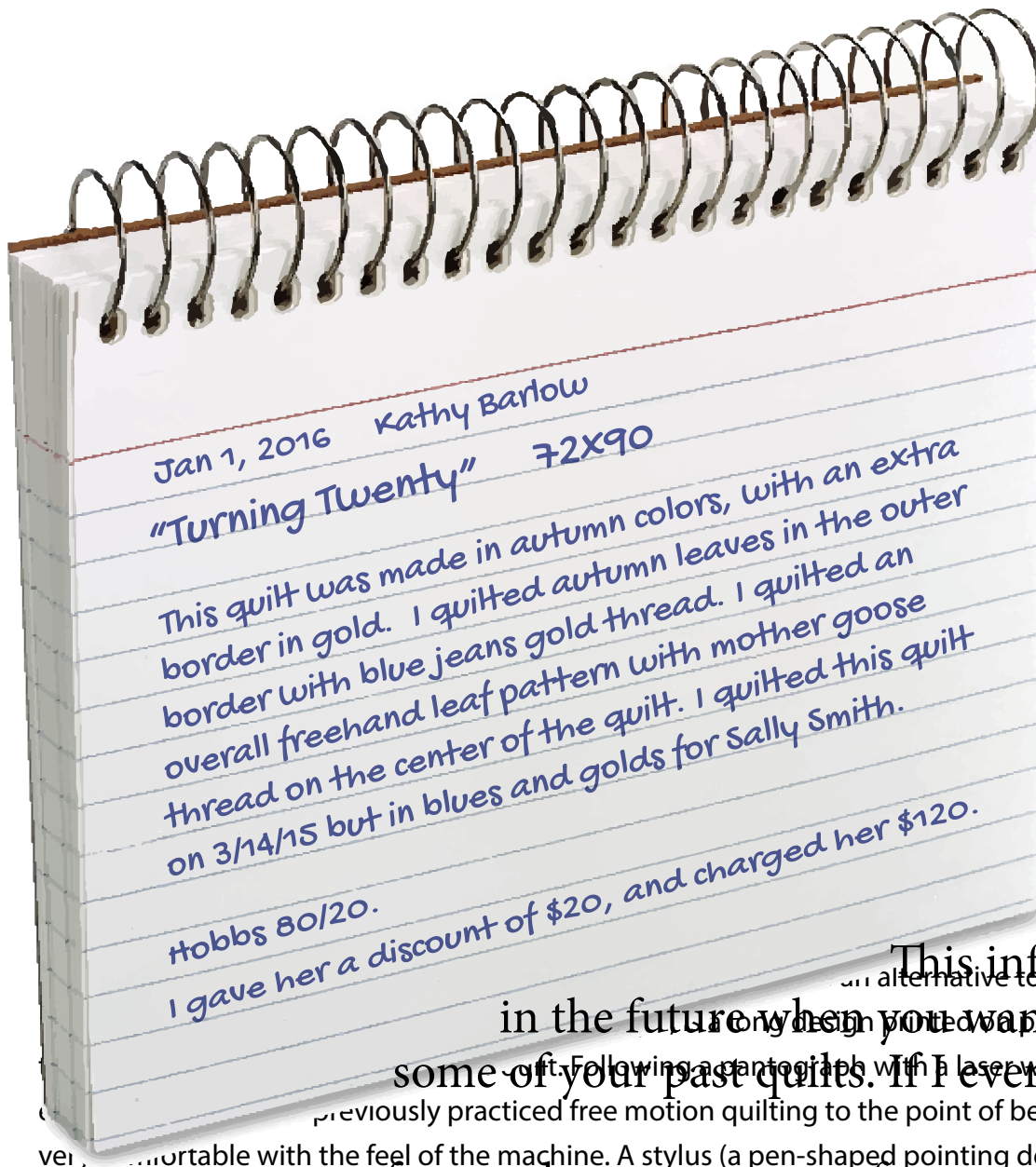
Keeping a portfolio is vital if you plan to quilt professionally. Your quilting portfolio will serve as a reference tool for yourself as well as for your customers. You can use past projects to show your clients how you can make ideas come to life through your quilting. Use the projects you are most proud of and that you feel best represent the quality of your work to show to your customers. The more detailed your portfolio, even of the projects you do not like, the better it will serve you when you take that step from quilting as a hobby to quilting as a profession.

Note from Kathy:

Years ago, one of the quilt shops taught a class. Prior to the class, they asked me to quilt the quilt that they were using to teach the class. I don't know why I didn't think ahead, but who knew that every person that took the class would want me to quilt their quilt exactly the same way when they finished it. Do you think I could remember exactly what I'd quilted on it? Not! I started taking a digital picture of every quilt that I quilted. EVERY ONE. (It's bound to happen that the one you'll want to look at is the one that you were in too much of a hurry to take the picture.) And then I learned that a picture wasn't enough detail for me. I could look at those pictures but when someone finished that quilt two years later, but could I remember what color of thread I used? What I charged the person? So, I started keeping a quilting journal besides. Each year, I write down the year and then as I finish each quilt, I jot down just a little information about the quilt. I put the date, the person's name (my name if it's my quilt), the name of the quilt (both what the person called it and the name of the pattern if I know it),

and also the quilt size. I jot down what I quilted on it and the color of the thread.

This is what it might look like:



This info can help you
in the future when you want to remember
some of your past quilts. If I ever quilt a similar
quilt
for another customer or for myself, I can simply
refer to my notes.

attached to your machine can be used in place of a laser to follow a pattern.

To attach the laser to your machine, you will first need to install the bracket. When looking at the machine from the backside of your frame, the bracket will be installed on the left side. Next, place the laser on the bracket of the Block Rockit with the laser pointed down at a slight angle away from the machine.

To follow the pantograph, lay it out on the table top of your frame. If your quilt or pantograph design is directional (it needs to be quilted in a certain direction), either load your quilt on the frame upside down or flip the pantograph pattern upside down to accommodate this. Move the Block Rockit to the right side of the frame when standing in the back, and adjust the laser so that it lines up with where you want to begin on the pantograph. Look to the needle of your machine and press the “needle down” button. See if this is where you want to start your quilting in reference to where your laser is. If everything is lined up how you like, you can begin quilting here.

From the backside, you will quilt from right to left. It is important to quilt this direction, as you will have fewer problems with thread breakage and tension. As you quilt, stand slightly to the left of the machine and watch the laser follow the design. Most importantly, breathe, relax your body, and don’t worry about following the pantograph perfectly as much as making smooth movements. You want to avoid jerky, abrupt motions. Take small steps with your feet and always relax your hands – you don’t need a death grip. And most importantly, have fun!

Remaining Calm, Cool and Collected

Quilting with a pantograph can be a bit tricky, but the more you do, the less you have to think about it. As you are following a pattern, as with freehand quilting, you will want to flow from the one end of your pattern to the other. The trick here is to be able to move your feet from side to side without it jerking your upper body. As you trace along the path of the pantograph pattern, you need to have a fluid, flowing motion. If you step to the side, and it makes your arm jerk, then you get a nice little mess up on your quilt. Just take your time and relax. If you are too uptight, then you are bound to mess up. Many quilters like to listen music that can help them relax and get in a flowing motion. Kathy usually listens to audiobooks with wireless headphones to have a fun



quilting experience.

Using rulers, templates, and pattern boards

Installing the ruler base, beginning with a ruler then using other templates

Borders

Borders are the frame of your quilt. Sometimes, you may want to disregard the borders as being a different part of the quilt, and quilt the same design over the borders and the center of the quilt. But, sometimes the borders really frame the quilt, and need to be highlighted.

Top and bottom borders can be quilted in a continuous line without stopping because they reach across the width of your frame. However, side borders will have to be quilted in vertical sections. Here are some suggestions on quilting borders:

Quilt the borders with the same design as the rest of the quilt. If you are using a different thread color in the border, change the thread and quilt the border before you roll the quilt to the next section. This will require changing thread often, but the quilt will have a nice continuous design.

Quilt all the borders first by quilting the top and bottom borders, then unpin and rotate your quilt 90 degrees to quilt the side borders as the top and bottom borders. There are many problems with this method, and you will probably get puckers on the back of your quilt because the center has not been quilted yet. Little tucks can happen - usually in the quilt back where you cannot see them until you are finished. It's easy to end up with extra puffy fabric in the center of the quilt when you quilt the borders before quilting the center.

Quilt the center of the quilt first, then go back to quilt the borders. Sometimes you can take the quilt off to quilt the side borders. Again, fabrics may shift when you unpin and turn a quilt and you may make problems for yourself with puckers.

Quilt the top border, then the center, and then the bottom border. Then turn the quilt and quilt the side borders. This will keep your quilt flatter, but you may still get puckers



when you quilt the side borders.

How Kathy quilts her borders:

Quilt the borders with their own design as you go along, changing the thread color as often as is needed. This is our number one preferred method. Here is how we do it:

1. Standing in front of your quilting frame start right at the belly bar at the left of your frame and start quilting the outside border.
2. Quilt your design (say it's swirls) up until you need to turn the corner to quilt the top border of your quilt and keep sewing. Quilt all across that top edge and turn the corner and come down until you have no more quilting room left.
3. Quilt the next border the same way. You may need to roll your quilt at this point. After you've rolled the quilt so that top border is out of the way, go back and quilt the tiny left side border - maybe just 5-6 inches of it.
4. Clip your threads, and do the same to the tiny right side border. Then go back and start quilting the center of your quilt. After you've quilted the center of your quilt and it's time to roll the quilt again, then roll it.
5. This time, quilt the center part of your quilt (because your thread is the same color.)
6. Change the thread color again and quilt another few swirls in the borders on each side. Roll the quilt again when you're finished here, and then quilt the borders first this time (because your thread is that color.) When you've quilted the little bits of border on the sides, it's time to quilt the center again.

Quilting the borders this way will allow your entire quilt to be quilted while you're rolling it without you ever having to unroll the quilt and re-quilt another part or without you having to turn the quilt and worry about the dreaded puckering. I promise you that when you have puckers on the back of your quilt, you'll do whatever it takes on the next quilt to never have that happen again.

ALWAYS look underneath your quilt each time you roll it to make sure there aren't folds in the backing fabric before you start the next part. This can save you a lot of suffering later on if you can eliminate the puckers BEFORE you start the next part of the quilting

Border Quilting ideas:



FEATHERS: This is always an old fashioned favorite. Practice feathers over and over and over - both on paper and on fabric. Dream about feathers. This can be a fast border after you know it backward and forward. I always sew a center vine before I do the feather and then I quilt a few feathers on one side of the vine, then sew back on top of that center vine to do a few feathers on the other side of the vine.

FEATHER VARIATIONS: Change the feather design to leaves on each side of the vine. You can make fat leaves with a center spine in each or skinny leaves without a center. Use the center vine as the starting point. Make skinny pine needle type designs on each side of the center vine or put a flower on one side and the leaves on the other, alternating back and forth along the vine. These center vine designs are fast and a fun border idea.

SWAGS: Always keep an odd number of swags so that you can sew to the next swag without stopping and cutting your threads, saving time. Mark your quilt at even intervals across and down the borders - or use the blocks in your quilt as markers. Say you have a 4-patch, then an empty block of the same size, then a 4-patch, etc. Using the seams where these designs match up, make a very shallow 'swag' design to the next intersection. Then quilt a larger 'swag' back to the first, then another larger 'swag' back. If you keep your swags an odd number (3 swags or 5) then you can always quilt the next swag. Great for the border on a baby quilt with small blocks.

LEAVES & LOOPS: These make a fantastic quilt design. Quilt a maple leaf then a few loops then another maple leaf then a few loops. Go around the entire border with leaves and loops.





VINING LEAVES: These leaves are hooked together, one after another, without a loop in-between. Can be large or small going directly into the next leaf facing the same direction.



SWIRLS OR WAVES: Sometimes you can just eyeball where the swirls will go or you may want to divide the border evenly so your swirls are more uniform. You can just put a pin every four inches and make sure you do a large swirl in each division then take out the pin. Quilt right into the next swirl without stopping to cut threads. My favorite quick border design.



SEASONAL QUILTING: Quilt a flower then a loop to the next flower. Alternate between a mitten then a snowflake until you reach the next border. Quilt a baby bottle then a pacifier then another baby toy. Quilt an autumn leaf then a loop then a leaf. Keep changing the main quilting theme then quilt loops to get you to the next empty spot. You can space these evenly or just quilt as you go. They'll turn out great.



Ideas and Tips for starting a business/quilting professionally

- Be friendly and fun and people will be drawn to your personality
- When Kathy started quilting she spent months practicing, building confidence and then went to the quilt store and said she was looking for customers
- Quilt a whole bunch. Tell all your friends and people you know

- Quilt for free--start with some quilts that you will donate to charity
- Take samples of your quilts to the quilt shops
 - Love to quilt a class sample, 25% discount when quilts for your shop
- Quilt guilds - show and tell, members
- Networking and word of mouth
- Show it off and be confident, entering contests
- Find a system that works for you - order forms, scheduling, blog or website
- Learn from constructive criticism

Final thoughts from Lynn and Kathy

Quilt like the wind bullseye!

We want people to be coming back!

We're passionate about helping you in your quilting journey.

We want to hear your successes so we can share them!

The key to having the most fun is to keep trying new things and to call Kathy Quilts when you come upon a stumbling block and we WILL help you!

Be patient with yourself as you are a beginner and call us for help.

Practice practice practice - the more you use your Block RockiT the more familiar you will become with it, the smoother it runs, and you will fall in love with your machine.

It's really scary learning something on your own, but the nice thing about KathyQuilts is that you will never be left in the dark. We were all there at some point, and we've learned the Block Rockit and we want to help you!

Glossary of Terms

Belly Bar - On a long arm quilt frame, the rail that is closest to you when you stand in front of your frame. Nothing is ever rolled onto this rail. Although, on a Grace Machine Quilt machine the rail that is closest to you when you stand in front of your frame is called the "quilt back" rail and is for the backing of your quilt.

Carriage - The upper and lower carriage assembly is where the sewing machine rides on a machine frame.

Domestic (Home Sewing Machine) - Any sewing machine that is made for general sewing in the home market. We often refer to these as short arm machines. This includes machines with 10 inches or less of throat length. These machines usually run at 700 to 800 stitches per minute.

Ease - ??????????

Floating a Quilt Top - Floating the top means the quilt back may be pinned to the take up rail, but the quilt top and batting are either pinned or sewn to the back.

Frame Backside - Side that holds the sewing machine carriage or table side of your frame. When you are using pantograph patterns or template guides, you will quilt from the back of the frame. When you pin a quilt on your frame you will pin it to the take up rail from the back side of the frame.

Frame Front - The front of the quilting frame will be the one that allows you to be the closest to the sewing machine needle. You can see your quilt best from this side of the frame.

Leaders - Strips of fabric that attach to the frame rails (poles.) The quilt gets pinned to these cloth leaders.

Long arm Machine - Sewing machine head made to ride on a machine frame. Larger than domestic sewing machines—these are generally made with over 18 inches of throat space. These are usually found on commercial machine frames. These are much faster than a home sewing machine because these are commercial machines.

Mid-arm Machine - Machine head made to ride on a machine frame. Head usually has between 15 to 18 inches of throat length. We classify the Block RockIt as a midarm because of its 14.5 inch throat.

Pantograph Pattern or Panto - designs that are followed with a stylus or laser to trace along, usually on long rolls of paper—placed on the backside of the frame on most machine quilting frames.

Press - steaming/ironing seams in the correct direction that will allow your quilt top to lay flat



Quilt Back Rail - Rail that the quilt back is rolled on when loading a quilt on the frame

Quilt Top Rail - Rail that the quilt top is rolled on when loading a quilt on the frame

Speed Control - Speed controls replace the foot pedal of your domestic sewing machine—a box that has some sort of knob and or buttons to control the speed of the machine. These speed controls only speed up or slow down your machine. They don't control your stitch length when quilting on a machine frame. The stitch length is regulated by how fast the machine is running and the speed with which you move the frame carriage.

Stitch Regulator - When machine quilting, controlling the speed of your machine is very important. If your machine is running too fast, and you move the carriage too slowly, you will have very small stitches. Stitch Regulators, like the Grace SureStitch, have a brain that determines the speed of your sewing machine by how fast you move the carriage. If you speed up, it will speed up, you slow down, the machine slows down. This produces even stitches.

Take Up Rail - One of at least three frame rails that the completed quilt rolls up on as you complete each row.

Throat Length – (arm length or harp, all related terms) The throat of a sewing machine is measured from the needle to the right. If you are quilting on a shortarm frame, you will need at least six inches of throat or arm length. Usually when you discuss how large your machine is, you are referencing the measurement to the right of the machine needle.

Walking Foot - ??????????

References:

[1] Refer to the frame's Instruction Manual for details on how to adjust the legs or foot levelers.

[2] (Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Sewing Station Design, <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/sewing/sewingstationdesign.html>, accessed January 10, 2015)



- [3] See section in this lesson on the encoder
- [4] Refer to the section “Setting Up Your Leaders From Kathy Quilts”
- [5] See the section “Oiling and Warming Up Your Machine” Lesson 2.

