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**Genius Hacks**  
Every Quilter Should Know



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# Yes, You Can!

## Free-Motion Quilt on a Regular Sewing Machine

By Christa Watson

Would you like to quilt your own quilts on your regular home sewing machine? Are you afraid to try because you don't think you have the right quilting equipment? What if I told you that you can add beautiful texture to your quilts without investing in a specialty machine? If your machine can sew a straight stitch, it can be used for



*You can machine quilt on any "regular" sewing machine.*

Free-motion quilting is a technique whereby quilting stitches are added by sewing in any direction on the surface of the quilt. Two Things are Needed to Perform Free-Motion Quilting:

1. The feed dogs need to be disengaged.
2. A free-motion quilting foot needs to be used.

If you think these options are not available to you on a basic sewing machine, think again! In fact, there are a growing number of quilters who quilt on their antique Singer Featherweight machines. Where there's a will, there's a way!

## Covering the Feed Dogs

If you cannot disengage, or lower your feed dogs to get them out of the way, you can cover them instead. My favorite way to cover the feed dogs on my machine is with a special piece of material called a Supreme Slider. This specially made plastic can be temporarily adhered to the bed of your machine, covering your feed dogs. It also helps by acting as a slippery surface on which your quilt can glide. Lower your stitch length to zero with the feed dogs covered and you've just completed step 1. In fact, some machines may actually perform better using this technique. If you can lower your feed dogs, try with and without engaging them and see what you prefer.



*Supreme Slider in action*



*Photo via Craftsy instructor Leah Day*

## Acquiring a Free-Motion Foot

If your machine does not come with a free-motion foot, you can get a generic darning foot that is made to fit most sewing machines.

## Other Ways to Try Quilting Using a Regular Sewing Machine

If free-motion quilting is still not for you, there are other options for quilting using a regular sewing machine. You can add plenty of amazing texture to your quilts with simple straight line quilting. A walking foot or built-in even-feed system works well for stitching straight lines. However, if you don't have either of these options, you can still quilt straight lines with your favorite all-purpose sewing foot.





You can quilt a series of concentric, geometric spirals inside a square block. The lines don't have to be even and they don't even have to be perfectly straight to add extra depth and dimension to your quilt.

To quilt the square spiral design shown above, start stitching on one side of your square. Using the edge of your foot as a guide, sew until you are about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch away from the edge. Stop with your needle in the fabric. Pivot, and then sew another straight line next to the edge. Continue in this manner until you have quilted the entire block in one continuous pattern.



Another great way to add interesting quilting with a walking foot or regular sewing foot is to stitch a series of straight lines spaced very close together over the surface of your entire quilt. This is sometimes called "matchstick quilting" and is a very popular design to use for modern quilting.

To machine quilt matchstick lines, simply start on one side of the quilt and stitch a line from one end to the other. Do not worry about keeping your lines completely straight. Organic, imperfect lines actually add more interest to the quilt. Continue stitching in the same direction all the way across the quilt. You can periodically mark a straight line with painter's tape to keep the lines going in roughly the same direction.

Quilting lines spaced further apart look great on quilts with large amounts of background negative space. They can be quilted at a diagonal angle across the quilt to add interest and break up the space. So don't feel limited if you can't or don't wish to free-motion quilt your creations. The sky's the limit when it comes to creativity, and it all starts with a straight line.



# The magic 8 method

## How to Make 8 Half-Square Triangles at Once

By Karen Walker



If you don't like cutting and stitching loose triangles together on the bias, or need to make lots and lots of half-square triangles for a quilting project, here's a quick and easy solution.



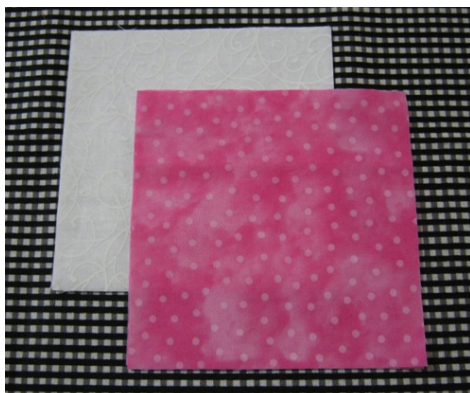
### Step 1:

To make a Magic 8, first determine what size finished half-square triangles are desired. For example:

- Let's say you want to make 3" finished half-square triangles.
- Add to your 3" measurement,  $\frac{7}{8}$ ". (Your total is now  $3\frac{7}{8}$ "")
- Multiply your total of  $3\frac{7}{8}$ " by 2. (That equals  $7\frac{3}{4}$ "")
- $7\frac{3}{4}$ " squares are the size needed to make your 3" finished half-square triangles.

### Step 2:

Cut two squares the desired size based on the formula above.





### Step 3:

With right sides together, draw two diagonal lines corner to corner.

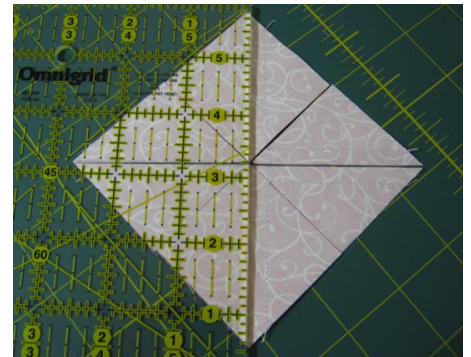
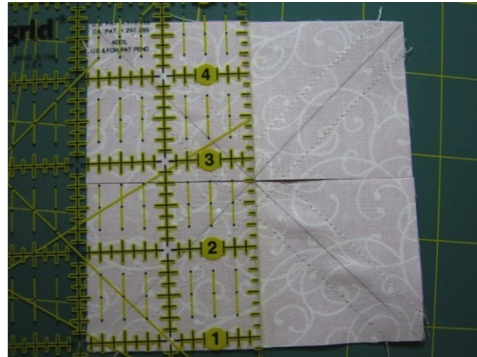


### Step 4:

Stitch a quarter inch of either side of both drawn lines.

### Step 5:

Carefully cut apart without shifting the stitched fabric square. There will be four cuts:



Cut 1: Vertical cut right down the center.

Cut 2: Cut down the center horizontally.

Cuts 3 and 4: Cut on both the drawn diagonal lines.

**Voila!**



Here's a look at some pinwheels made using the Magic 8 method. Use the Magic 8 method to whip up these fun quilt patterns!



### **Pumpkin Spice Quilt**

This quilt is a great stash buster! Warm it up for winter by adding a flannel backing. So snuggly and easy to make!

[Get the Pumpkin Spice pattern.](#)



### **Poppa's Tree Farm Quilt**

Switch up the colors, and this lovely tree quilt can be enjoyed not only at Christmas, but all year round. This can easily be made into a wall hanging, too!

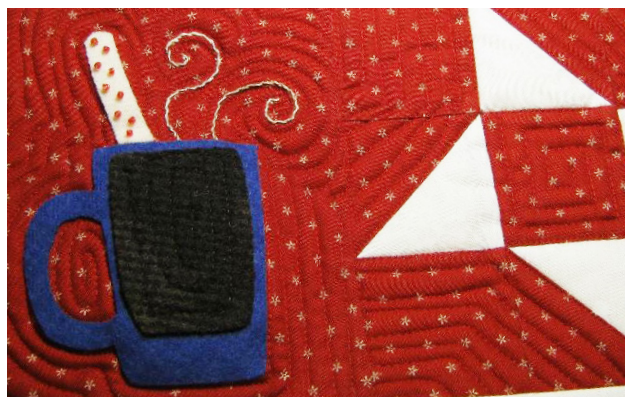
[Get the Poppa's Tree Farm pattern.](#)



### **Pinwheel Table Treat & Pillow Kisses Mini Quilt**

The small scale pinwheels on this sweet little mini quilt are a breeze using the Magic 8 method.

[Get the Pinwheel Table Treat & Pillow Kisses pattern.](#)



### **Hot Cocoa with Friends Mug Rug**

These quick and easy wool appliqué mug rugs made with traditional Friendship Star blocks are perfect for enjoying a hot cup of cocoa with a friend. Super yummy!

[Get the Hot Cocoa with Friends Mug Rug pattern.](#)

# The Secret to a Perfect Quilt Binding?

## GLUE!

By Lauren Lang

Admit it, quilters: you're not fans of binding. It's one of the more tedious parts of the quilting process. You've pieced the top and quilted the layers, but you still need a binding to frame the beautiful artwork you've created. Luckily, there's a long-held secret to creating a perfect quilt binding without having to use pins or quilting clips: glue!

Yep, glue! Gaining popularity in the modern quilting circles, glue has long been used for basting, piecing and appliqué. It's cheap, easy to find, easier to use, and makes quilt bindings look amazing.





Afraid that glue might gunk up your machine or ruin your quilt? Don't be. The glue is dry when you sew your binding down, and if you use the right kind, it's completely washable. Follow these easy steps to learn how to apply quilt binding with glue. Whether you prefer to hand-stitch or machine-stitch your binding, we think you'll be stuck for life!

## How to Apply Quilt Binding With Glue:

### 1. Get Started

In addition to your sewing machine, you'll need your quilt with edges squared up, bias tape (either store-bought double-fold or handmade), a hot iron without steam and school glue. The brand of glue doesn't matter, but it must be school glue so that it washes out. You may use a school glue stick, but make sure it doesn't have any additional color added to it, even if it claims to "disappear" when dry. White is best.



### 2. Sew Edge of Binding to Quilt

Stitch the edge of the binding to the front of your quilt as you normally would. If you are using double-fold bias tape, make sure to stitch the thinner edge at the fold. This will ensure that the quilt looks perfect on both sides when it is finished. If you are using 2½" handmade bias tape, stitch both raw edges to the quilt edge with a ¼" seam.

### 3. Apply Glue

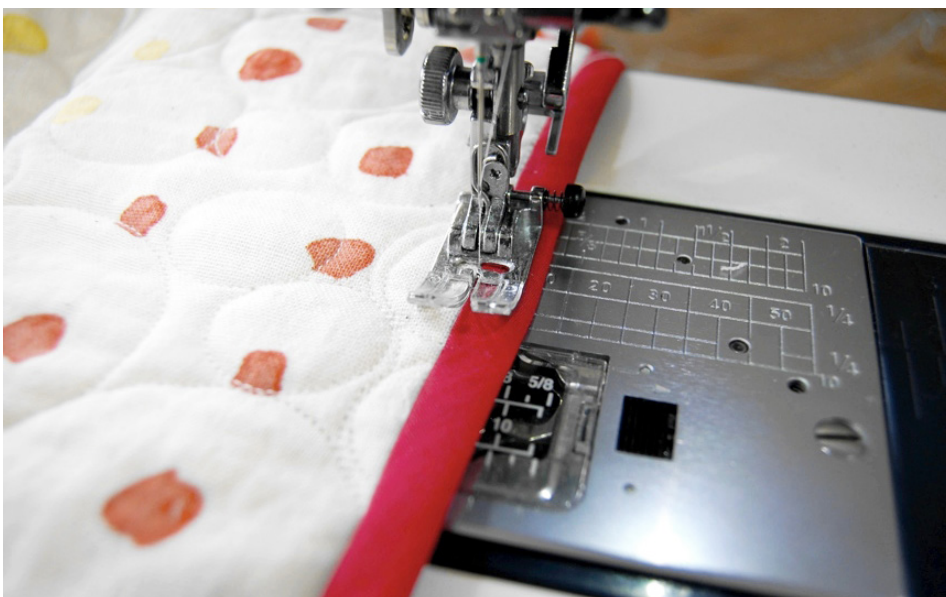
Flip the quilt over to the back side and stretch the bias tape over the edge. The folded edge of the tape should extend beyond the stitch line. Rather than pinning or clipping the edges here, we will use glue instead. Spread a thin layer of glue over 2-3 inches of binding, then finger press to the quilt.



### 4. Iron the Binding to the Quilt

Make sure your iron is nice and hot, and your steam turned off. A dry heat is needed to set the starches in the glue. After applying your thin layer of glue, press the binding to the quilt. Only a few seconds are needed to set the glue. It will feel slightly stiff when it is dry.

Repeat the gluing/ironing process until you have finished glue-basting the binding to the quilt. The neat thing about this technique is that you can set your mitered corners so that the points line up exactly right. If some extra glue gets on the front of your quilt or binding as you're finagling your corners, don't worry! It will wash out. Just make sure everything is as you want it before you press it. Crunchy fabric is harder to manipulate. See? Perfect!





## 5. Hand-Stitch or Topstitch Binding to Quilt

Now that your binding is basted to your quilt (and completely pin-free), it's time to stitch it down. If you prefer to hand-stitch your bindings, you can do so now. But not having pins or clips to worry about means that you can do a beautiful job machine-sewing the binding on; the fabric won't bunch up or slide around on you.

If you are feeling confident about the placement of your binding over the original  $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam, you may "stitch in the ditch" between the quilt and binding. The stitching will look invisible from the front, and it should catch the slightly wider side of the bias tape in the back. I prefer to err on the side of caution and do a very narrow top-stitch (a scant  $\frac{1}{8}$ ") just over on to the binding. This way I'm doubly sure that everything will catch on the back.

My finished binding from the front...and the back!



Voila! Easier and faster than traditional binding methods, and with better results. What's not to love?

# Sew Organized

## 6 Quilt Studio Organization Hacks

By Sherri McConnell



Being organized for sewing and quilting makes it much easier and more fun to accomplish your creative goals. Organization principles that apply to the rest of your home also apply to your sewing area or space. Let's take a look at some of those ideas and see how you can incorporate them to have a more organized quilting life.



### 1. Store Most Used Items in Easy-to-Access Places

Things that you use frequently should be kept out in the open or within easy access of where you'll use them. For example, store scissors and a pincushion next to your sewing machine; keep mats, rulers and rotary cutters at your cutting area. Keep waste cans or thread keepers anywhere you're trimming — you probably need one at your machine, one at the cutting table, and one at your ironing board.

### 2. Keep Work Surfaces Clear

It's going to be easier to sit down and tackle a project or start something new if you are diligent about keeping your spaces ready to use. This includes your sewing machine work area, your cutting area and even your iron board. I only keep my iron, spray starch and a small metallic bowl that "sticks" to my board and holds a small pair of scissors at the end of my ironing board. That way the full surface of the board is available for use at all times.

### 3. Have a System for Pattern Storage

It's frustrating when you can't find a pattern that you know you have. Having a system



in place for pattern storage prevents you from buying the same pattern twice and helps you to find what you're looking for in a timely manner. Here are some ideas for pattern storage:

Use bins for frequently used patterns or projects you are going to start soon. Group unused patterns by designer or type of pattern: jelly roll quilts, fat quarter quilts, table runners, baby quilts, bags, etc.

Go through magazines and pull patterns for later use. Store in plastic sheet protectors in notebooks organized by pattern type. This also works well for PDF patterns you purchase online.

Think about using a filing cabinet if you have space. Vertical hanging files are a very efficient way to store patterns. It's easy to move patterns from one category to another and to add or change category names if you use this method, too.

#### **4. Use Labels Where Possible**

It doesn't help to have threads, notions and tools well-organized if you don't know where anything is. Purchase a label maker to make self-stick labels to place on plastic boxes. Or make cardstock labels to hang with ribbon from storage baskets or bins. You might also consider making a master list for items used less frequently.

#### **5. Re-evaluate and Make Changes When Necessary**

An organizing system is only good if it works for you, so don't be afraid to reevaluate and make changes whenever necessary. If you consistently have trouble finding the same item then you might need to come up with a new storage plan for that.

#### **6. Plan to Donate or Sell Items You Won't be Using**

Senior centers and charity organizations are happy to accept fabric and sewing supply donations. You can also sell unused fabrics and items. Because the old saying "One person's trash is another person's treasure" is also true for fabrics and supplies.



# Online Quilting Class

The secret's out: If you have a sewing machine at home, you probably don't need a longarmer!



Join the popular online quilting class [Quilting Big Projects on a Small Machine](#). Sign up today to experience the satisfaction of expertly finishing large quilts at home on your domestic machine. You'll wow fellow quilters, plus save time and money!

[GET MY SAVINGS >>](#)



# Meet The Experts



## Christa Watson

Christa Watson of the blog [Christa Quilts](#) loves to teach and inspire others to make their own quilts from start to finish. Machine quilting is her favorite part of the process, and she tries to sneak in as much sewing time as she can while raising a family in Las Vegas, Nevada.

## Karen Walker

Karen Walker, the blogger behind [Laugh Yourself Into Stitches](#), has been quilting more than 15 years. She owns a longarm quilting business, and recently became one of Craftsy's indie pattern designers. She uses the Magic 8 method in almost all of her quilt designs. Visit her Craftsy pattern store [here](#).





## Lauren Lang

Lauren Lang is a quilter, writer and teacher living in Boulder, Colorado. She blogs with Rhonda Jordan at [Right Sides Together](#), a website celebrating modern quilters and sewists. Follow her on Instagram: [@rightsidestogether](#).

## Sherri McConnell

Quilting for over 20 years, Sherri McConnell teaches classes and has had her designs published in Quiltmania, Quilts & More, American Patchwork & Quilting and Stitch Magazine. She is a contributing author to Sweet Celebrations with the Moda Bake Shop Chefs and is the author of *A Quilting Life: Creating a Handmade Home*. See more of her writing on her blog [A Quilting Life](#).

