

Freehand

QUILTING DESIGNS

Freehand quilting designs are great because you don't need to use templates or follow marked patterns. Here are three nifty freehand designs for various levels of expertise.

Some quilts call for a simple, all-over design or have areas that need fillers. Freehand machine quilting is perfect for these quilts or sections of quilts—you simply “quilt as you go,” without marking.

Proper preparation will go a long way toward making freehand machine quilting enjoyable.

Select the Design

Begin by deciding on a design.

Echoing the shape of an appliqué or quilting motif is freehand quilting in

its most traditional form. Space lines of echo quilting evenly or stitch at varying intervals for a random look. Seek out continuous-line designs that do not require stopping and starting. A curved or loopy quilting pattern creates nice contrast and interest atop geometric patchwork. Conversely, a linear design can be perfect for a quilt with curves.

Rehearse the Design

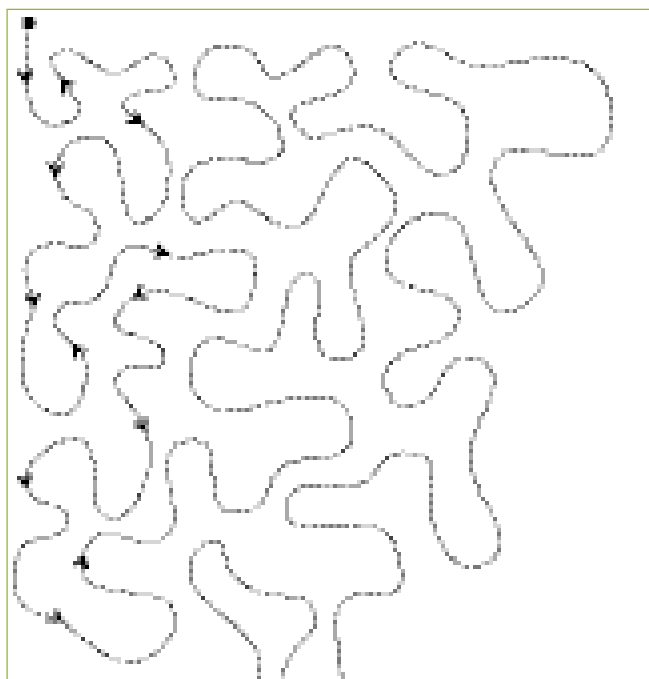
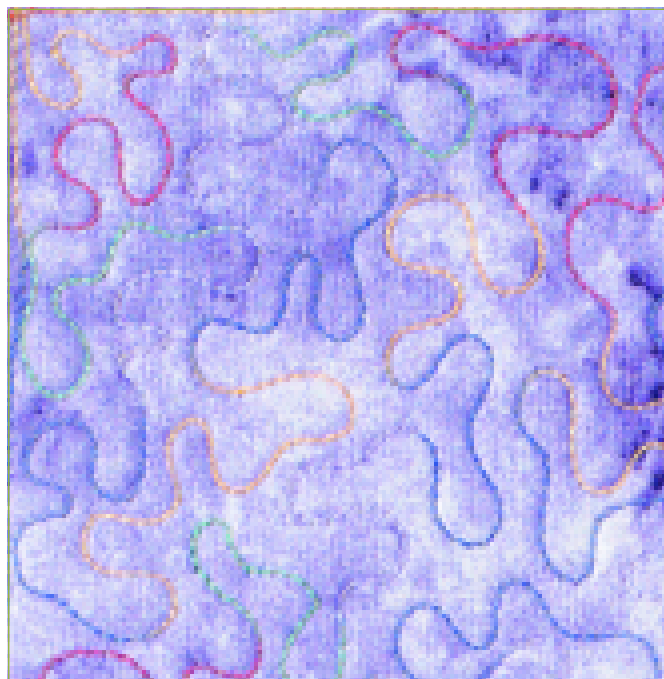
Once you've decided on a design, practice drawing it, either with a

pencil and paper or with your finger touching a sketch of the pattern. Rehearse the design until it feels comfortable. Your brain will get used to the pattern, which will help you successfully stitch the design when you begin quilting.

Prepare Your Machine

Set up for freehand quilting by lowering or covering the feed dogs on your machine. Use a machine quilting needle the correct size for your thread, and put on a straight

Threads courtesy of Superior Threads.



Level 1: Meander or stipple quilting is perhaps the most popular freehand design. It's easy to stitch in various directions without crossing previous stitching lines. This design looks a lot like a doodle you'd draw on paper.

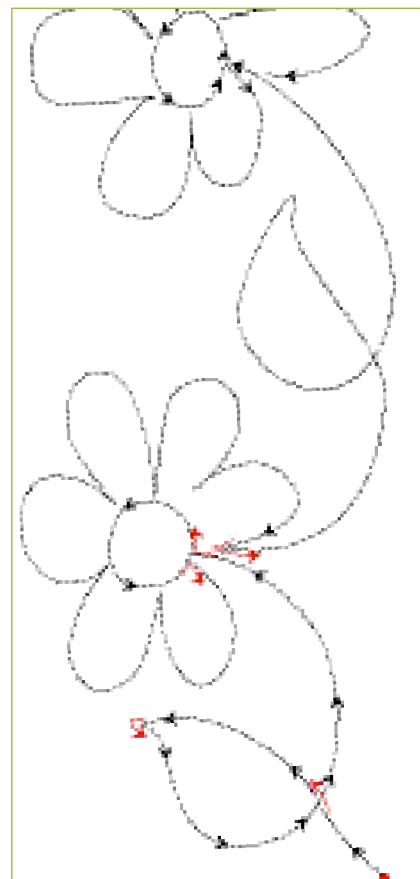
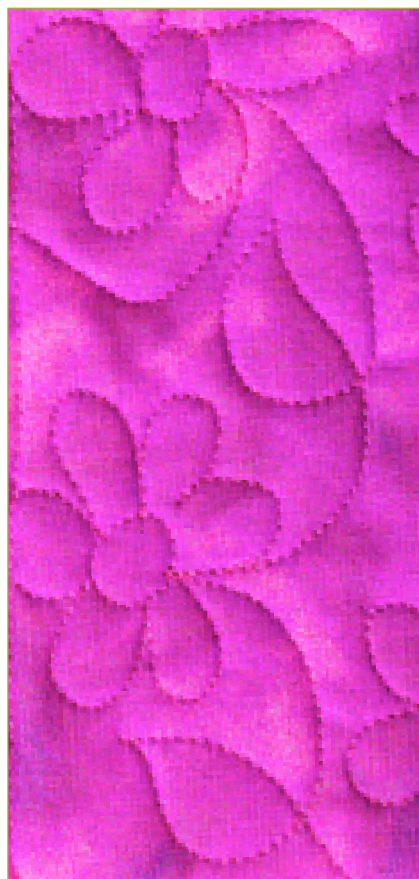
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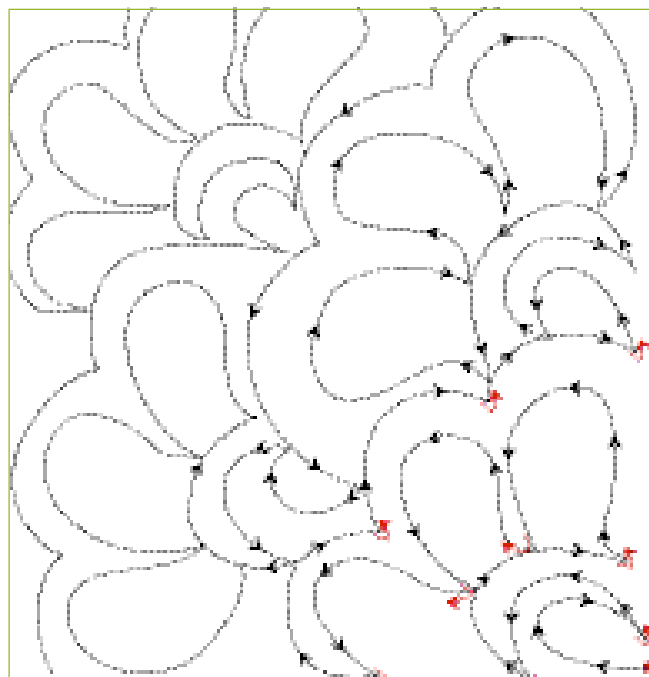
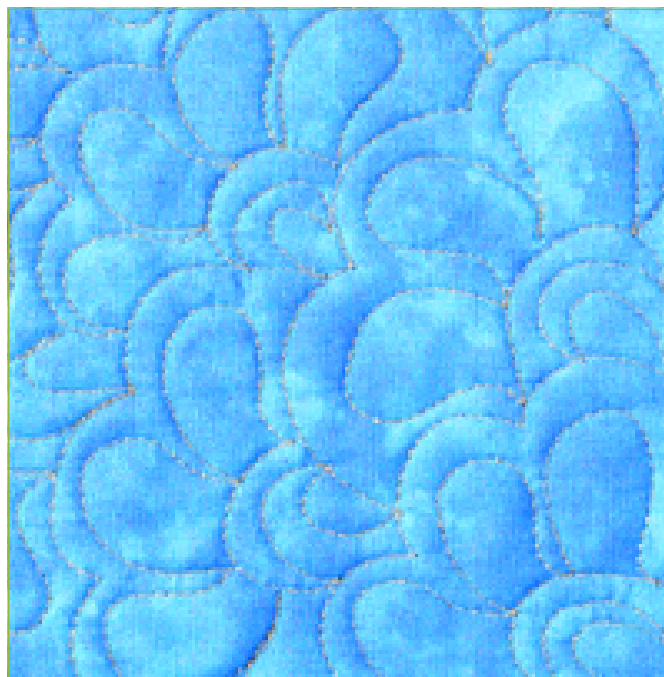
stitch throat plate if you have one. Wear quilting gloves to help you grip the quilt. Once you start quilting, remember to breathe. Take frequent breaks to stretch your arms and shoulders to reduce fatigue. Some quilters listen to music or a book on tape to “get in the zone.”

The designs we’ve included here are all continuous. We’ve included a basic meandering motif (Level 1), a simple flower design (Level 2), and a more complex floral pattern (Level 3).

Don’t be afraid to try any of these basic motifs. With freehand quilting, the only limitation may be your own creativity.



Level 2: Freehand flowers like this are just right for some contemporary quilts. Vary the size of the flowers and use leaves to fill the areas between them.



Level 3: Developed by Marilyn Badger, these “Badger Blossoms” work well as an allover design or to fill setting blocks. ✖