

Learning

New Quilting Designs

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Anyone who has ever tried free motion quilting will testify that it's not as easy as the teachers and YouTube videos make it seem. Many a new machine quilter has abandoned a project after a short while, disgusted with the "mess" they have made of their quilt.

While free motion quilting is not rocket science, it does take practise, practise and then some more practise. Go to a class and quilt for a morning session, take a lunch break and you will experience the "2 steps forward, one step back" phenomenon when you return for the afternoon session!

Your body and your brain are not used to doing what you are asking of it and you have to 'train' it to respond in the way you want. This is called "muscle memory" or "procedural memory". It is a process where you can become very good at something through repetition of the movement. Eventually the action becomes effortless.

It's like writing your name; in Grade one it was a huge effort, now you do it without thinking. The information is not stored in the muscles (as the name suggests) but rather the nerve pathways are developed to move the appropriate muscles without you consciously having to think about it...can you tell I studied biology?!

In my quilting journey, I have found a **3 step process** to be really useful when learning new designs and it is how I now teach in my classes. Step 1 is to watch someone else quilting or drawing the design you want to perfect (either in class, a DVD or youtube video). Step 2 is to go and draw the design. I like to use a whiteboard because somehow, psychologically, if I make a mess I can wipe it off and it's gone forever. Paper also works but is more of a reminder of attempts that were less than successful!

When you are drawing, work with your elbow up in the air and not resting on a table. This will work the same muscles as when you are quilting on a sit down or frame

based machine.

Once you can draw the design to your satisfaction without having to think too hard then you can progress to step 3...sewing the design. A little tip for you...99% of people (me included) are inclined to keep step 2 to a minimum or skip it all together! You will not be saving time...guaranteed! It takes 3 to 4 times longer to unpick than stitch and if you are not confident with the design before you start stitching then you will be doing a lot of frustrating unpicking!

Here's a few more tips:

- Focus on the quality of your practise! Remember, doing something badly 1000 times will just mean that you are excellent at

doing it badly!

- Take it slowly learn slow and forget slow!
- Don't rush to do the entire pattern in one go. If you can, break down the design into smaller elements and learn one part really well before progressing to the next.
- Quilt slowly until you feel confident and then speed up.
- Take breaks and be patient. Being tired will lead to mistakes and frustration!

I thought it would be nice to give you a selection of designs to practise. Most people love feathers but they don't have to be the traditional heirloom type. Here are selection of simple feather variations for you to try.

Step 1: Trace my design with a pen or your finger. (Down the spine, one side of the design, back down the spine then the other side of the design.)

Step 2: Draw out your own version of the design on a whiteboard or paper. Remember, quilting is like handwriting, everyone is different so if your design doesn't look identical to mine then don't worry!

Step 3: Try stitching it out. Get comfortable with one design before you move on to the next!

Enjoy!

Claire

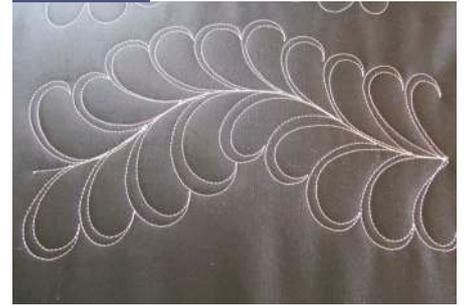
Feather 4



Feather 5



Hooks 2



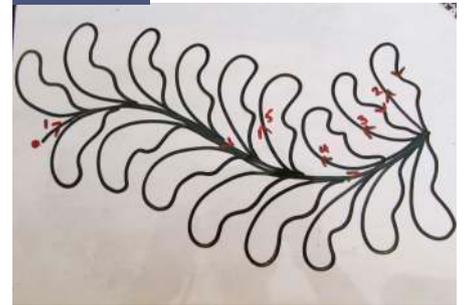
Swirl 1



Swirl 2



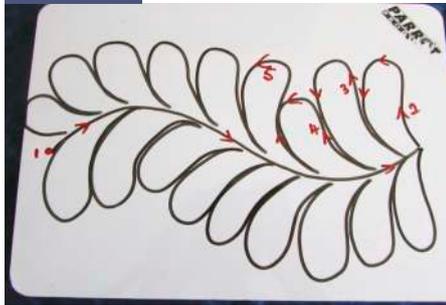
Wobbly 1



Wobbly 2



Feather 1



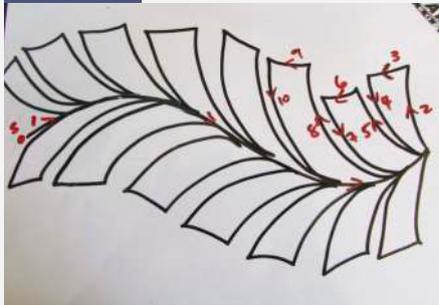
Feather 2



Feather 3



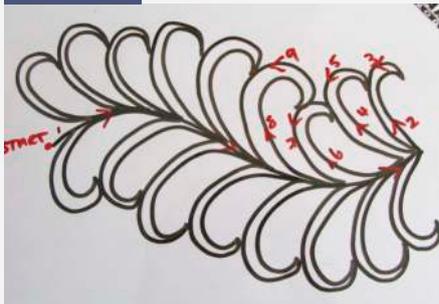
Straight 1



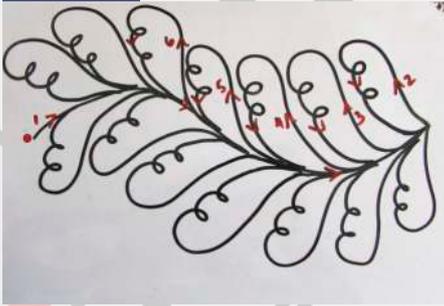
Straight 2



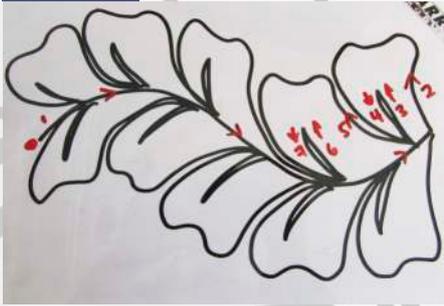
Hooks 1



Loopy 1



Leaf 1



Loopy 2



Leaf 2

