



Product options for marking your quilts

I'm sitting down to write this having finished my last quilt for the National Quilt Festival competition last night. It's an exhausting process, taking every last ounce of energy and time that you are prepared to give it, and then some more! I was meant to have finished last week - but that's a story for another day!

When working on my quilts, I do a lot of marking. Marking quilts before you quilt them is a time consuming process. If at all possible, I try to avoid marking, specifically for that reason! But sometimes, when you are working on a special project, or are new to machine quilting and want your designs to look even, it pays to spend the time and mark your designs, or at least key parts of them.

There are many different

products to choose from. Each has its pro's and con's so let's take a look at some options and help you make an informed choice next time you want to mark a design.

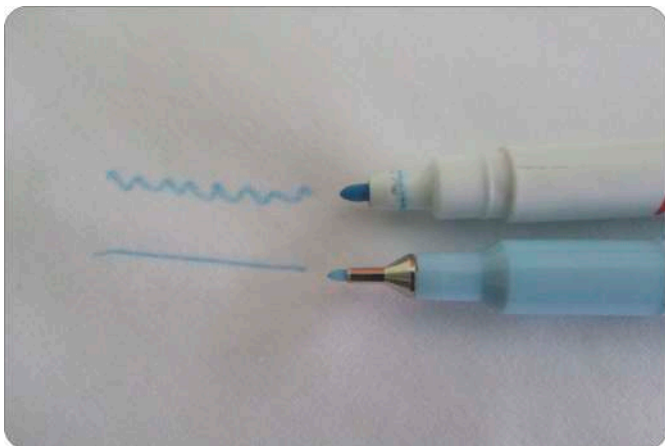
Before you go any further, the very first thing to do with any of these options is to **test it before you use it** on your project. Take a small sandwich with your chosen top, backing fabric and batting. Use all 3 layers as the combination is important. Some colours hold the dyes more stubbornly and oils in wool batting can also contribute to it being more difficult to remove marks. Draw on your sandwich and leave it for an hour or so before you try to remove it.

So what options are there?

Chalk is my preferred marker on dark fabrics. I have a chalk pencil with replaceable 'leads' that can be sharpened with a normal pencil sharpener. This means you can get a

finer line if you need it but it's easy to use and doesn't catch in the fabric as you draw your line. It doesn't have any kind of binder in the chalk so brushes out very easily. I use a piece of clean batting or a microfibre cloth to remove the lines.

If I want to mark in more details then I have a mechanical pencil with 0.7mm chalks. These break more easily when you are marking but give you a nice fine line. The mechanical pencils tend to have ceramic or some other binder in the chalk to make them harder and stop them breaking. It does mean you will need to wash the quilt after you finish to get the final residue out as it doesn't brush out as easily. You can get refills for both products with coloured chalks to use on lighter fabrics. I've not used them and I'm cautious because of the coloured dyes used, but if you want to try it, test on your sandwich before you mark your quilt!



Blue wash away pens are probably the one I use most on light fabrics. They come with varying reputations depending on who you talk to! I personally have only ever had a problem once. This was with an orange fabric and wool batting. Red based colours are notoriously difficult and I think the oil in the wool batting made it worse...and of course I broke my own number one rule and didn't test the marker before I used it!...Lesson learned!) The advantage is that you can get them in medium and fine tips and that the marks will last for the duration of your quilting.

There's a new product available called Blue Line Eraser which is great. It comes in a starter pack with a spray bottle of solution, wicking pen and a blue pen. It won't get out very old marks that have gone yellow with age but it removes virtually everything else, even heat set markings that would normally return if you use water.

Purple pens are the air erasable variety. They are great if you intend quilting your design immediately because depending on your fabrics, the lines last from about half an hour to half a day. It doesn't help marking an intricate design in the morning and thinking you will quilt it that night because

the chances are it won't be there anymore and you'll be marking all over again!

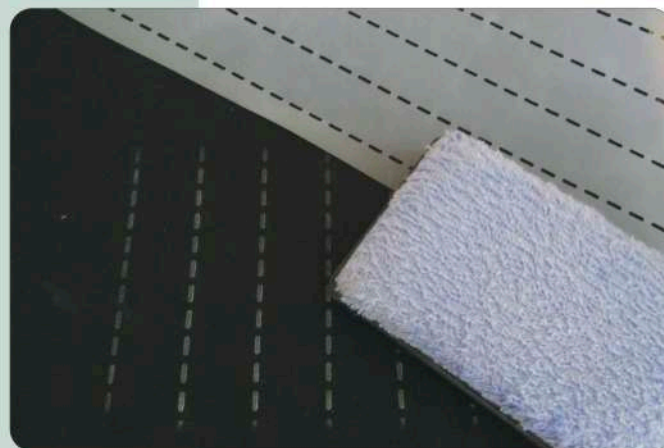
Pilot Frixion pens are a newer edition to the arsenal of options available. I've personally not used one other than to test it so I can't tell you much about them! They come in a variety of colours and have a fine tip so you can mark finer lines. They draw a nice dark line so are good for lighter fabrics but I'm not sure how well they would show up on dark fabrics. Marks can be removed by ironing and come back if you put the fabric in the freezer. We don't have temperatures cold enough in this country, but it worries me slightly that there must be a residue in the quilt that might return to haunt you at a later date. I have no evidence for this, but it's something to consider all the same. They probably would be better used on appliqué or embroidery where the line (if it comes back) is hidden and it won't matter.

Whatever type of pen you use, **ALWAYS** submerge the quilt in cold, plain water before putting it away in the cupboard or washing it with any kind of detergent. You want to make sure that you have removed every trace of ink before it has time to set into the quilt forever

Glo pencils are made with a substance that glows under UV light. Some of the longarm machines have UV lights but a glo pencil will not be very useful to a domestic machine owner. The advantage is that they can be used on any colour fabric.

The old traditional sliver of soap is also an option. Obviously it washes out and leaves no residue but I find it difficult to mark curved and intricate designs. Straight lines work like a dream though!

Another option that you may or may not have heard of is a pounce pad. This is a little box





containing chalk with a fabric side. You use it with a plastic stencil or your own home made stencils and wipe the pounce pad over the stencil so chalk is transferred to your fabric through the holes. It's a great way to mark simple designs but is temporary and you need to mark a design and then quilt it straight away before the chalk disappears.

As you can see, there are many options available. I suggest you try a few and see what works best for you...and remember to ALWAYS test the marker before you use it on your beautiful quilt!

Till next time, Happy Quilting!

Claire

For more information, to attend a class or to have a quilt quilted please contact Claire at www.quiltastix.co.za or 082 562 5983

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