



# Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm

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with Nina McVeigh of BERNINA

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# Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm

with Nina McVeigh of BERNINA

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If you complete quilt tops faster than you can quilt them yourself or pay to have someone else to quilt them, it might be time to consider a longarm machine! The BERNINA Q Series Sit-Down Models allow you to sit while quilting with a variety of different table options. The 16" and 20" throat spaces allow plenty of room for large quilts. The machines feature a unique digital thread tension adjustment, easy threading, and an on-board bobbin winder. The stitch regulator ensures perfect stitches that you can even use without the foot control.

This *Quilt Street* e-book is a supplement to our "Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm" video series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com), featuring Nina McVeigh, BERNINA longarm quilting machine expert. Nina is a quilter, designer, and fabric artist. She previously owned a quilt shop for 15 years and most recently was the Quilting and Longarm Specialist for BERNINA of America, where she was instrumental in the development of BERNINA's Longarm Quilting Machines. She has written for several magazines and has contributed to the WeAllSew blog, writing articles on heirloom sewing and quilting. She has also developed a line of quilting rulers.

Follow along as Nina sits down with us to share her tips for quilting with a sit-down longarm machine.

# Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm

## Part 1: Tools & Supplies

In the first video of our “Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm” series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com), Nina McVeigh of BERNINA reviews the essential tools and supplies necessary for quilting with a longarm machine.

**Machine:** The most important element is selecting a machine. The BERNINA Q 20 indicates that it is a 20" machine, meaning there is 20" of space from the needle to the back of the machine in the throat space. The adjustable-height table that goes with the sit-down models is ideal for small spaces. The height may be expanded to 28", 30", and 32", so if you prefer to stand while quilting, the table allows you to do so. It also folds back down for easy storage when you aren't machine quilting. What's unique about the Q Series is that as you grow in your quilting journey, if you decide that you would like to upgrade to a frame, you can put this same machine on a BERNINA frame.



**Batting:** An important part of the quilting process, batting is used as the middle insulation layer that provides warmth and loft in the finished quilt. It comes prepackaged by size or by the yard and is known to offer lovely visual texture and dimension to a finished quilt. Batting is made from a variety of natural and/or synthetic fibers and is typically chosen to coordinate with the finished quilt top.



- **Cotton batting** is warm and has a gentle drape. When you wash the finished quilt, cotton batting will shrink, taking on those rumpled, cozy qualities of an antique quilt. It comes in white and natural, and you should be mindful of which shade you choose for your quilt. If your quilt top has a white background, you will want to use white batting, as even a natural color can show through the surface. Although there are some variations in thickness, cotton batting is generally low loft, or thin. If you want a higher loft, you may want to use polyester.
- **Polyester batting** ranges from low to high loft. It drapes differently than cotton and does not shrink. Importantly, it does not show fold lines. If you make a lot of quilts and like to display them folded on a shelf or chair, the quilts will not retain the harsh fold lines as much as a cotton batt.
- **Wool batting** is warm in the winter and cool in the summer. It has a higher loft like that of polyester, but it is a natural fiber. If you like heavy quilting, it will compress those areas and pop up the open spaces, almost like trapunto—where a quilted area is stuffed and raised above the surface.
- **A blend batting**, the most commonly used batting, is usually produced with 80% cotton and 20% polyester and labeled 80/20. Blends are available in white, natural, and black, making them ideal for almost any quilt.

Regardless of their fiber content, many battings are needle punched. When you layer your quilt sandwich, you need to lay the batting down in the same direction that the needles went through it. You want to see the needle holes on the top, and the back will be slightly bumpy where the needles punched through the batt.

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**Needles:** Needles are arguably one of the most important parts of your machine, and they need to be changed often. Nina recommends changing the needle at the beginning of every project. Nina prefers a jeans needle because of its sharp point. There are also specialty needles for batiks, such as the Microtex needle. The needle you select should be based on the material and the application. For example, you would use a metallic needle when quilting with metallic thread.

Notably, the Q Series uses a domestic needle. The Q Series is the only longarm machine in the industry that uses the same needle as your sewing machine, so the needles will be familiar to you and are readily available.



**Basting:** Basting is the process of layering the backing, batting, and quilt top together and then temporarily securing the layers together before quilting. There are three different ways that most quilters baste.

- **Thread:** To baste with hand stitches, thread a needle with a long thread that contrasts with your quilt top so it will be easy to identify when it's time to remove the basting stitches. Working from the center of the quilt sandwich toward the edges, take long running stitches through all layers of the quilt sandwich, creating a grid of stitches approximately 4" to 6" apart in vertical and horizontal rows.



- **Spray adhesive:** Spray adhesive works best for basting small quilts. Spray your batting first and then attach and smooth out the backing or the quilt top, depending on which side you're working on. For best results, refer to the manufacturer's instructions.



- **Safety pins:** Safety pins are generally an easier way to baste large quilts. Working from the center of the quilt, baste using safety pins approximately 4" to 6" apart. Some quilters use the width of their hand flat on the surface as a measure to approximate the placement of basting pins.



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**Gloves:** It can be difficult to maneuver the bulk of the quilt sandwich with your hands and shoulders, and machine quilting gloves can help with that task. The most commonly used are Machingers by Quilters Touch. The gloves are mesh, so they keep your hands cool, and the flexible fingertip grips allow for full control while machine quilting. Another style is the Regi's Grip three-finger gloves, which leave two fingers exposed. The gloves keep your hand cool while allowing you to still have a gripping surface. The Swan Amity Quilting Gloves work on the same principle of having two exposed fingers, but they have padding in the palm to encourage a more ergonomic wrist position. The open fingers allow the tactile feel of touching your quilt while you work, which is appealing to many quilters.



**Palm Grips:** The Palm Quilting Paddle Set by Martelli comes with two paddles that nest comfortably in the palm of your hand. They have a nonskid surface that rests against the quilt and allows you to gently guide the quilt sandwich.



**Gripper Rings:** The Gripper Rings by BERNINA come in a set of two, including an 8" and 11" ring. They are weighted and have a gripping surface on the back. You simply position your hands on the ring's knobs to move the quilt sandwich. The ring is cut so that you can slide it around the needle. Nina likes how it narrows your field of focus to the center area within the ring. Gripper rings allow increased control during quilting and precise guidance of large quilt projects, keeping the area to be quilted completely flat and wrinkle-free.

# Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm

## Part 2: Threads & Threading the Machine

For a visual demonstration of how to thread the BERNINA Q Series Sit-Down longarm machine, be sure to watch the second video in our “Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm” series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com). On the following pages, read along for a reminder of tips and techniques shared in this presentation by Nina McVeigh of BERNINA.

Most often, you will see large cones of thread being used with a sit-down longarm machine because of the amount of thread you use while quilting, but you can also use the same regular-sized spool that you would use on your sewing machine. Use a cone stabilizer to keep the extra-large spool in place.



Thread comes in different weights, or thicknesses. Normal sewing thread is 50wt., which you can also use for quilting. This is a great weight for a beginner to use. Nina recommends selecting a color that will blend with your quilt top so that any stitching errors will not be as noticeable while you learn to machine quilt. Thicker threads, such as 40wt., are heavier, so the stitches will be more visible. An heirloom quilt might call for 60wt. or 80wt. thread, because generally your stitches will be much tinier. Silk is another lightweight option for an heirloom quilt. If you will be doing a lot of stippling or other dense quilting, you don't want to use a heavy thread in those areas. Cotton thread is perfect for quilting. Other quilters prefer polyester embroidery thread because it has a sheen to it.

Once your thread is selected, it is time to thread the longarm machine. There are two spool holders on top of the machine. Not all longarm machines have an on-board bobbin winder, but the BERNINA Q Series does. Your bobbin winder is always at the ready for you. There is also a bobbin minder to help you keep track of how much thread is left on your bobbin.



To wind the bobbin, place the spool on the right side. Pull the thread straight up into the first thread guide and then through the second guide. At this point, hold the thread to give it a little tension and then go to the pre-tensioner at the back of the machine.



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The bobbin will have BERNINA printed on one side, and a good way to remember which way to insert it into the machine is to note that “BERNINA kisses the machine.” In other words, the wording faces the machine. When the bobbin is full, it will stop, and you can use the thread cutter above to cut the thread connecting the bobbin to the spool.

Before you insert the bobbin in the machine, check the tension. You want a constant tension while quilting. The BERNINA Q Series Bobbin Tension Gauge is included with the Q Series Sit-Down longarm machine. Place the bobbin inside the gauge, just as you would if you were placing it in the machine. When you guide the thread through the pulleys and then straight out, the needle should point to 220. Any deviation means the tension should be adjusted. A number lower than 220 means the thread is too loose, and a number higher than 220 means the tension is too tight. There is an opening at the end of the gauge that exposes the bobbin tension screw. By tightening or loosening the screw just a bit, you should be able to restore the 220 reading when you retest. Having this definitive number as a guide takes the guesswork out of adjusting your tension.



Once a tension of 220 is established, place the bobbin into the bobbin case in the machine's throat plate. Now, the name BERNINA will face out so that you can read it. When you pull on the thread, the bobbin will turn clockwise.



To thread the top of the machine, place the spool on the left spool holder. Go straight up and then through the second thread guide, as you did for the bobbin thread, and from there, the threading is very similar to that of a regular domestic sewing machine. The needle threader secures the last of the thread through the eye of the needle, forming a loop at the back where you can pull the thread through. Trim any excess thread using the cutter on the side of the machine.



Next, pull the bobbin thread to the top so that both threads are under your presser foot. Then, position your quilt in the throat area (Nina recommends starting with a test piece at first) and pull up the bobbin thread through the surface of the quilt sandwich. This is an important step, because in free-motion quilting, you are going in all directions, and you don't know where the bobbin thread is if you can't see it. You don't want the bobbin thread to get caught under any of your quilting stitches and create what's called a “nest” of thread underneath.



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Before you start stitching, secure your threads. You can program your foot control to secure your stitches. When you use the back-kick function of the foot control, it will secure those threads, taking several stitches in place to secure. Test on a scrap first!

When you have completed your machine quilting, pull up the bobbin thread again through all the quilt layers. Back-kick on the foot control again to secure the stitch, raise the presser foot, pull out a loop of top thread, tap the foot control so the needle goes down and back up, and move your quilt sandwich over. When you pull on the thread loop it creates, it pulls up the bobbin thread, which you can then cut at the surface of the quilt. This is a good practice to develop early so you have a nice, clean finish at the beginning and at the end of your quilting stitches.

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## Part 3: Basting



Before quilting begins, the layers of the quilt—quilt top, batting, and backing, collectively called the “quilt sandwich”—must be basted. In Part 3 of the “Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm” video series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com), Nina McVeigh of BERNINA discusses important ways to baste your quilt. There are a few different methods to choose from.

### Spray Basting

Spray basting is a great option for small projects. However, use it cautiously; avoid using it near the longarm machine or any other sewing equipment. Use it in a well-ventilated room or, preferably, outside or in a basement or garage. This method works best for basting small quilts.



### Thread Basting

Although primarily associated with hand quilting, you may also opt to thread-baste your quilt on the longarm machine. The basting feature on the BERNINA Q Series Sit-Down is a stitch-regulated mode. When you select this mode, you have a choice of stitching four stitches per inch, two stitches per inch, or one stitch per inch.

Pull up your thread to the top and take some securing stitches. This is an important first step, because sometimes basting stitches are so long, they can pull out easily if not secured in the beginning. Thread basting is great for smaller projects, as it can be cumbersome on a large quilt if the layers are not yet secured together.



Nina prefers machine basting a small area, such as an appliquéd area where she might plan to do stippling around it later. For this, she would select four stitches per inch and thread-baste a circle around the area to be quilted. This keeps the layers of the quilt sandwich from shifting where she plans to do more detailed quilting.

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## Pin Basting

This is Nina's preferred method of basting for a large quilt. First, lay the backing on a worktable with the wrong side facing up. Use packing tape (which is wider than masking tape) to secure it to the tabletop. Make sure the fabric is taut without pulling it to stretch. Tape down all four sides. (Nina works with long strips vs. several short strips with openings in between.)



Next, place the batting, which should be slightly smaller than the backing. Smooth it down so that there are no wrinkles. Take the batting out of the bag the night before to let it breathe or place it in the drier for about 15 minutes to release any wrinkles or fold lines.

Finally, smooth the quilt top, right side up, over the batting. The top should be slightly smaller than the batting. Now, the layers are ready for safety pins. Nina uses brass safety pins in size 0, which she likes because they are small and easy to manipulate.



Begin pinning in the middle of the quilt sandwich. Go through all layers until the pin hits the table. Put your finger in front of the pin to guide it back up and then close the pin.



Continue pinning, spacing the safety pins about a hand's width apart. The bigger the pins, the more play in the fabric, and therefore, using large pins creates less accurate basting. For that reason, Nina prefers small pins. She also encourages quilters to close the pins to avoid sticking themselves while they quilt.

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While some quilters find basting a tedious task, Nina finds it a relaxing step that allows her an opportunity to reflect on how she wants to quilt the top. When finished pin basting, remove and discard the tape from the edges.

While quilting, you are continually looking ahead at the design, and you will need to remove pins as you go. Set the machine with the needle stop down so that the line of quilting does not shift when you pause. Remove the adjacent pin that is in your way and even those in the immediate area. Nina typically removes four to five pins at a time.



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## Part 4: Moving the Quilt

In this episode of the “Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm” video series at quiltstreet.com, Nina McVeigh of BERNINA shares tips and tricks for moving the quilt under the BERNINA Q Series Sit-Down longarm machine. In the video that corresponds with this e-book, Nina demonstrates with an 80" x 80" bed-size quilt.



If you splay your hands open with thumbs touching, that's the equivalent of your quilting area. You need to be able to move that area around. Nina prefers to work having the quilt coming toward her because there is no drag that way—it's easier to move.

Wear the machine quilting gloves of your choice and work with your fingertips. Quilting with your hands down flat makes it difficult to move the quilt. The harder you press down, the more difficult it becomes to move the quilt. Plus, pushing down on the surface creates tension in your neck and shoulders. Guiding the quilt with your fingertips alleviates many of those problems.



If you feel like you need a little more “grab,” try using the Palm Quilting Paddle Set by Martelli. It comes with two paddles that nest comfortably in the palm of your hand. They have a nonskid surface that rests against the quilt and allows you to gently guide the quilt sandwich. Use these grips while you work close to the needle, keeping in mind the immediate work area. The paddles prevent you from pressing down on the quilt too hard with your hands.



Nina's preferred method of working is to use a BERNINA Gripper Ring. It clearly defines your quilting area. It is weighted and has a gripping surface to manage movement. The quilting area is secured, which prevents the fabric from buckling. Quilt by moving the entire gripper ring.



## Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm

As stated earlier, Nina prefers to work with the quilt coming toward her. However, some quilters find it hard to break the habit of sewing away from themselves, as they do with their regular sewing machine. To avoid drag and pull on the quilt from the edge of the table, drape the quilt over your shoulder so the quilt is moving down instead of up. If it is too heavy, you can set up an ironing board behind you to offset some of the weight of the quilt.



Many quilters have been taught to begin quilting in the middle of their quilt. The idea of starting in the middle comes from the need to move any excess fabric and batting outward. However, Nina finds that if the quilt sandwich is basted well, there shouldn't be any shifting fabric, so where she starts quilting doesn't make a difference. Nina begins working at one edge and completes half of the quilt at one time.

As final thoughts, Nina suggests practicing with a smaller quilt or project to get the feel of quilting on a longarm machine. She also cautions that you watch the sides of the quilt so it doesn't fall off the table and pull your work.

# Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm

## Part 5: Bernina Stitch Regulator

The BERNINA Stitch Regulator (BSR) is a major breakthrough for machine quilters. Perfect for free-motion quilting, it automatically controls the stitch length, adapting automatically to the speed of the fabric being moved versus having to coordinate the foot pedal with stitch length and speed. The technology reads the movement of fabric, keeping the stitches even. And that is the goal of all quilters!

The BERNINA Q Series Sit-Down longarm machine has three modes of stitch regulation. Basting is one mode, discussed in the previous section and video. In Part 5 of the “Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm” video series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com), Nina McVeigh of BERNINA focuses on BSR 1 and 2, which are two modes used in machine quilting.

### BSR 1



In BSR 1, you can set the stitch length, anywhere from one stitch per inch to 22 stitches per inch. The default setting for quilting is 10 stitches per inch.



To get started, pull up the bobbin thread through the quilt sandwich. You may see red lights shining through the quilt; those are the lights of the stitch regulator. The needle automatically adjusts its speed based on how fast you move the quilt layers. When using BSR mode 1, if you stop, the needle simply continues to go up and down. For that reason, you don't want to stay in one place for too long. The constant motion is called the “idle speed” of the needle, which you can adjust. If you are a beginner, you might want to slow down the idle speed; once you gain experience, you might want the needle to idle faster. While the stitch regulator adjusts the machine speed to match your movement, it is possible to “outpace” it if you move too quickly. It's important to practice so you can move smoothly throughout the quilting process.

Nina prefers using BSR 1 whenever she is quilting pointed designs, because there is a natural pause that happens whenever she shapes a point. That natural pause, with the needle going up and down, creates an extra stitch to give you a crisp, sharp point.

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### BSR 2



Nina prefers engaging the needle down position so that there is no shifting among the quilt layers when she pauses. She prefers using BSR 2 when she has a smooth quilting design in mind, such as an all-over meandering pattern with smooth curves. If you are a beginner, you may like BSR 2 because it gives you time to think about where you want to go next in the quilt design without the needle making continuous stitches. However, be aware that if you pause for more than seven seconds, the quilting mode will automatically turn off. Try both modes and see which one is the most comfortable for you.

In BSR 2, the needle will rest in an up position versus going continually up and down as it does in BSR 1. Even though the needle is not moving, the machine is still on, as evidenced by the red lights that shine through the quilt sandwich. Take care to avoid placing your fingers in harm's way of the needle when you are ready to resume motion.

You can also program the machine so that the needle stops in the down position when you remove your foot from the pedal.



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## Part 6: Wavy Vertical Lines

Stitching wavy vertical lines is an ideal way to ease into machine quilting with the BERNINA Q Series Sit-Down longarm machine because that's the way most quilters are used to moving fabric through their sewing machines. In this part of the "Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm" video series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com), you'll learn how to quilt wavy vertical lines like a pro.

The best way to create muscle memory is to draw graceful wavy vertical lines on a piece of paper, making sure the lines are not exactly the same. Occasionally, draw a perfect echo to create a bit of interest. This is a great motif for modern quilt patterns. After you are comfortable with the lines you are drawing on paper, you can move to the longarm machine and do the same thing.

Pull up the bobbin thread through the quilt sandwich to get started, and then begin stitching wavy vertical lines. Rather than turning the fabric when you reach one end, get used to stitching backwards. Move the fabric sideways, and then stitch a row of quilting in the opposite direction. You can use the edge of your presser foot as a guide to create the occasional echo line of quilting. This is a great background fill for a modern quilt pattern. Everyone can be successful with this technique, so it is ideal for a beginner. Practice getting comfortable stitching in both directions.



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## Part 7: Wavy Horizontal Lines

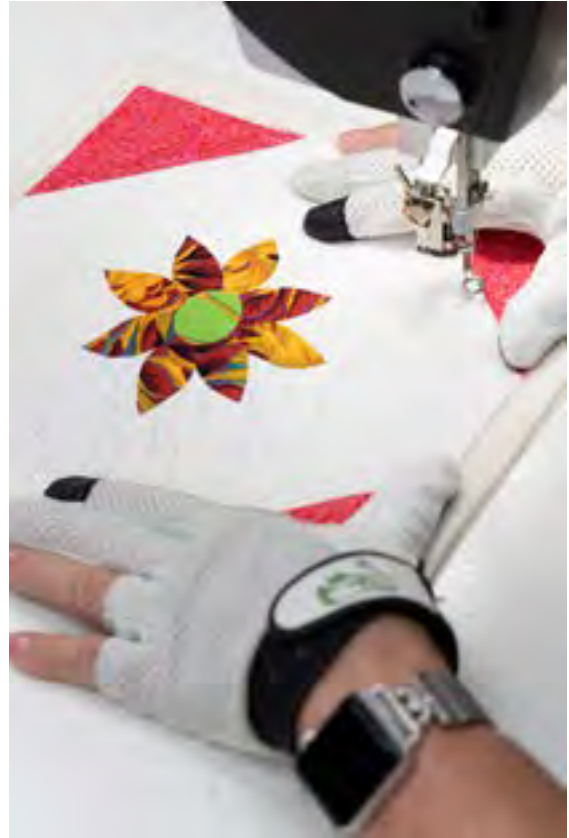
Next on the “Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm” video series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com), we’ll discuss how to create wavy horizontal lines with the BERNINA Q Series Sit-Down longarm machine with tips from Nina McVeigh of BERNINA. As in the previous session, we are going to begin by drawing wavy horizontal lines on paper to develop muscle memory. While sewing vertical lines feels natural because that’s how most quilters normally sew with their sewing machine, sewing horizontal lines has a different feel. Practice drawing wavy horizontal lines, traveling down the sides to join rows, without jerky motions. Echo a few lines to create interest.



When you are ready to practice on a quilt sandwich, pull up the threads through all layers and secure the stitches. Then, practice sewing wavy horizontal lines right to left and left to right. When you combine the wavy horizontal and vertical lines, it creates a wavy plaid, which makes a lovely background fill. Below is a glimpse of how wavy plaid looks on the back of a quilt.



If you have a motif, such as an appliquéd flower, you might not want the quilting lines to go over the design. In that instance, you can use the edge of the appliquéd shape to travel to the next area you want to create a wavy line. You can also travel along the seam, as Nina is doing along the pink triangle in the photo below.



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## Part 8: Stippling

Stippling is a meandering quilting method that refers to free-motion quilting done in small, curvy shapes that are nestled closely together, almost like a puzzle. Follow Part 8 of the “Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm” video series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com) to see how Nina McVeigh of BERNINA masters this beautiful quilting technique.

You'll want to begin practicing with a large stippling design and then work your way to trying a tiny, or micro, stippling technique. Micro stippling can enhance other quilting motifs. This effect is further enhanced when using wool batting; when a heavy stitching area is compressed, the wool batting fills in the open areas so they pop up. When using a lot of thread in a condensed area, Nina sometimes uses a thinner thread such as silk or 60wt. thread.



As with the stitches we've previously reviewed, begin by drawing. Become a doodler—practice drawing whenever you are on the phone or having to sit and wait for something. While some quilters are adamant that the stitching lines should not intersect or touch, Nina has a more relaxed approach. Whether you cross your stitching lines or not, Nina believes you should just be consistent.

If you are unable to draw stippling patterns you like, consider tracing a design or asking a friend to draw an example for you to trace. Then, practice the design again and again until you are able to draw it yourself.

Use the #73 Stippling Foot, which offers more visibility. The front of the foot is cut off, so the stitches are more visible. Pull up the thread through the layers of the quilt sandwich and secure the stitches.



Practicing the wavy lines from the previous sessions will build your skills for stippling, going back and forth and side to side. By mastering those wavy stitches first, you'll find that stippling becomes a natural progression. Think of a toddler just learning how to walk down a hallway—they stumble around in all directions rather than walking in a straight line. And that's the same approach you want to take when moving from one section of the quilt to another. You also want to avoid the look of rows. As you begin a new path, meander into the previous stitching a bit to avoid creating obvious rows.



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As you create smaller stippling patterns, you may want to reset the BSR stitch length to a smaller number so that you have enough stitches to make a curve. When you get into micro stippling, you might consider choosing a manual mode where there is not a set stitch length. Get the machine going at a certain speed, and then move the quilt sandwich accordingly. This is a more advanced technique you should try after you have mastered regular stippling.



# Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm

## Part 9: Echo Quilting

Echo quilting is stitching multiple rows of evenly spaced quilting around appliqué shapes. This technique does not require practice drawing, as you are outlining the appliqué shapes. Having already practiced moving the quilt sandwich in all different directions, you'll find echo quilting is a natural next step. This stitching causes what's on the fabric to stand out. In Part 9 of the "Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm" video series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com), Nina McVeigh of BERNINA demonstrates how to stitch this technique with ease and accuracy.

Echo quilting can be accomplished on the BERNINA Q Series Sit-Down longarm machine by attaching a ruler foot. The ruler foot is  $\frac{1}{2}$ " wide, meaning the edge of the foot is  $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the needle.

Echo quilting clips are also available. These clips fit onto the ruler foot itself by lowering the foot into the center opening and then pulling it up. This now places the edge of the foot  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the needle. So, instead of echoing your previous stitching line, you can continue to echo the appliquéd motif. The clips come in three sizes— $\frac{1}{2}$ ",  $\frac{3}{4}$ ", and 1". All three clips have concentric circles, which can be used as further guides.



**Pro tip from Nina:** Make at least two lines of echo quilting to make a motif noticeable.

As you stitch, keep the edge of the foot even with the motif. When you approach a valley, as in the space between the flower petals shown below, keep the  $\frac{1}{2}$ "-wide foot inside that area so that the outer edge touches both sides. At that point, change directions to continue echo quilting.



# Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm

## Part 10: Hooks & Curls

For this next episode of the “Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm” video series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com), Nina McVeigh of BERNINA introduces a more intricate quilting technique. Nina likes to think of hooks and curls as stippling with a point. As with most stitching patterns, practice first by drawing the pattern. Draw a partial circle, come into a point, then come out of the point, and go in another direction. This is where your practice in echo quilting plays a part, as you can echo your previous curve. Draw until you are comfortable going to the machine.



Use the #73 Stippling Foot for visibility and select BSR 1 so the needle takes an extra stitch at the point. When you are ready to end a sewing session, Nina recommends you stop at a point. If you stop at a curve, it will not come out smooth when you resume working on your project.



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## Part 11: Pebbles

Pebbles are a great background fill, creating an organic look, and they are also fun to stitch. Again, before you stitch, practice drawing pebble designs on paper. Remember, the purpose of drawing for practice is to learn how to navigate with ease. Because you are stitching circles, and you must come back to where you started, use the outside edge of a circle or a previously sewn line to guide you.

In this video of the “Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm” series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com), Nina McVeigh of BERNINA gives her tips for creating this fun pattern. Nina recommends using BSR 1 with a stitch length of 10, the default setting. If you will be creating small pebbles, increase the number of stitches per inch so that the design will show up.



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## Part 12: Rulers

Stitching in a straight line by free-motion quilting is difficult unless you use a ruler. In this part of the “Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm” video series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com), Nina McVeigh of BERNINA shows you how to use a ruler with a longarm machine.

For this technique, you must use a ruler foot and a longarm straight-edge ruler, which is  $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. The thick part of the foot is called the “fence,” and it keeps the ruler adjacent to the stitching. The foot is an exact  $\frac{1}{2}$ " circle, meaning your stitching will always be  $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the edge of the ruler. The straight lines shown on the quilt below were made using a ruler. Were it not for using the ruler, the stitching would have turned out as wavy lines.



Pull up the bobbin thread and lower the foot where you want to start before you ever place the ruler. This ensures there is no chance you will place the ruler under the foot. Lay the ruler next to the foot. The key is to carefully move the ruler and the fabric at the same time. If you push too hard, the ruler may slide or be pushed away. The ruler allows you to repeat an exact linear design. When you are ready to begin another row, markings on the ruler will help guide you  $\frac{1}{4}$ ",  $\frac{1}{2}$ ", and so on. It really perfects your free-motion quilting.



The ruler is also useful for stitching in the ditch of a quilt block. The BERNINA ruler has notches  $\frac{1}{4}$ " from the straight edge of the ruler. You can place the edge of the notch on the seam, and then, because you are stitching  $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the edge of the ruler, you are stitching in the ditch.



There is a nonskid material on the back of the ruler that keeps it from slipping as you stitch.

There is also a 45° angle at the end of the ruler, so if you align that angle against any straight line on the quilt, you can stitch a diagonal line. It's also important that the ruler can move 360° around the foot so you can travel in any direction. Do not use a rotary-cutting ruler for stitching lines; you should use a quilting ruler that is made to go with your sewing machine and is thick enough to work with the presser foot.

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## Conclusion

We hope that the “Teach Me How to Quilt Using a Sit-Down Longarm” video series at [quiltstreet.com](http://quiltstreet.com) has been helpful and that you will try all these free-motion quilting techniques. As you can see in the quilting sample below, Nina McVeigh of BERNINA has incorporated hooks and curls, straight lines from ruler work, pebbles, and feathers. The possibilities are endless! Experiment with different techniques and build your skills over time. You will receive such great satisfaction from quilting your own quilts!

