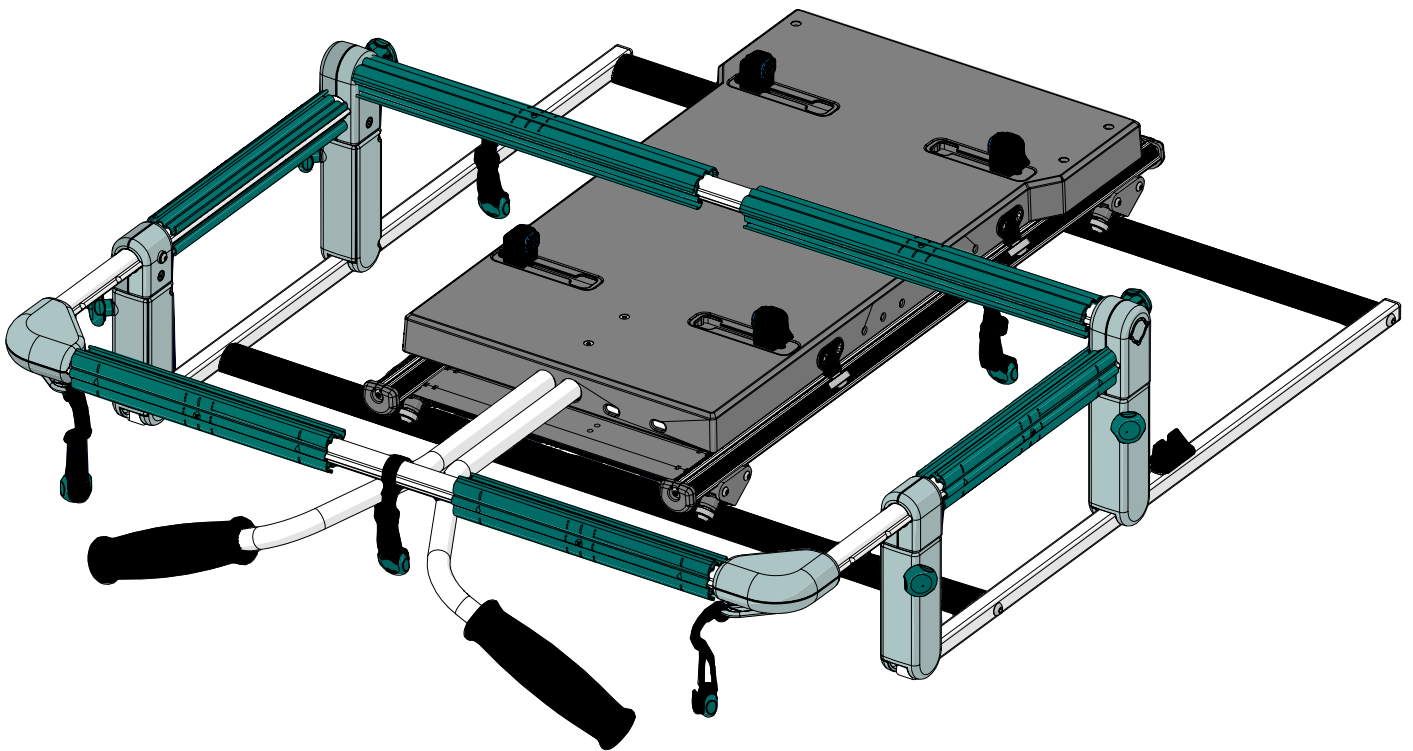


Mini But Mighty

A project for learning about your new Mini-Quilter,
refining your skills, and exploring your creativity



Grace
COMPANY

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WELCOME TO THE EXCITING WORLD OF HOME-BASED QUILTING!

Whether you're a life-long quilter with a new Mini-Quilter frame or you're starting a new hobby, Grace Company is here to guide you toward success on your personal quilting journey.

Read these instructions, refer to them often, and soon you'll be confident using your frame.

Regardless of your quilting experience, use the included practice grid to become acquainted with your setup. Using the provided grid lets you master your new equipment, worry-free.

Use the notes section to write down important insights or to doodle your quilting designs. You can even write on the practice grid—remember, this is practice!

Now, go have fun!

THE FRAME

The Mini-Quilter is a **hoop frame**. Like an embroidery hoop, the hoop frame holds a small section of your project. When you've finished stitching that portion, you simply shift to a new area and you're ready to continue. This allows you to make a quilt of any size!

THE PRACTICE GRID

Your frame came with a grid for you to practice with. The practice grid will help you learn about your new frame without the pressure of stitching directly into your latest masterpiece. The steps in this booklet can be repeated as many times as you like for practice and fun. The more you practice, the more your confidence will grow! Think of these lessons as a chance to have practice sessions, a dress rehearsal, and finally several performances.

THE SUPPLIES

- Practice grid (came with frame)
- Fabric clamps that clamp the fabric onto the frame (came with frame)
- Placement template (came with frame)
- Spare fabric for quilt backing and top
- Batting
- Measuring tape or ruler
- Scissors (x2; one pair for paper, and one for fabric)
- Thread snips (optional; scissors will work)
- Pencil
- Marker / fabric marker (one that doesn't bleed!)
- Pins
- Thread
- Spare full bobbins

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What size of quilt can you make with a hoop frame?
- Why do you need to cut your backing and batting larger than your quilt top?
- What is a zone?
- Why is it important to mark your quiltable area before you start to stitch?
- Why should you pull up your bobbin thread at the start and end of your stitching?

VOCAB REVIEW

Hoop Frame: A quilting frame where the quilt is manually moved to a new section of quilt. The quilt size is not limited by the size of the frame.

**Before you start,
make sure:**
your frame is fully set up,
you have all your supplies, and
you are ready to have some fun!

0

Lesson 0: Printing the Practice Grid

You can skip this lesson the first time you use the practice grid. Instead, use the large practice grid that came with your frame. If you want to practice with a grid again later, you can print more copies.

KEY CONCEPT

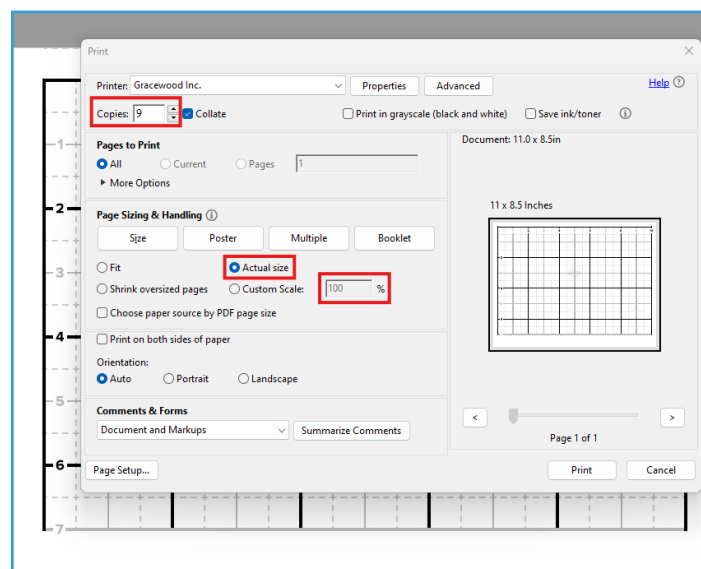
You can print as many copies of the practice grid as you'd like. Make sure the printer is set to print at real size. Also, take the time to tape the grid together before you start.

PRACTICE STEPS

To print more copies of the practice grid, you need:

- Computer that is connected to the Internet
- Printer that is connected to your computer
- Paper that is 8 ½" x 11" ("normal" paper)
- Scissors (for paper!)
- Tape

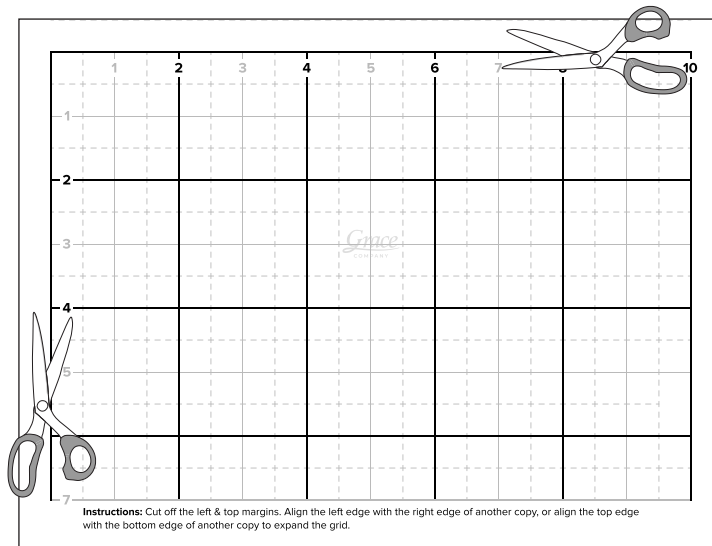
- 1 On your computer, open the web page <https://digitalcontent.graceframe.com/course/582/784> to access the practice grid.
- 2 Click the **Practice Grid Template 8.5x11** to download the PDF to your computer.
- 3 Open the PDF, and then click **Print**.
- 4 In the Print window, do the following:
 - a Make sure that the page size is set to **100%** or **Actual size**. (Depending on your printer, the name of the field might be different, but the idea is the same.)
 - b In the **Copies** field, enter **9**. (Depending on your printer, the name of the field might be different, but the idea is the same.)



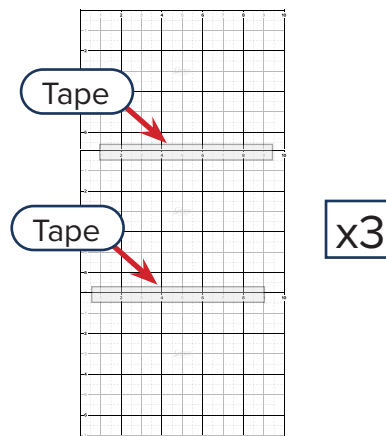
- c Click **Print** to send the information to the printer.

5 Once the grid is printed, do the following to tape the grids together:

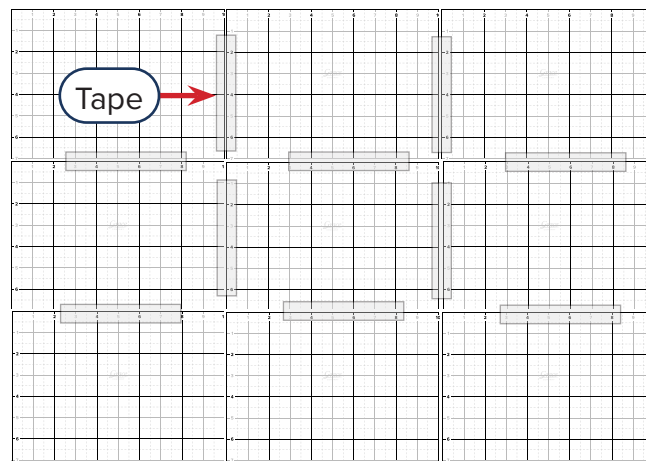
a Cut the top and left margins off each copy of the grid.



b Line up the top edge of one copy with the bottom of another copy, and **tape** them together. Line up the top edge of another copy with the bottom edge of the larger page, and **tape** them together. Repeat this step two times (for a total of three sets).



c Line up the right edges of one set of copies with the left edge of another set, and **tape** them together. Repeat this step to attach the third set. At the end, it's a 3x3 grid.



1

Lesson 1: Planning Your Designs

KEY CONCEPT

When you stitch your designs, you cannot lift the needle off the fabric easily, so it's best to plan designs that are continuous lines.

Generally speaking, you can quilt in two broad ways: to fill in space and hold the layers together, or to highlight a specific part of the quilt. When you fill in space, you basically ignore any changes in the pieces of the quilt and simply repeat a design over and over until the quilt is filled in. This type of quilting is called **continuous line design quilting**.

Most quilters choose to use continuous lines for quilting, where the line only stops when the needle can't reach. It takes a little practice to get the hang of creating designs with a continuous line, so don't be afraid to experiment. With this practice quilt, you will have several opportunities to practice making continuous lines. Think of this lesson as the first of a few practice sessions before you perform.

PRACTICE STEPS

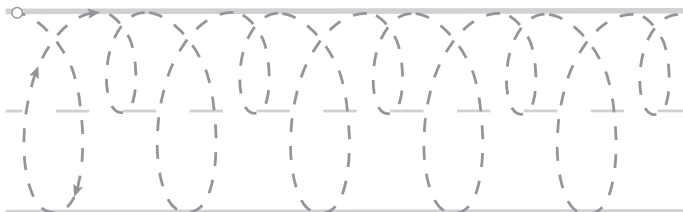
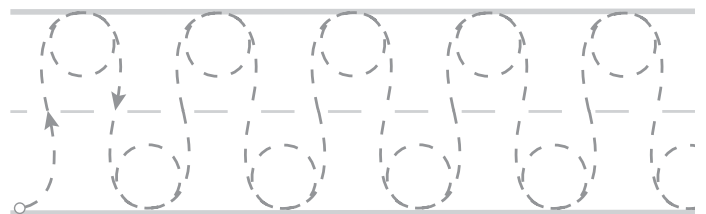
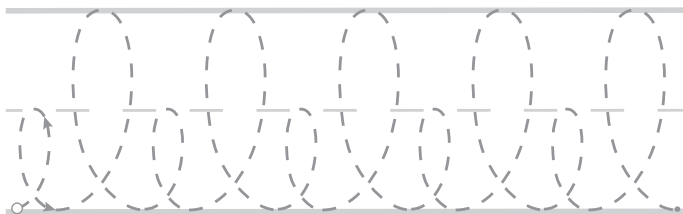
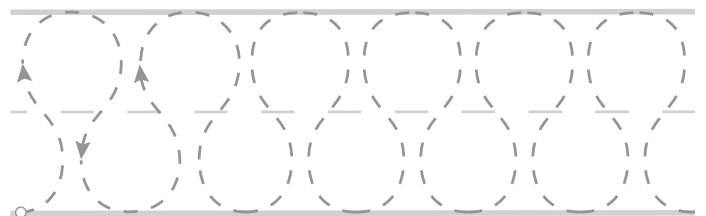
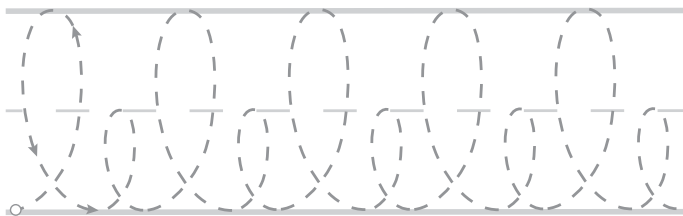
To plan your designs, you need:

- Practice grid (came with frame)
- Pencil/eraser
- Extra paper (lined is best, but blank is fine)

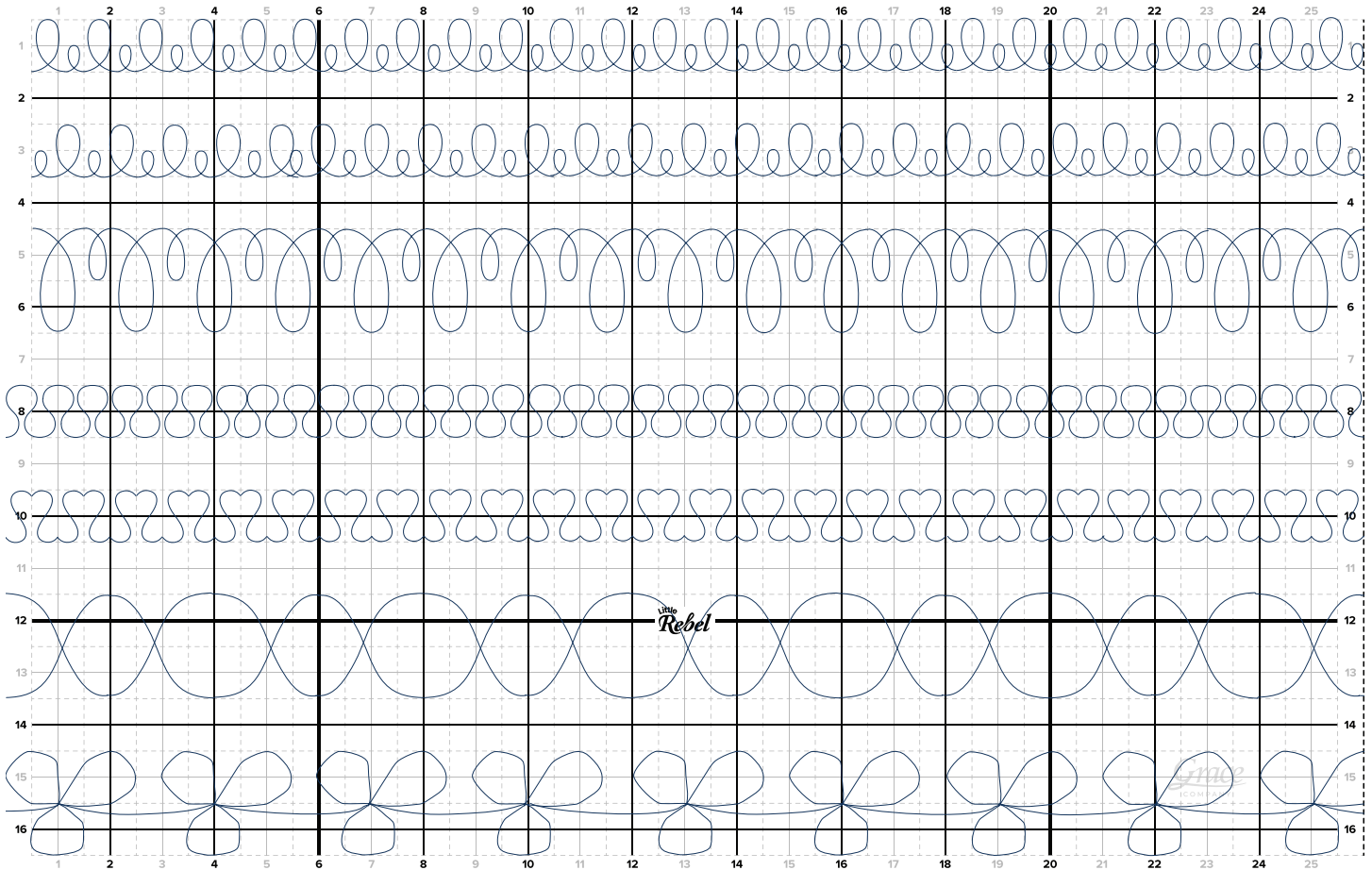
VOCAB REVIEW

Continuous Line Design Quilting: Using designs that repeat and that aren't necessarily connected to what is going on in the parts of the quilt. The lines normally start and end at the edges of the quilt top.

- 1 Think about the designs you want to use. On the extra paper, sketch out the designs you want to try. Start on the left, and remember to keep your pencil in contact with the paper as much as possible. The examples below are some options to follow, but they are just examples. Do what you want to—it's your quilt and your practice!



- 2 Once you have picked your designs and have practiced drawing them without lifting your pencil, sketch them on the practice grid. Use the grid to help you keep your designs consistent. But don't feel constrained by the grid; you can use it to make your designs symmetrical or spaced evenly, but you can also use it to make one part especially asymmetrical if you want. Again, the grid is a tool to help you quilt how you want to.



Note: Make sure to practice on the whole grid. You'll be using the designs you drew to help you more clearly see how your machine interacts with your quilt in a future lesson. **Tip:** Before you start, cut the minimal instructions off the practice grid.

2

Lesson 2: Making Your Quilt Sandwich (Not very tasty, but fulfilling and satisfying)

A **quilt sandwich** is made of a quilt top laid over a layer of batting and backing fabric. When quilting via machine and frame, it's important to cut the quilt backing and batting larger than the top. This extra length helps achieve a neater finish when you bind your quilt, and it also helps position the quilt top within the reach of the machine's needle while you're quilting. Another section of these instructions explains more about placing your quilt top, but for now, remember that you need to cut the backing and batting larger than the quilt top because it makes it easier to position the quilt top cleanly in the frame.

KEY CONCEPT

You must cut the backing and batting larger than the quilt top to help position the quilt top on the frame. If the edges of the quilt top are too close to the edges of the frame, then you can't quilt the edges of your quilt top.

When you're setting up your quilt sandwich, you also need to pay attention to the look of your fabric and batting. The **right side** of the fabric (for both your quilt top and backing) is the side you want to be visible when your project is finished. It might have a pattern on it, or be brighter than the other side. The **wrong side** is the side you want hidden in the finished project. It might be faded compared to the right side. If there really isn't a difference between the two sides, then just pick one side to be the right side. For your batting, one side might be the **scrim side**, which is a structural layer on some types of batting. It often feels coarse or pimply, while the other side feels smooth or "puffy".

VOCAB REVIEW

Quilt Sandwich: A quilt top laid over a layer of quilt batting and backing fabric. All three layers are stitched together when quilting.

Right Side of Fabric: The good-looking side of the fabric. It might have a pattern, or be more vivid than the other side.

Wrong Side of Fabric: The less good-looking side of the fabric. It might be washed out compared to the other side.

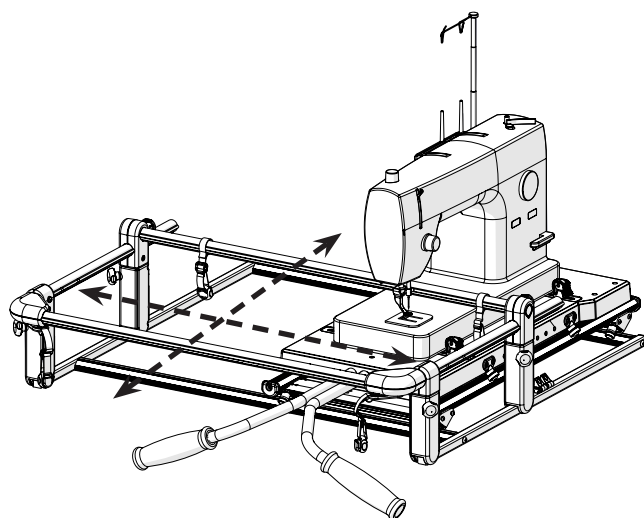
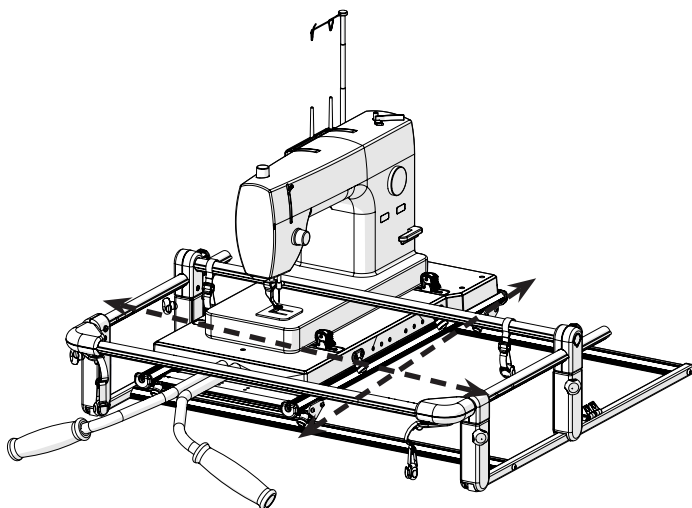
Scrim Side of Batting: The side of the batting that feels rougher or pimply; the other side will feel smooth by comparison. This structural layer is on some types of batting.

PRACTICE STEPS

To make your quilt sandwich, you need:

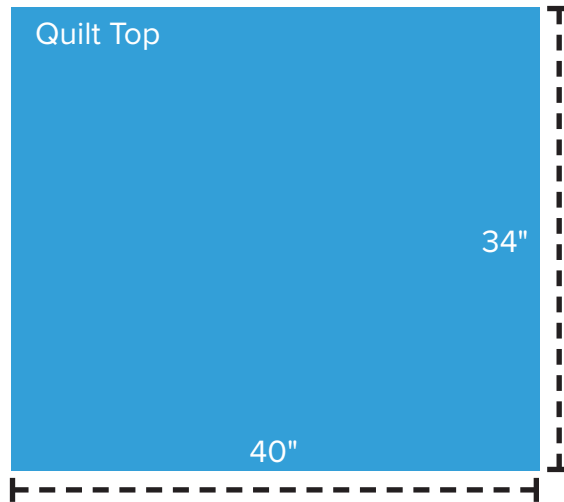
- Fabric for the quilt top
- Fabric for the quilt backing
- Batting
- Pins
- Pencil or fabric marker for marking
- Measuring tape or ruler

- 1 Take a moment to examine your quilting setup. Move the machine around the perimeter of the frame and notice the limits of the machine's reach. You can't get the needle all the way to the sides of the frame. When you position fabric within the hoop, you need to place the quilt top where the needle can reach. Again, this is why you need your batting and backing to be larger than the quilt top.



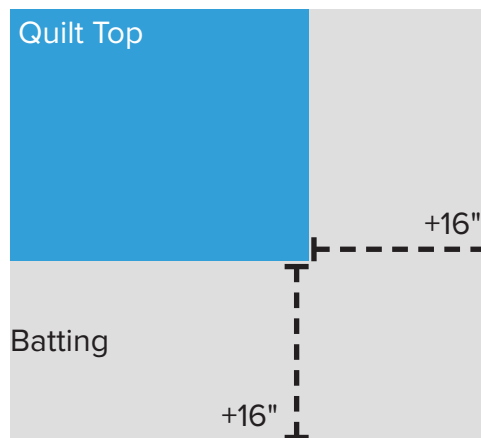
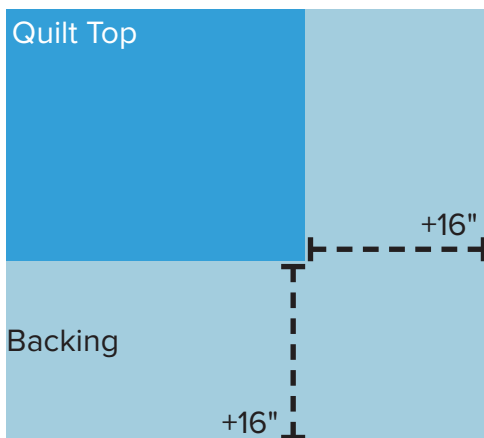
- 2 Cut some scrap fabric 40 inches by 34 inches to act as the **quilt top**. (If it's easier for you, you can make the top a little larger; for example, if your bolt is 42 inches wide, then don't bother to cut off those extra 2 inches. If you have a spare yard of fabric to work with, just use the whole yard. Just remember to adjust the sizes in the next step by the same amount.)

Tip: Make sure the fabric is a solid color—any pattern will make it harder to see what's going on later with the holes and stitches you'll be making in the fabric.



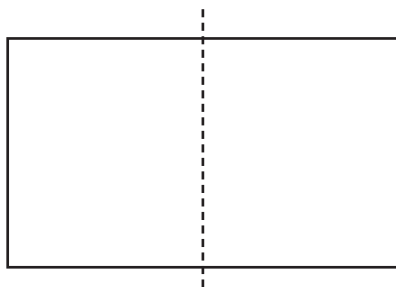
Note: If you don't have any scrap fabric that large, then you can piece together some fabric into a quilt top of that size.

- 3 Cut your **backing** and **batting** so that they are each **16 inches longer and wider** than the quilt top. The backing and batting both need to be 56 inches by 50 inches, unless you increased the size of the quilt top.

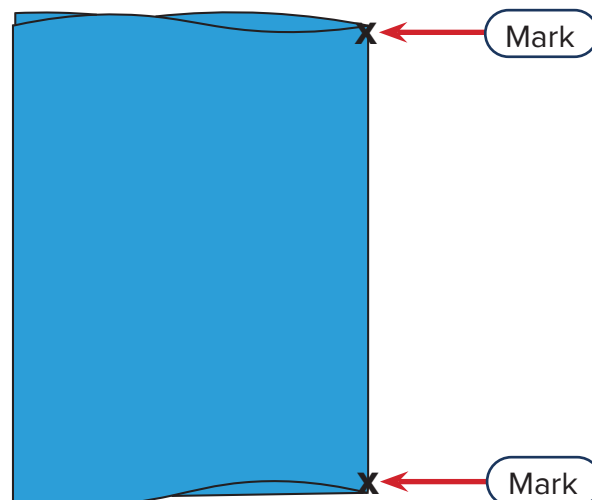


Note: One easy way to measure your backing and batting is to lay your quilt top on the fabric with the top and left edges lined up, and then use a ruler to mark 16 inches out from the bottom and right edges.

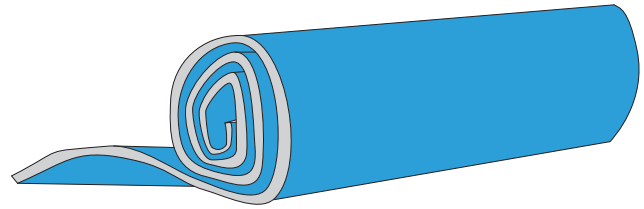
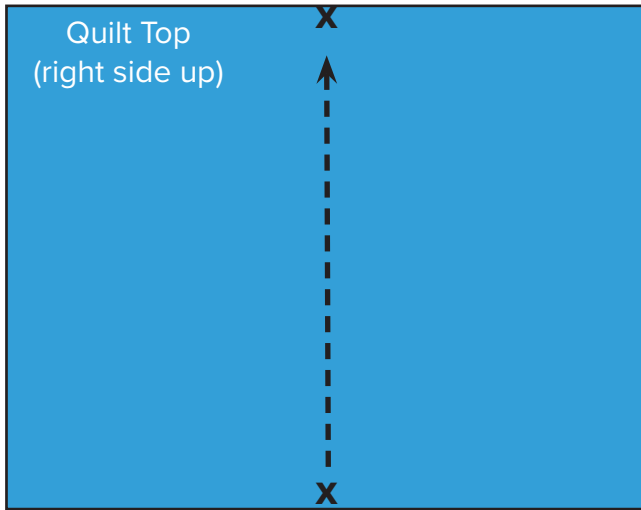
- 4 Fold the quilt top in half vertically, and then **mark** the center of the **top** and **bottom** edges.



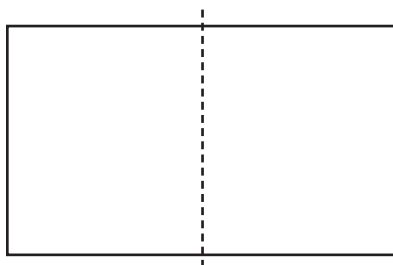
Note: When folding vertically, remember that the quilt top is wider than it is tall.



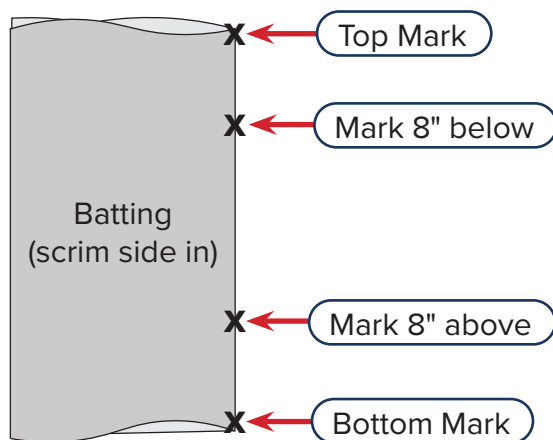
- 5 Now spread the quilt top out flat with the *right side* facing up. Starting at the bottom, roll up the quilt top. Rolling up the quilt top makes it easier to place on the batting later in this task.



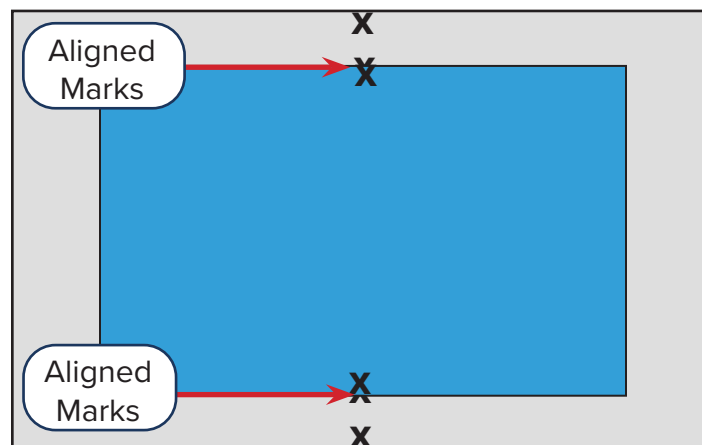
- 6 Fold your batting in half vertically so that the *scrim* is on the inside. **Mark** the center of the **top** edge. Then mark **8 inches below** that point. Next, mark the center of the **bottom** edge and mark **8 inches above** it.



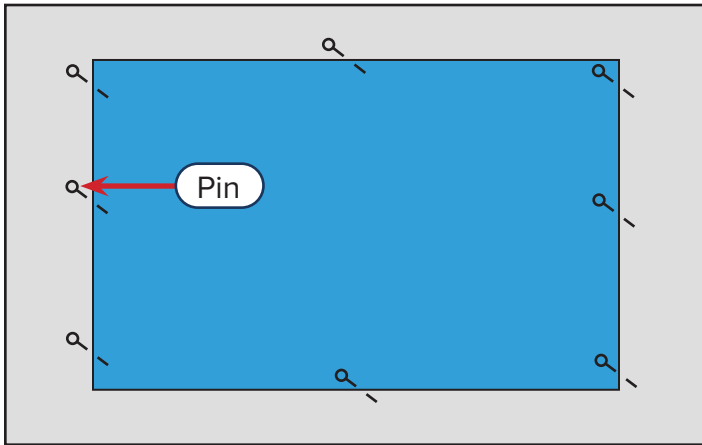
Note: When folding vertically, remember that the batting is wider than it is tall.



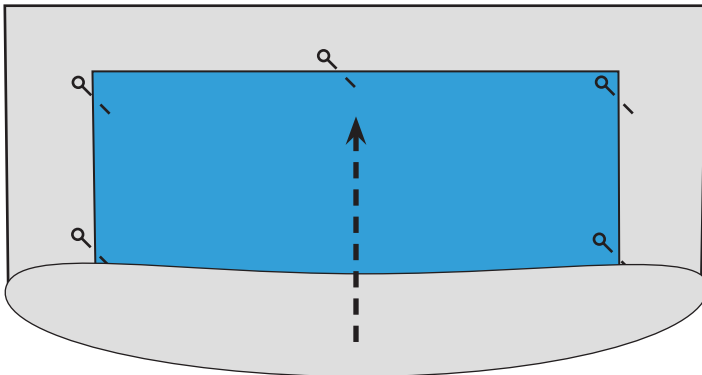
- 7 Spread your batting out flat, making sure your batting has the *scrim side facing down*. As you spread your quilt top out flat on the batting, **align** the center **marks** on the quilt top with the **marks 8 inches** into the middle of the batting.



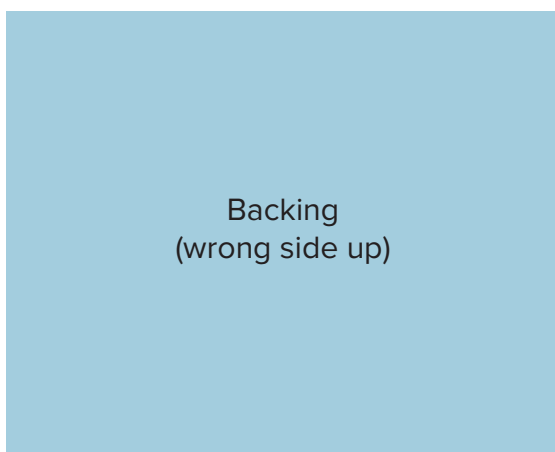
- 8 Smooth out any wrinkles and then **pin** the layers together. **Tip:** Use enough pins to avoid gaps and puckering. Some gaps might appear when the fabric is rolled or moved and can make it difficult to position the quilt on the frame.



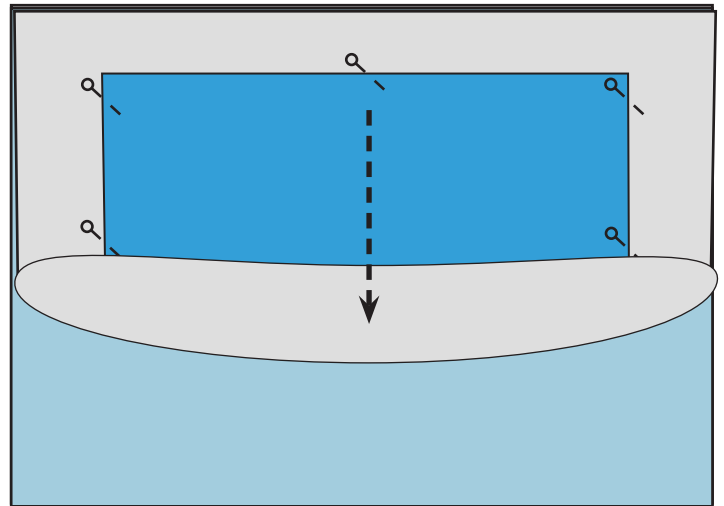
- 9 Start at the bottom and roll up the batting and quilt top layers. Rolling up the layers makes it easier to place them on the backing fabric later in this task.



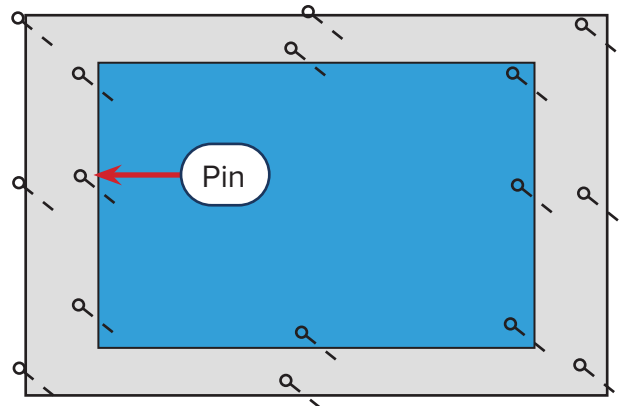
- 10 Lay the quilt backing down flat with the *wrong side* facing up. Smooth it free of any wrinkles.



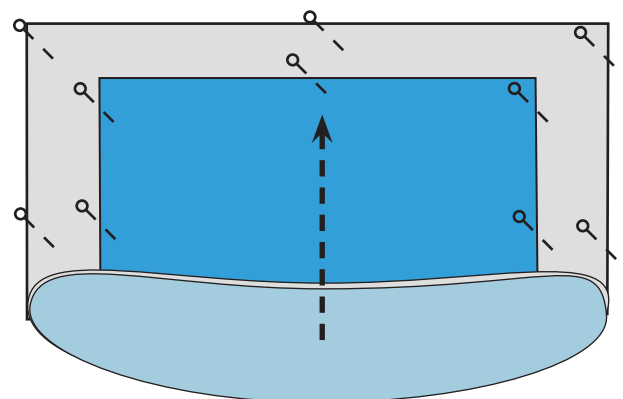
- 11 Line up the top edge of your batting with the top edge of the backing. Carefully unroll the batting and quilt top so that it lays neatly over the backing.



- 12 Smooth out any wrinkles in the fabric and **pin** the layers together. Remember to use enough pins to minimize puckering and gaps.



- 13 Roll the quilt sandwich up from the bottom edge so you can easily carry it to your frame.



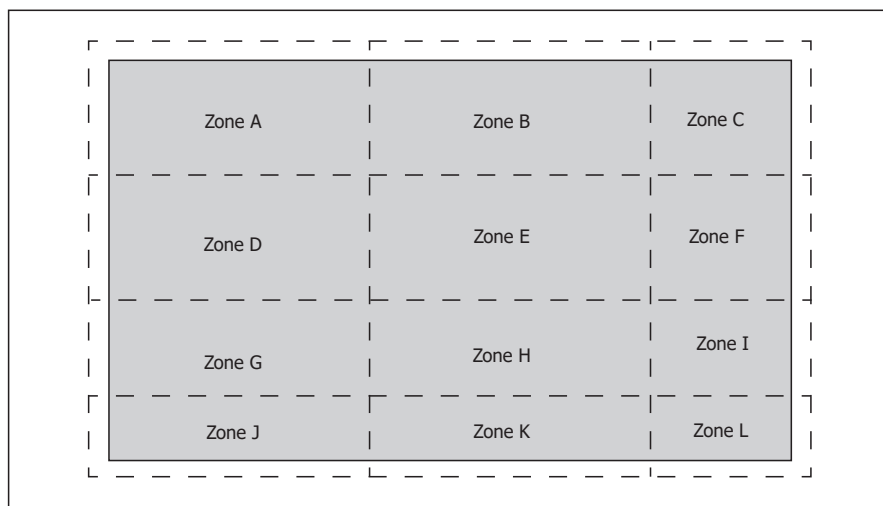
3

Lesson 3: Attaching Your Quilt to the Frame

As you discovered in Lesson 2, your needle can't reach every part of the hoop. Also, if you get the top plate or machine too close to the side of the frame, then your carriage wheels might catch on the frame—forcing you to change directions to continue, which makes creating straight lines on the edges very difficult. Another issue is that if you move the machine all the way to the back, the machine foot can collide with the take-up rail on the frame, which is like bumping your pencil.

Of course, you want to avoid these issues. To prevent these problems, you need to position your quilt top in the quiltable area. The **quiltable area** is the section of the frame where your machine is safely able to quilt without bumping into the frame. When quilting, stay within the quiltable area to keep your machine and your frame (and by extension your quilt) safe from collisions.

Because the size of the quiltable area is actually smaller than the frame, and because your frame is the *Mini-Quilter*, many quilts, including our practice one, will be larger than the frame's hoop. The section of the quilt that is in the hoop's quiltable area at the moment is the current **zone**. Each zone is quilted without repositioning the project on the frame. When that zone is filled, you move the quilt to a fresh zone. You create your own zones on your quilt. The following image is an example of how you might set up the zones on a quilt.



Your own quilts might have more or fewer zones depending on the size and shape of the specific project. In general, the best method is to start at the top-left corner of your quilt, stitch each zone across, and then move down to the next row of zones. Remember that your zones don't have to be all the same size. In a later lesson, you will learn how to move your quilt to the next zone.

When positioning your quilt on the frame, the goal is to place a zone in the frame's quiltable area so you can quilt freely.

KEY CONCEPT

When placing your fabric, you want to get a portion of the quilt top in the frame's quiltable area. The quilt should be square with the frame, smoothed of wrinkles, and have good fabric tension.

VOCAB REVIEW

Quiltable Area: The area of the frame your machine can freely move around without bumping into anything.

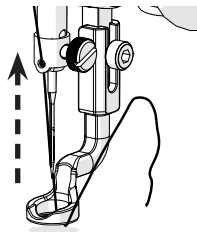
Zone: The section of your quilt that is in the hoop of the frame, available for quilting.

PRACTICE STEPS

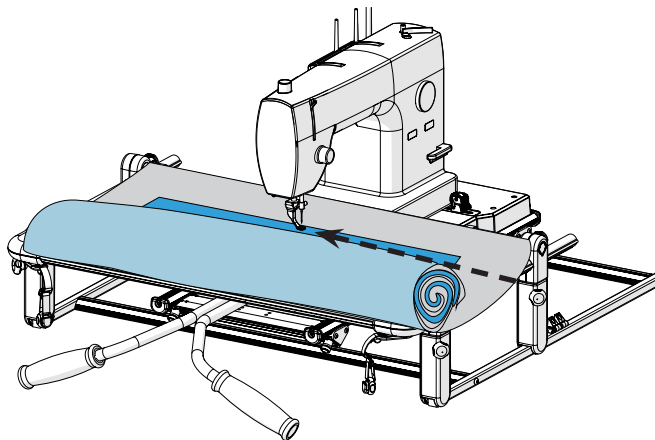
To attach your quilt to the frame, you need:

- Your quilt sandwich
- Fabric clamps (off your frame for now)
- Pins
- Placement template (came with frame)
- Fabric marker (that doesn't bleed!)
- A penny (for testing fabric tension)

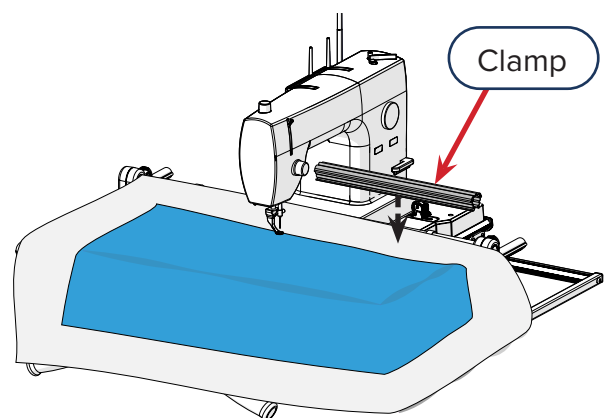
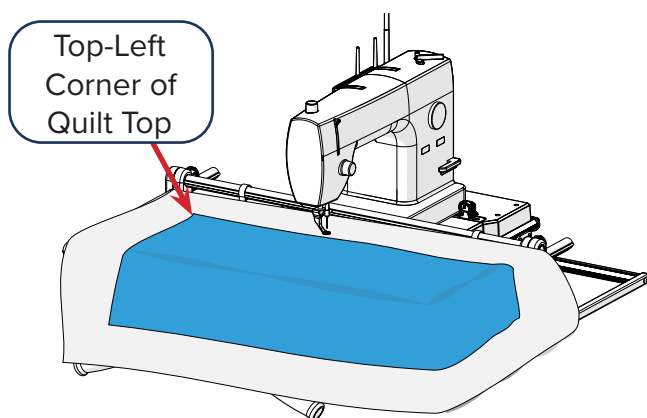
1 Raise the needle on the machine so the quilt can slide under the hopping foot.



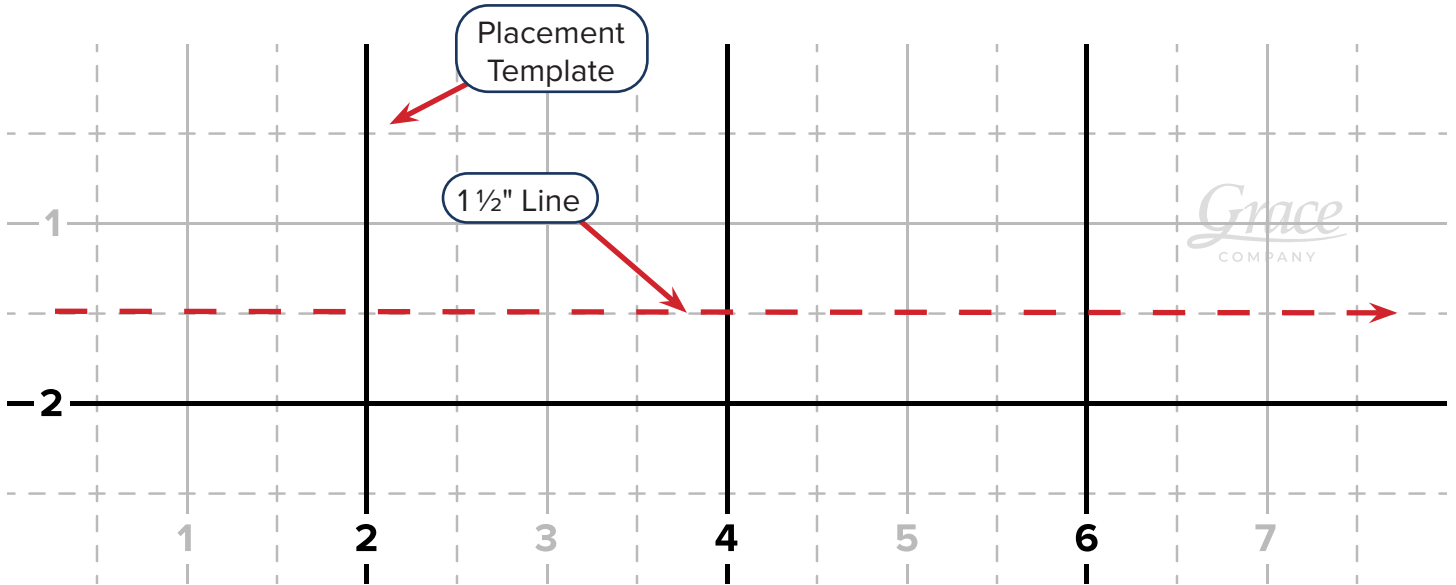
2 Take your rolled quilt sandwich (quilt sushi?) to your frame. Unroll the first 7-8 inches of your quilt on the frame's take-up rail, making sure to slide the top edge of the quilt under the hopping foot.



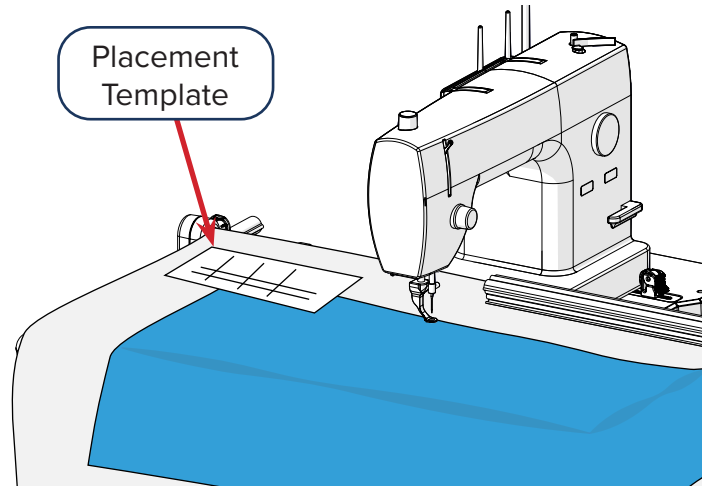
3 Unroll the rest of the quilt and spread it evenly and squarely across the frame. Set the fabric on the frame such that the **quilt top's top-left corner** is roughly near, but not touching, the top-left corner of the frame. **Tip:** Put one **clamp** on the take-up rail to keep the fabric in place.



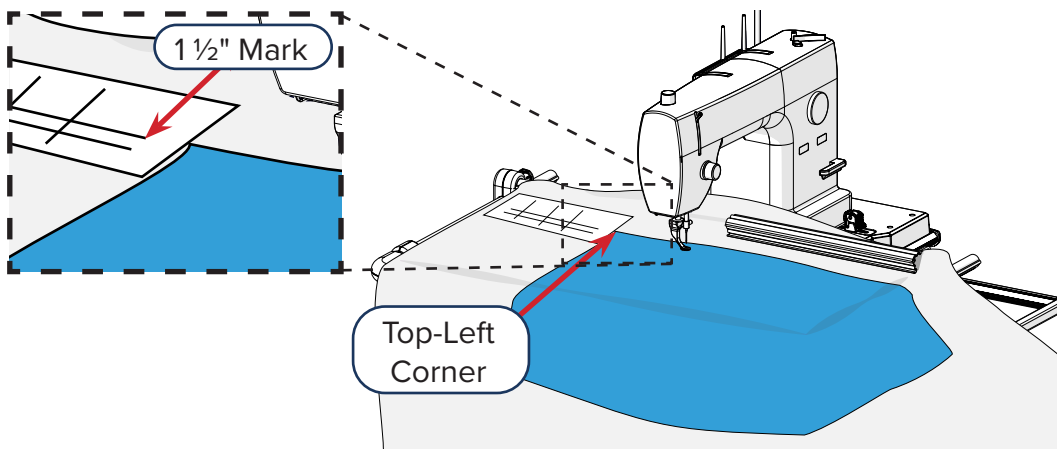
- 4 On the **placement template**, find the **1 ½ inch line**. Draw a line across the template at this spot with your marker. **Tip:** If you find it easier, you can cut the template to that size.



- 5 In the top-left corner of the frame, orient the **placement template** so that the short side is touching the left side rail and the long side is touching the take-up rail.

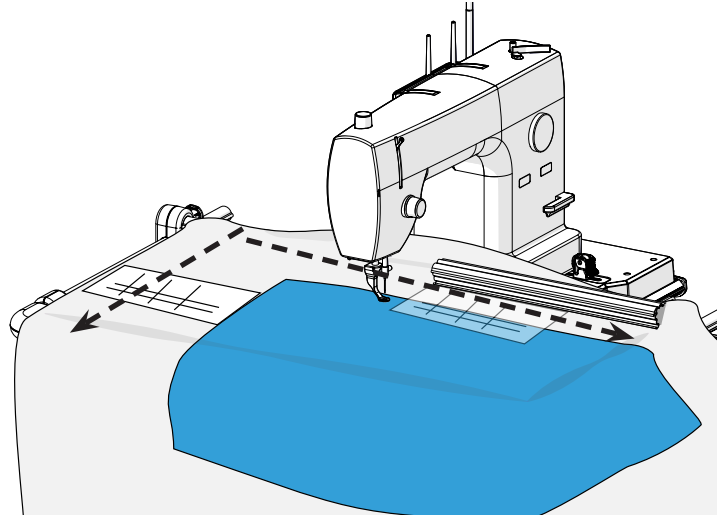


- 6 Adjust the quilt sandwich so that the **top-left corner** of the quilt top lines up with the right edge of the template and with the **1 ½ inch mark** near the bottom-right corner of the template. (Or if you cut the template, *on* the bottom-right corner.)



This location is the ideal start for a quilt. It allows the needle to reach around the edges of the quilt top for a clean tacking-down stitch and still maximizes the quilting space left over.

- 7 Slide the template along the top and left edges (one at a time) and adjust your quilt sandwich to make sure the quilt top is straight all the way across and down the frame.



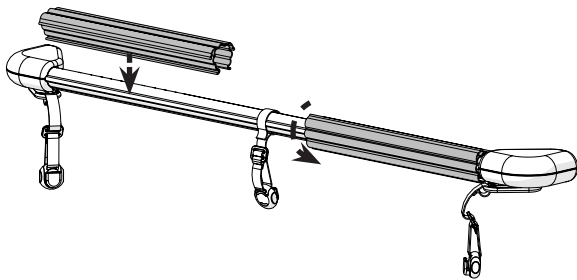
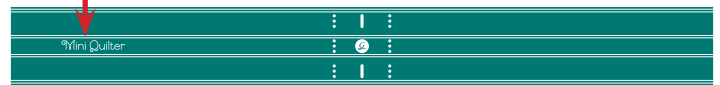
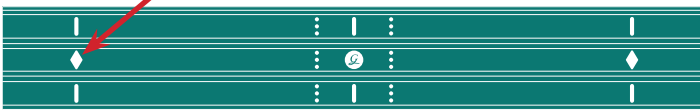
- 8 Now that the quilt is in the correct place, it's time to hold the fabric in place with the clamps. Make sure to use the correct clamps on the different rails. The front/side clamps are shorter and have a diamond line, while the take-up clamps are longer and display the Mini-Quilter logo. **Note:** As you place the clamps, take the time to smooth out any wrinkles.

FRONT/SIDE CLAMP (X4)

TAKE-UP CLAMP (X2)

Diamond Line (x2)

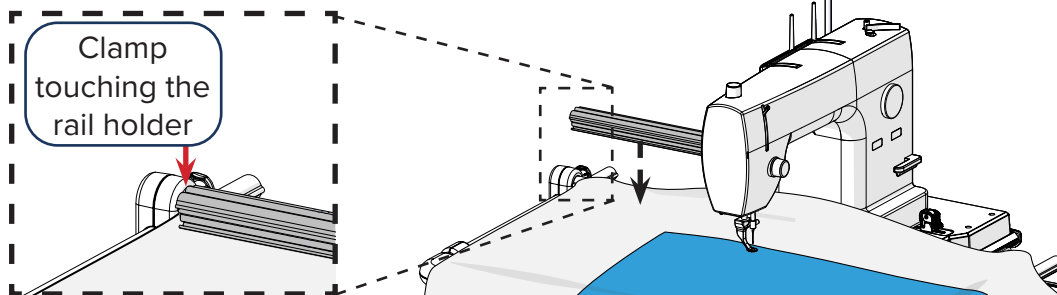
Mini-Quilter Logo



Tip: When you put the clamps on the front and side rails, put them on from the top, and then twist them a quarter turn (90°) to the side of the rail. Putting them on this way adds tension to the fabric while holding it on the frame.

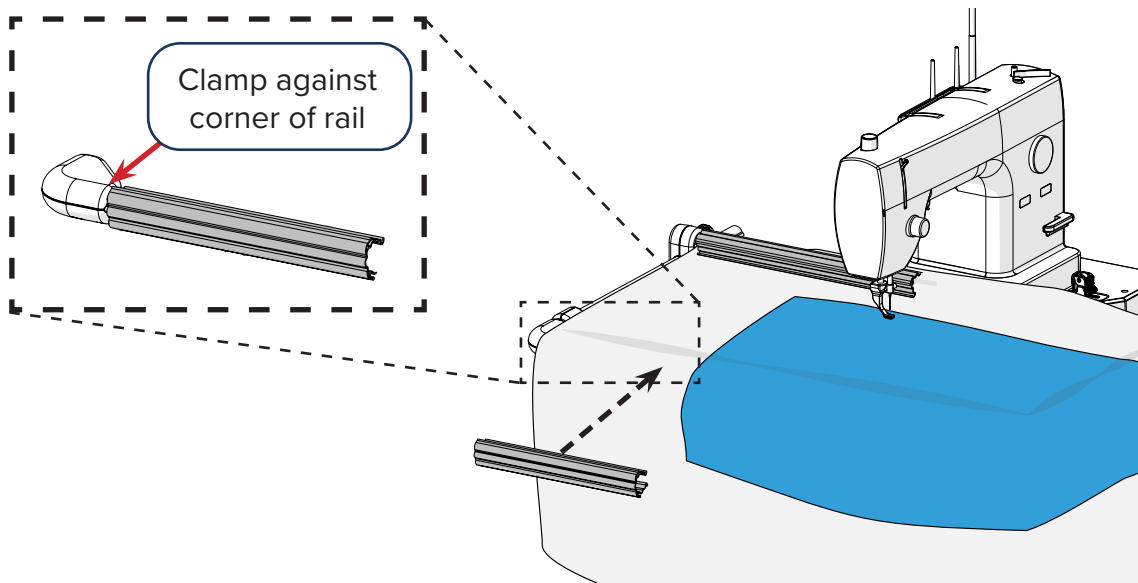
Do the following to put the clamps on the frame:

- a On the left, press a take-up clamp onto the take-up rail so that the left edge of the clamp is as far to the left as it can be, up **against the rail holder**.

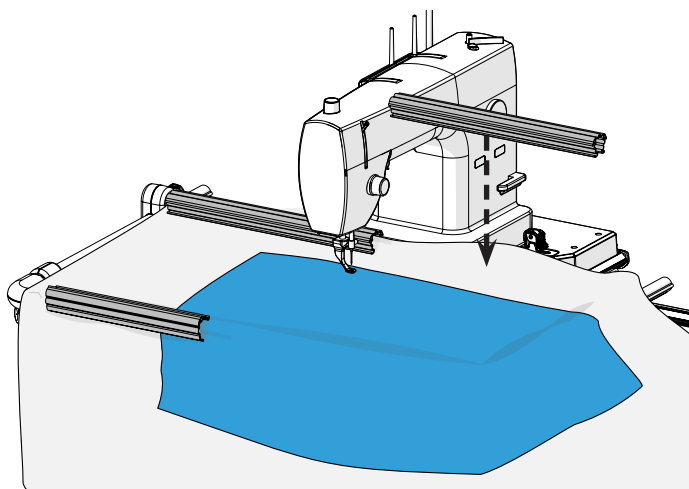


Note: Feel free to move the machine around the frame to get it out of your way as needed.

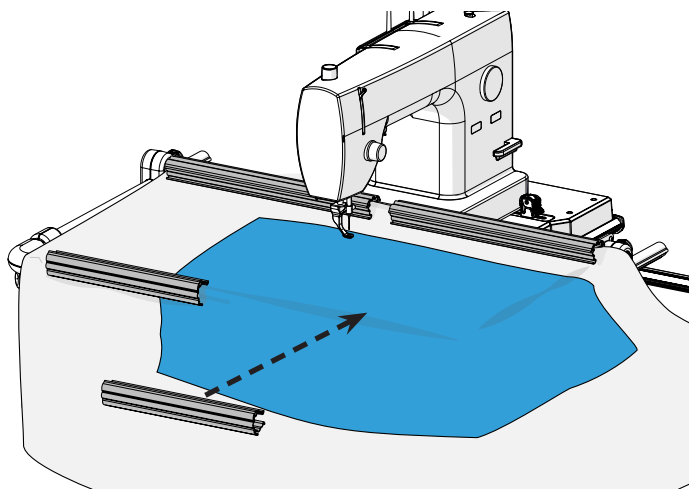
- b On the left side of the front rail, place a front/side clamp so that the left edge of the clamp is **against the corner of the rail**.



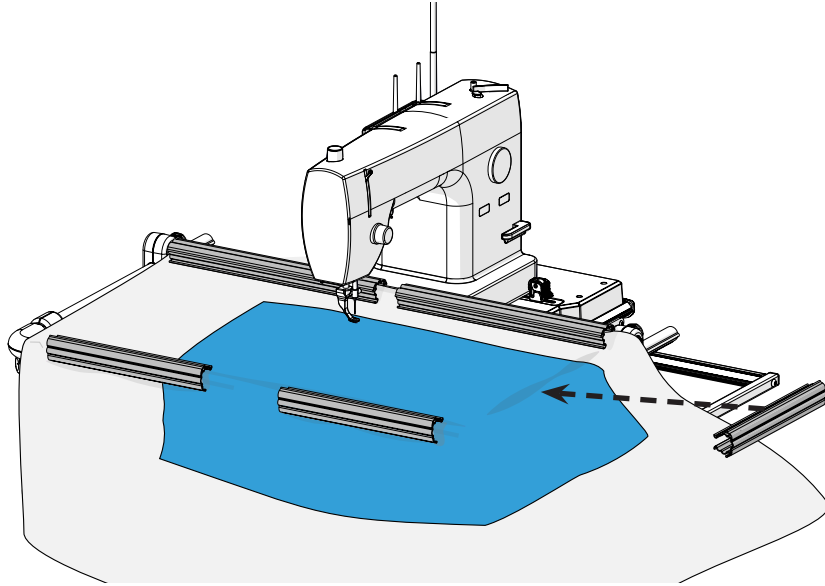
- c On the right side of the take-up rail, place the other take-up clamp so that it is as far to the right as it can be, next to the rail holder.



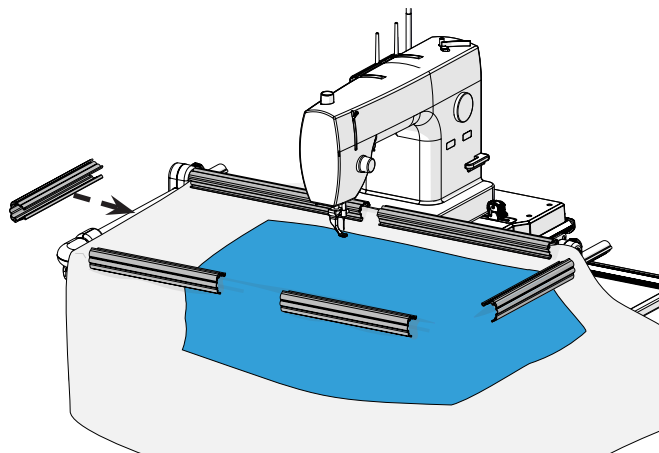
- d On the right side of the front rail, place another front/side clamp so that the right edge of the clamp is against the corner of the rail.



- e On the right side of the frame, press another front/side clamp onto the right side rail so that the top edge is right up against the take-up rail holder.

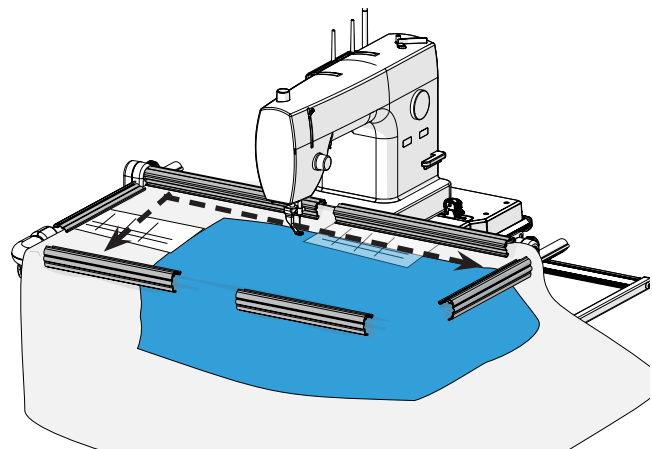


- f On the left side, you might notice that it's going to be difficult for the last clamp to hold the fabric. And that's ok! Place the clamp on the rail anyway, again right up against the take-up rail holder, as it's going to be helpful in Lesson 4.

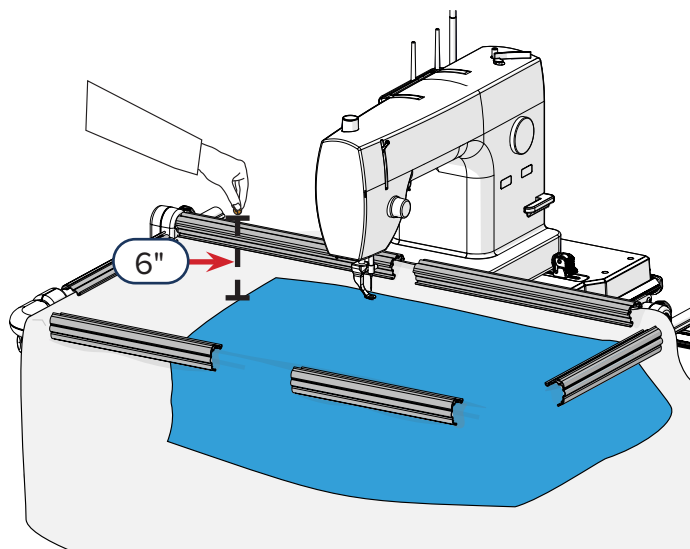


- 9 Slide the template along the top and left edge (one at a time) again, just to make sure that your quilt top is straight all the way across and down the frame. (The clamps will shift the fabric slightly, so it's important to double-check!)

Note: It's ok if the quilt top is further away from the rails than it was originally. In this step, you are using the template to check that the quilt top is still far enough from the rails and clamps so that when you quilt, you can reach the edge of the quilt top.



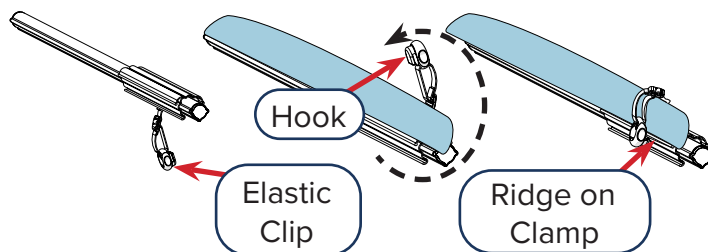
- 10 Next, test your fabric tension. Ideal fabric tension is smooth and taut. Drop a penny **6 inches** from the surface of the fabric and watch how it bounces. Most of the time, your fabric tension will either be too loose or in a good state.



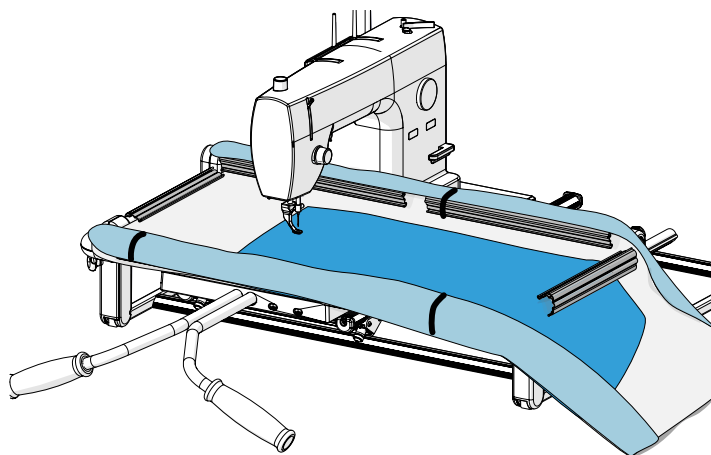
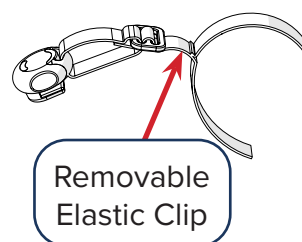
Do one of the following:

- If the penny only partially bounces and does not fully lift from the fabric, then the tension is good. Continue to the next step.
- If the penny doesn't bounce at all, or seems to roll to a low spot in the fabric, then the tension is too loose. Remove the fabric clamps from the front rail, and pull your quilt sandwich toward the front rail a little. Replace the fabric clamps, and then test the fabric tension again.
- If, on the rare occasion, the penny bounces and completely clears the fabric, then your tension is too tight. Remove the fabric clamps from the front rail and shift your quilt sandwich toward the take-up rail a little, or away from the side rails a little. Replace the fabric clamps, and then test your tension again.

- 11 Look at the fabric hanging off the frame. Regardless of whether the fabric is hanging off the front or the back of the frame, it can get in the way of moving the machine around the frame. This is where the **elastic clips** come in. Use them to hold the fabric against the clamps when it makes sense. Loop the band around the fabric and over the clamp, and then slide the **hook** of the clip into the **ridge on the clamp**.



Tip: For your own small projects, add the **removable elastic clip** to the front rail. Undo the velcro, wrap it around the middle of the front rail, and then use it like the others.



Note: Throughout most of the rest of this booklet, the clips are not shown. This is to keep the images less cluttered. Use the clips as makes sense in all the lessons.

4

Lesson 4: Marking the Quiltable Area

KEY CONCEPT

It's important to keep your machine in the quiltable area, so take the time to visualize it. Use the practice grid at first to clearly see the space. As you gain confidence, you can use the lines on the clamps to remind yourself of the quiltable area.

In the last lesson, you placed your quilt top away from the edges of the frame so that it is in the quiltable area. Now, as this is your first time using the frame, we're going to use the practice grid to clearly visualize the quiltable area.

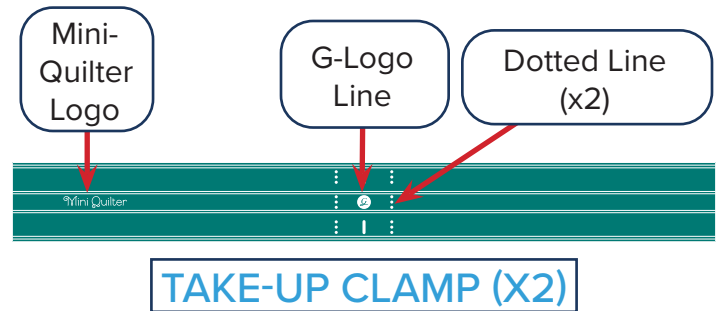
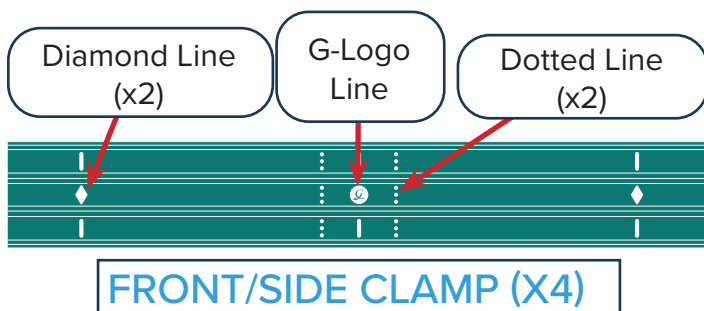
As you gain confidence with your frame and how your machine interacts with it, you can use the lines on the clamps to remind yourself of the quiltable area, and stop using the practice grid.

PRACTICE STEPS

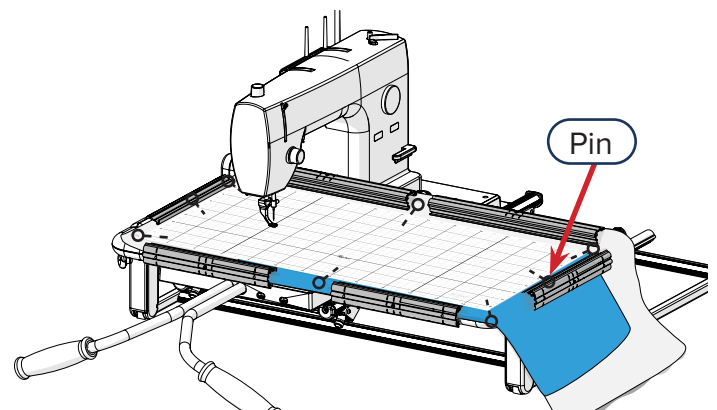
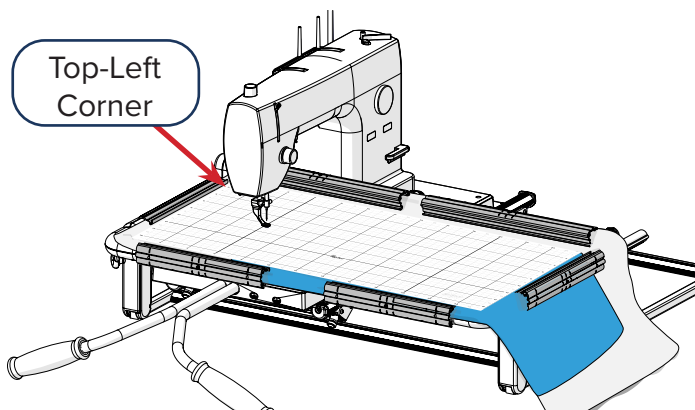
To mark the quiltable area, you need:

- Practice grid
- Pins
- Marker that *isn't* the same color as your designs (make sure it doesn't bleed!)

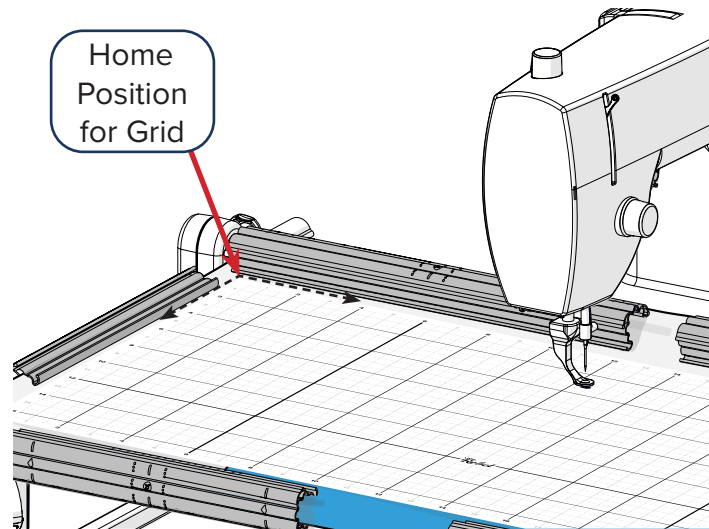
- 1 Look at the fabric clamps. They have symbols on them to indicate the edges of your quiltable area. The **diamond lines** indicate the horizontal edge near the take-up rail, while the **G-logo lines** indicate the vertical edges. The **dotted lines** are for you to use if the offset of your needle is such that the G-logo line doesn't work for your machine. **Note:** The horizontal edge of the quiltable area near the front rail is very dependent on the length of your machine, so none of the clamps can help with indicating that edge. But this lesson will explain how you can determine that edge yourself.



- 2 Set the practice grid on the frame so that the **top-left corner** of the grid is touching the inside of the left side rail and the inside of the take-up rail, which aligns the grid with the top-left corner of the frame (not with the quilt top). Notice that the location of your quilt top is not the same as the location of the practice grid. This is on purpose. **Pin** the grid to your quilt.

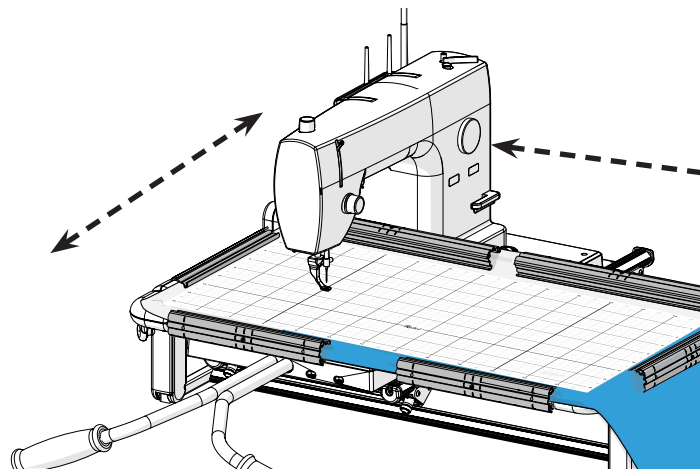


- 3 Make sure you feel confident that you understand this placement of the practice grid. This is the **“home” position** of the grid, and you will be returning the grid to this position multiple times as you quilt. Take the time to memorize this position, with the practice grid touching the inside of the left side rail and the inside of the take-up rail.

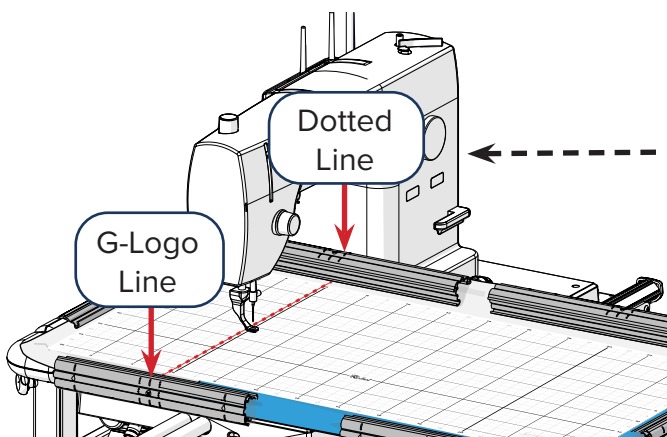


- 4 Move your machine as far left as it can go without hitting any part of the frame. Take the time to confirm that it cannot hit any part of the frame by moving the carriage along the left side, from the front to the back.

Note: It's more important that the machine doesn't hit *anything* than it is that the machine goes as far to the left as it can literally get.

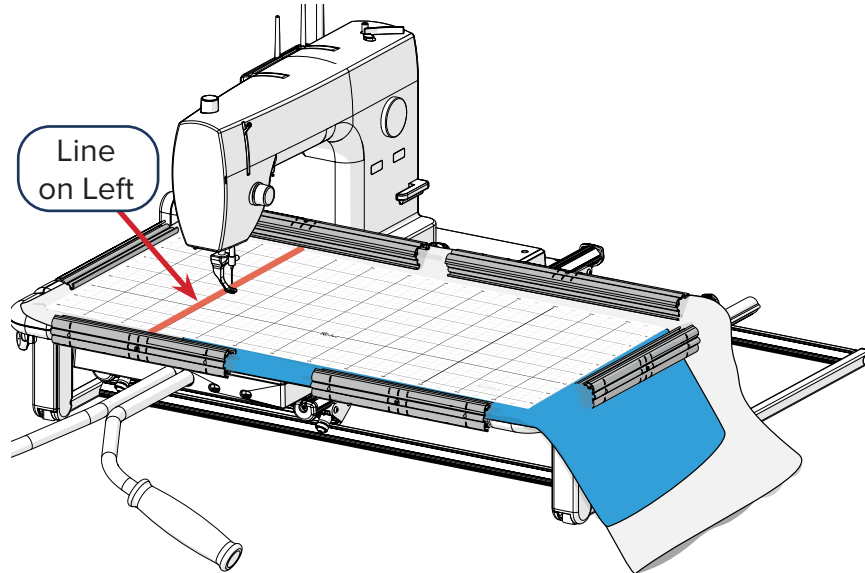


- 5 Moving the machine to the left lines up your needle with the **G-logo line** on the left take-up clamp and the left front rail clamp. **Tip:** Remember, depending on the offset of your needle, you might not be able to use the G-logo line. If this happens, simply use one of the **dotted lines** as shown in the image below.



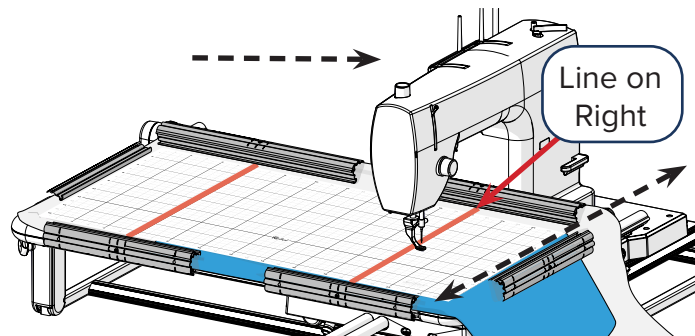
Note: If this motion *doesn't* align the needle with these lines, then the practice grid or the clamps might not be in the correct spot. Review Lesson 3 and the home position (step 3) and adjust things to align correctly. If things *still* don't line up, it might be that your needle is so offset from the machine's middle that you need to change your machine's position on the top plate. See the *Assembly and Use Instructions* for the Mini-Quilter for more information.

- 6 Use a pencil or marker to draw a **line** on the grid from the needle, going from the top to the bottom. This line indicates the furthest **left** you will move your machine.



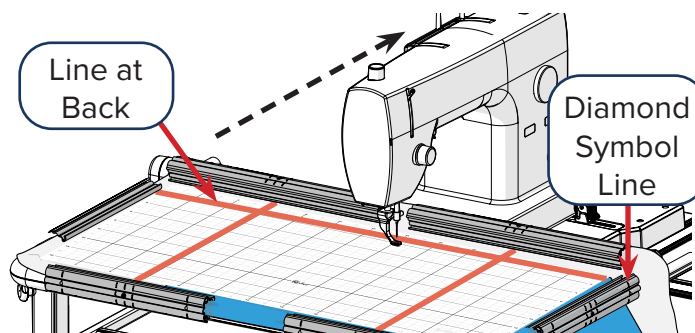
- 7 Move your machine as far to the **right** as it can go without hitting any part of the frame. Moving the machine to the right lines up your needle with the G-logo line on the right take-up clamp and the right front rail clamp. **Tip:** Remember, depending on the offset of your needle, you might need to use the dotted line instead. Draw a **line** on the grid, again using the needle as your starting point, going from the top to the bottom. This line indicates the furthest right you will move your machine.

Note: Remember, it's more important that the machine doesn't hit *anything* than it is that the machine goes as far to the right as it can literally get.

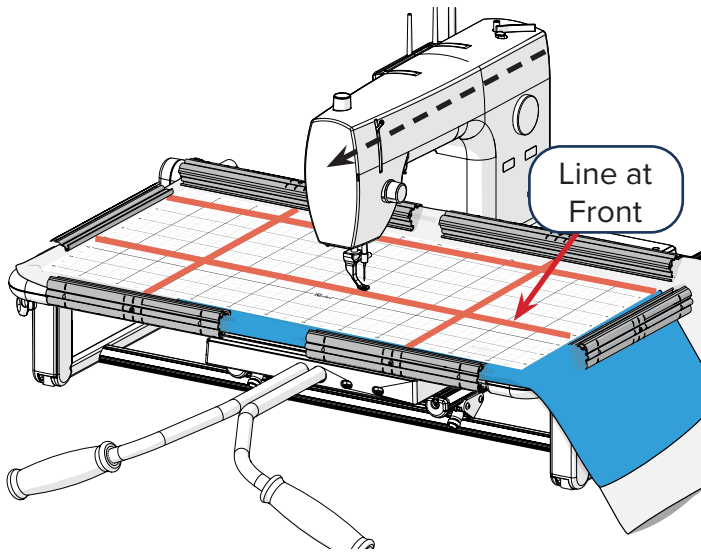


- 8 Move the machine as far **back** as you can without hitting the take-up rail or the clamps. This motion lines up your needle with the **diamond line** on the side rail clamps (the line closest to the take-up rail). Even if your needle can get closer to the take-up rail without hitting anything, it's still best to use the line as the indicator of the back edge, so it's easier to remember where the edge is later. Draw a **line** on the grid from the needle, going across the frame. This line indicates the furthest back you will move your machine.

Note: Remember, it's more important that the machine doesn't hit *anything* than it is that the machine goes as far to the back as it can literally get.



- 9 Move the machine as far **forward** as you can without hitting the front rail or the clamps, or hitting the take-up rail with the back of the machine. Draw a **line** on the grid from the needle, going across the frame. This line indicates the furthest forward you will move your machine.

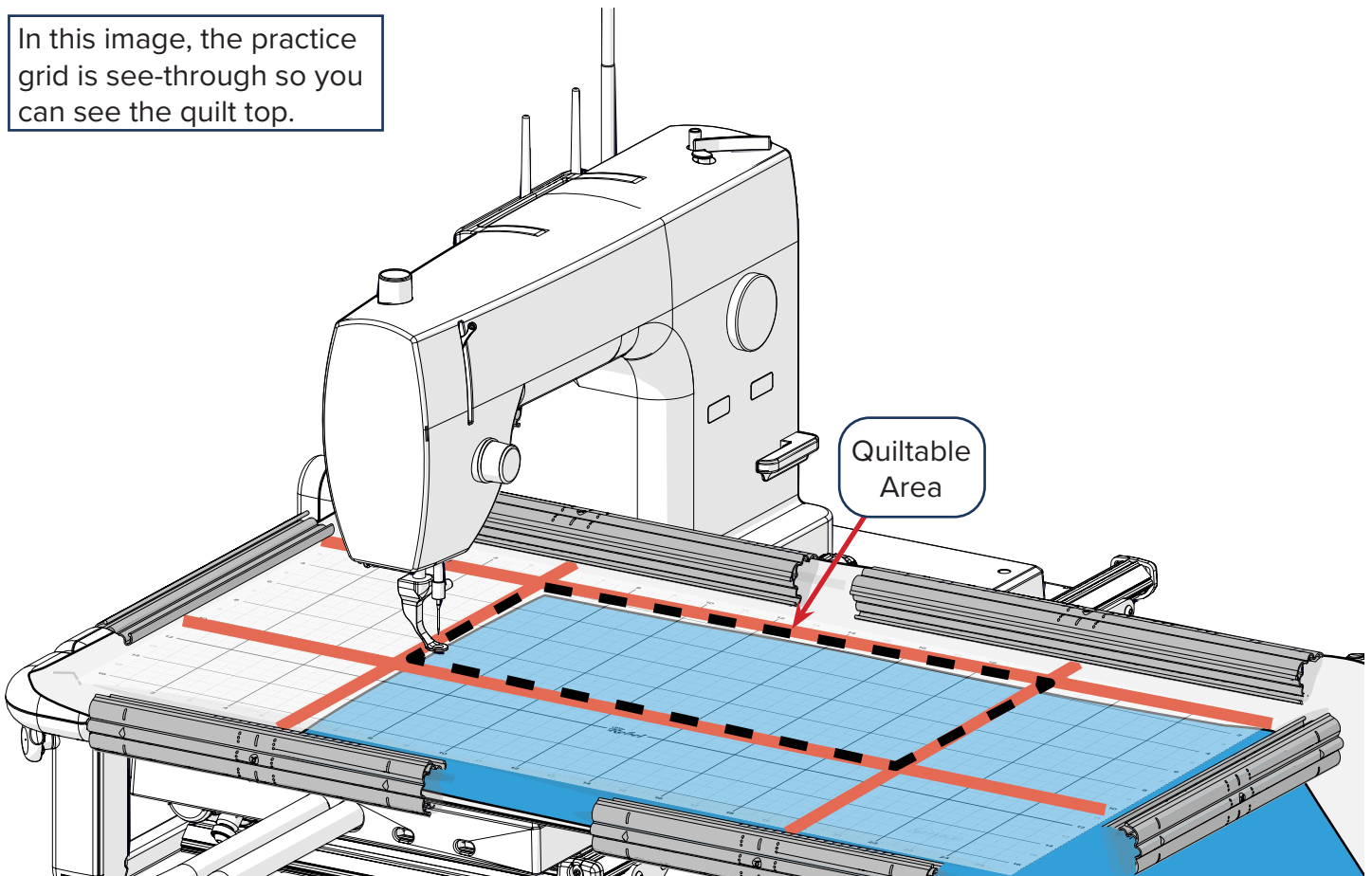


Note: Remember that the front edge of your quitable area is very dependent on the length of your machine! If your quitable area looks bigger or smaller than the example, that's ok. It just means your machine has a different throat length than the example machine.

Tip: The line on the practice grid with the Little Rebel logo on it is the front edge line for the Little Rebel. For more information about that machine, see <https://graceframe.com/en/sewing-machines/little-rebel>.

- 10 Look at the rectangle you just drew. This is your **quitable area**. The left and top edges of your quilt top need to be inside the quitable area—you need to be able to sew around the edges of your quilt top, which you'll do in a later lesson. (You might need to lift up the practice grid to confirm this.)

In this image, the practice grid is see-through so you can see the quilt top.



Note: If your quilt top is *outside* of the quitable area, then go back through Lesson 3 *and* this lesson to adjust the location of the quilt top, your clamps, and the practice grid to make sure that the quilt top is *inside* the quitable area. You *must* position the quilt top such that your needle can reach it.

5

Lesson 5: Gaining Muscle Memory

As you've probably noticed, some of the designs you originally drew on the practice grid are outside the quiltable area. And that's ok! You were practicing drawing continuous line designs.

In this lesson, we're going to create a **window** in the practice grid so that you can see your quilt top while you keep using the practice grid to keep track of your quiltable area. You'll also have a chance to practice creating continuous lines without the aid of a grid. Remember, this repetition of drawing your designs is to help you get comfortable with creating continuous line designs and to help you visualize your quiltable area.

One of the best ways to get comfortable quilting is to run the machine without any thread, not top thread, not bobbin thread. You have the chance to feel how easy it is to move the carriage around the frame, how quickly it stops when you stop, and so on. But with no thread, you can't mess up anything. Think of this lesson as the dress rehearsal before your performance.

PRACTICE STEPS

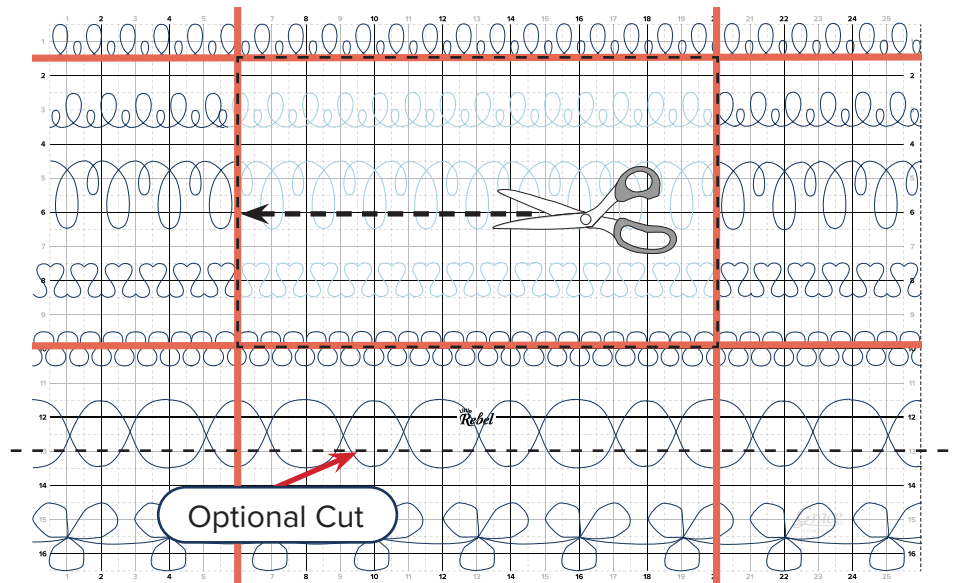
To gain more muscle memory, you need:

- Extra paper (blank is best, but lined is ok)
- Scissors (for the paper, so not your fabric scissors!)

- 1 Take the practice grid off the frame. Use scissors to cut a window in the grid, so that the quiltable area is open, and the rest of the grid will cover the places you can't quilt.

Tip: Start cutting in the middle of the window, and then cut around the lines you marked.

Optional: You can also cut off the rest of the practice grid a few inches after the front edge line, so that there is less paper to manage. Just remember that you can still only quilt in the window!



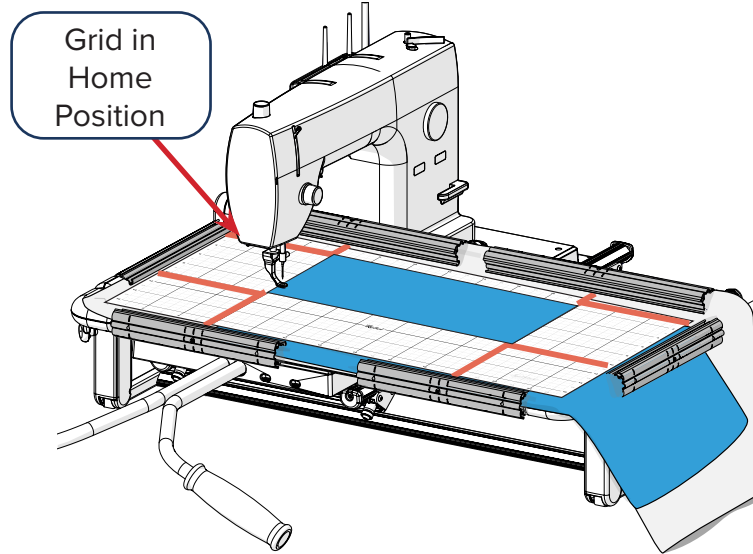
KEY CONCEPT

Drawing and stitching without thread will continue to build your muscle memory, so that when you actually quilt the project, you'll have more confidence in your movements. Learn how your machine moves around the frame, and how responsive the carriage is to your movement.

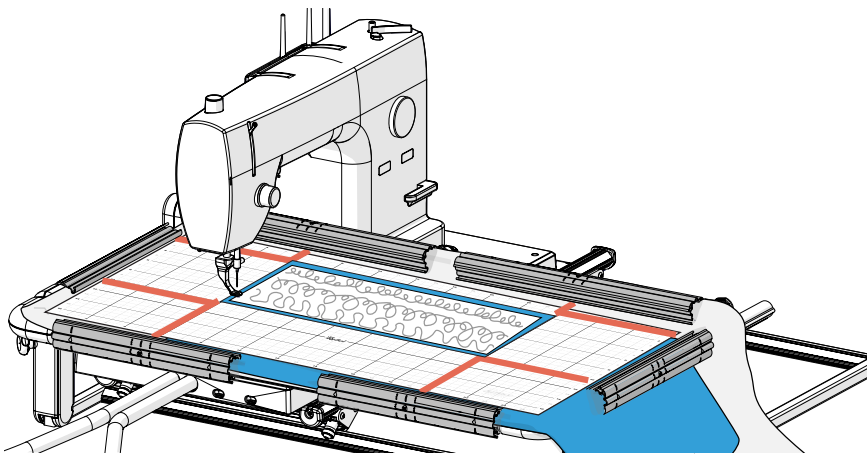
VOCAB REVIEW

Window: A hole in the practice grid that makes it easy to both see your quilt top and use the grid to keep track of your quiltable area.

- 2 Put the practice grid back on the frame, in the **home** position (with the grid touching the inside of the left side rail and the inside of the take-up rail) and pin it in place.

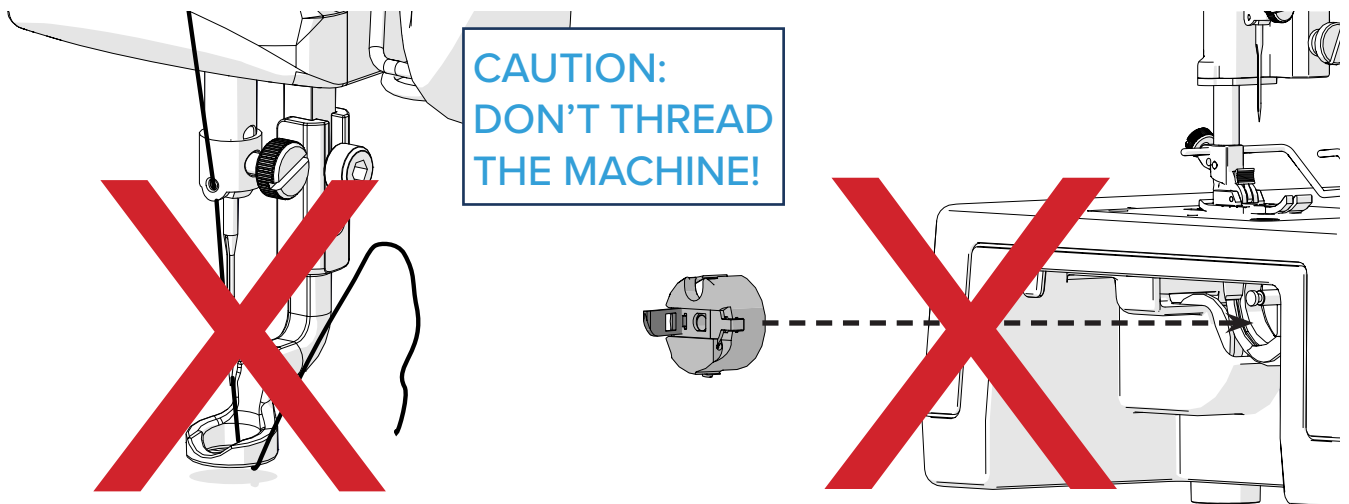


- 3 Place a piece of paper in the window (pin it down if it doesn't want to stay put). You might need to use multiple pieces (taped together) to fill the window, or to cut the paper down to size so it doesn't cover the edges of the grid. Draw your design again.

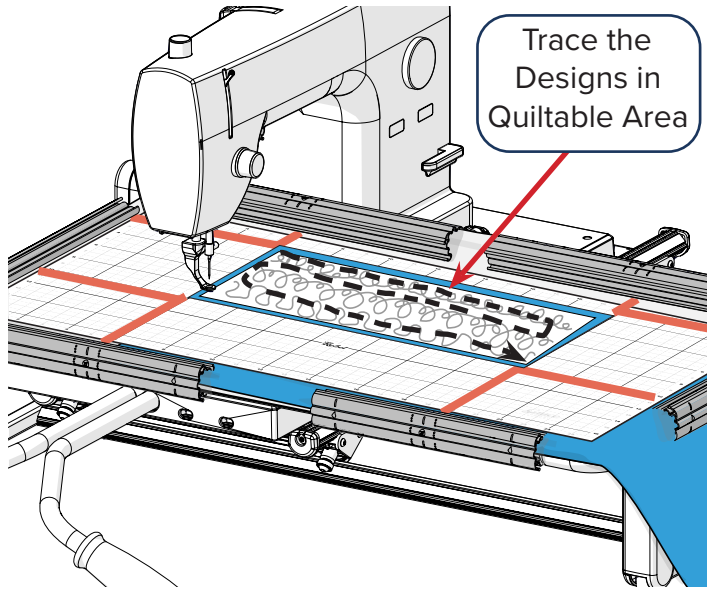


Note: Pay attention to the difference drawing without the grid makes. Your lines are probably going to be slightly off from your first drawings. That's ok! You're practicing and learning why a grid can be very helpful for planning your designs.

- 4 Make sure your machine is not threaded, *including the top thread and the bobbin thread.*

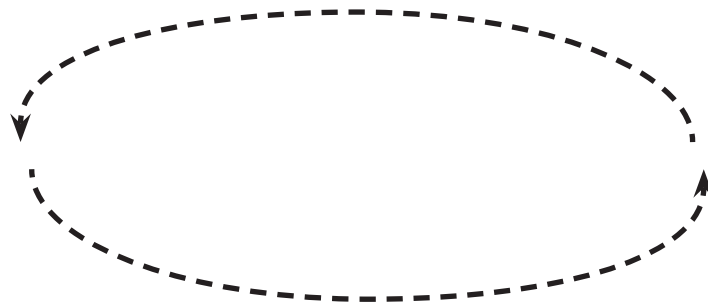
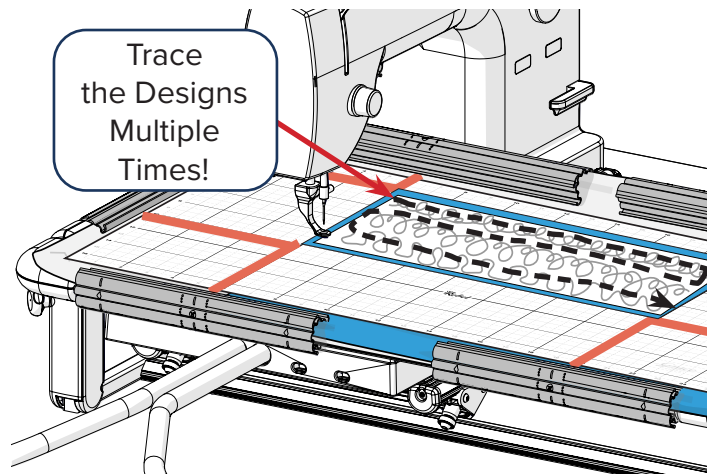


- 5 Turn on the machine, and use the needle as your “pencil.” **Trace over the designs** you made in the quiltable area. You’ll punch a bunch of holes in the paper and the fabric.



Tip: Try to follow the designs you drew closely, but don't worry at all if you can't follow them exactly. That's totally normal, and when you're finished no one will be able to see the plan, just the finished product!

- 6 Repeat this practice as many times as you want. It's a good idea to repeat the practice a few times, until you feel like if you walked away and came back, you'd still be confident continuing. Actually, if you want to, do just that! Stop here, and start again with the booklet after a break. Quilting is supposed to be fun, and you're working hard to learn this new skill. Take a break whenever makes sense for you.



6

Lesson 6: Tacking Down the Edges

Now that you've practiced using the machine to create your designs, it's time to get ready to quilt with thread!

Before you quilt with thread, you need to **tack down** the edges of your quilt. Tacking down the edges helps to keep your quilt top from shrinking or scrunching up as you fill it in. Stitch along the top and left edges of your quilt top, about a ¼ inch from the edge. You will tack down the other edges of the quilt top later, once they are in the quiltable area. Remember, every time you move your quilt to a new zone and reveal an edge of the quilt top, you must tack down the newly revealed edges.

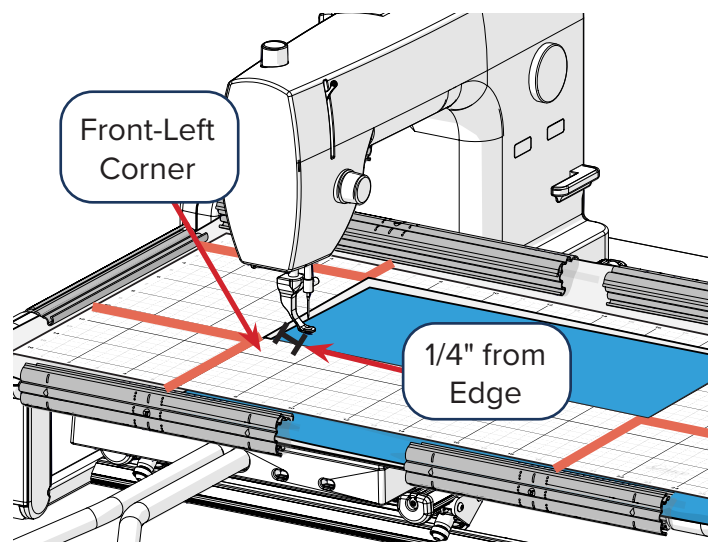
You're also going to learn about **pulling up your bobbin thread** at the start and end of stitching. Pulling up the bobbin thread prevents it from being in the way as you continue quilting. It also makes it easier to cut the threads when you finish quilting a section or a line.

PRACTICE STEPS

To tack down the edges, you need:

- Scissors
- Thread (installed in the machine)
- Wound bobbin (installed in the machine)
- Thread snips (optional, scissors will work)

- 1 Take the extra paper off the frame so only the practice grid is on the fabric. You don't want to stitch the extra paper to your quilt. Move your machine to the **front-left corner** of the quiltable area, until your needle is about a **quarter-inch** in from the edge of the quilt top.



KEY CONCEPTS

Tacking down the edges reduces fabric shrinkage and helps the edges stay flat.

You need to pull up the bobbin thread when you start and end your stitching to keep it from tangling under the quilt.

VOCAB REVIEW

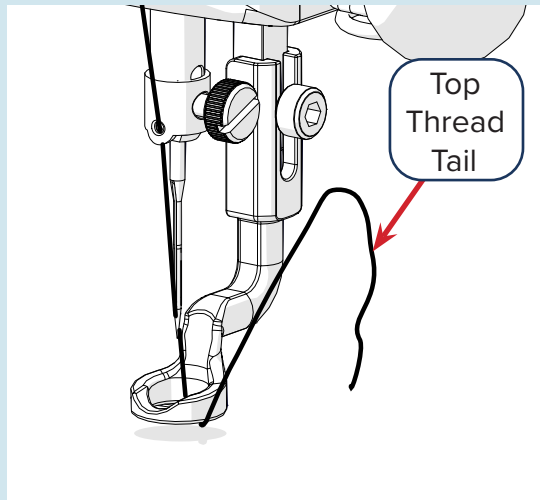
Tack down: Sewing around the edges of the quilt top to help keep the fabric from shrinking.

Pulling up the bobbin thread: Moving the tail of the bobbin thread to the top of the quilt at the start and end of your stitching. This action helps to prevent the thread from being stitched to the bottom of the quilt.

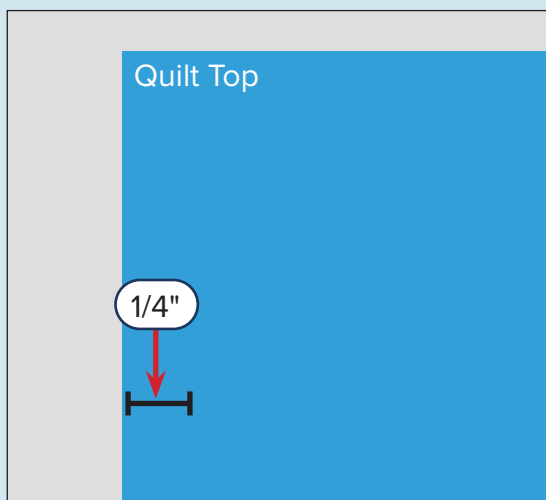
- 2 Make sure your machine is threaded, and then start by pulling up your bobbin thread.

Every stitch made with a sewing machine has two threads: the top thread (from the cone or spool on the machine) and the bottom thread (from the machine's bobbin). When you first start stitching, the tail of the bobbin thread is underneath the quilt. Because you can't see it, it's easy to stitch over the tail and end up with an unsightly bunch of thread under the quilt. To prevent this, you must bring the bobbin thread up to the top of the quilt. Pulling up the bobbin thread also makes it easy to trim it with the top thread tail. Pull up the bobbin thread at the start of every tie-on and the end of every tie-off, and at the start and end of tacking down your quilt.

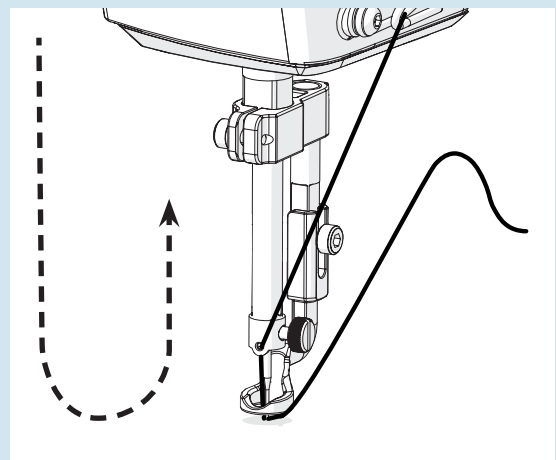
- a Pick up and hold the **top thread tail** that is threaded through the needle. **Note:** It doesn't matter whether the thread is under the hopping foot or not. Also note that your foot might look a little different depending on your machine, but the process is the same.



- b Make sure your needle is positioned where you want to start stitching. For tacking down the edges, position the needle about a quarter of an inch from the edge of the quilt top.

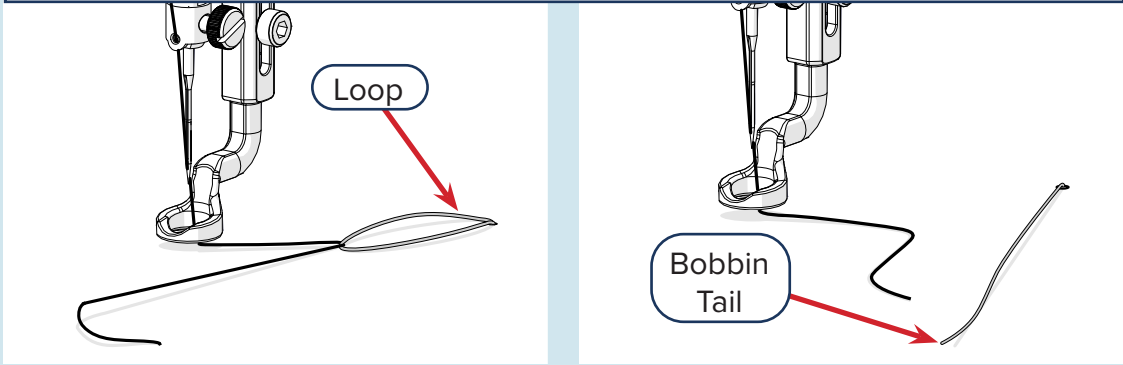


- c While still holding the thread tail, make a **single stitch** in place. If your machine has a single stitch button, press it once. If it has a needle up/needle down button, press it twice. Otherwise, you can use the hand wheel to make the stitch.

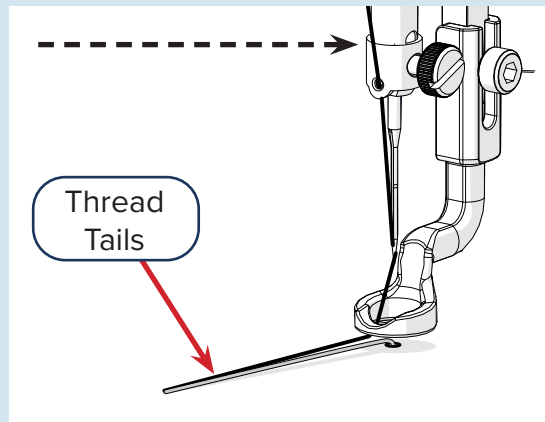


- d Continue holding the thread tail and move the machine away from the stitch. A **loop** of bobbin thread is pulled up to the top of the quilt. Keep pulling until the **bobbin tail** completely pops out.

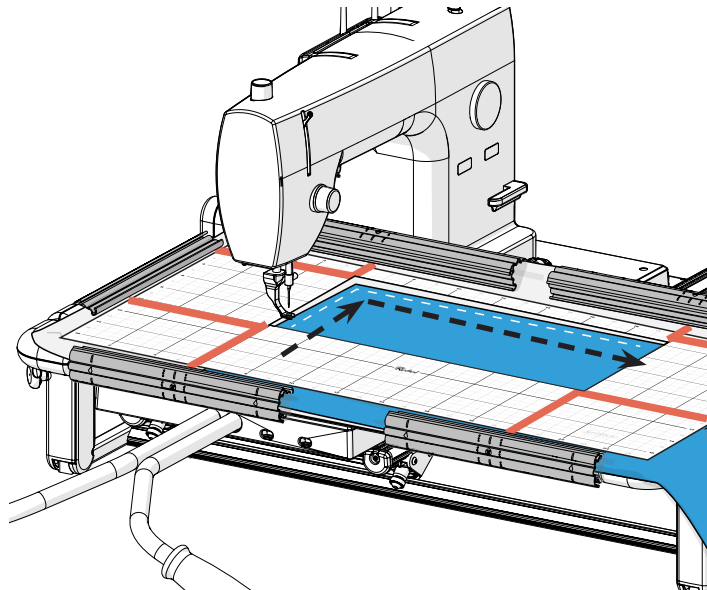
Tip: Once the loop is big enough, hook your finger in the loop to pull on the bobbin thread and pop it out.



- e Gather up both thread tails and move the machine back to the first stitch. Pull on the **thread tails**, especially the bobbin tail, until both threads are tight.

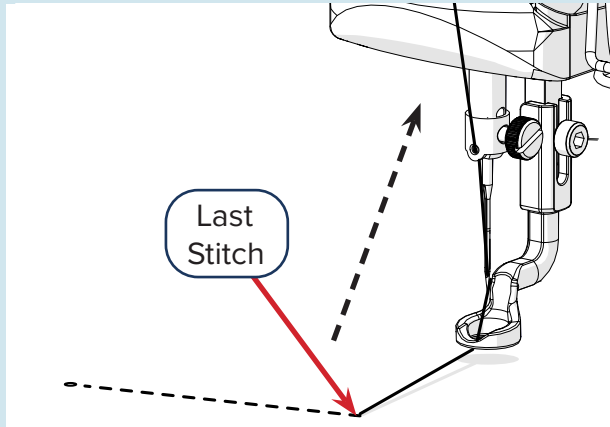


- 3 Stitch along the left edge, to the back-left corner. Then stitch across the back edge until you reach the end of the quiltable area. Remember to remove the pins as you stitch.

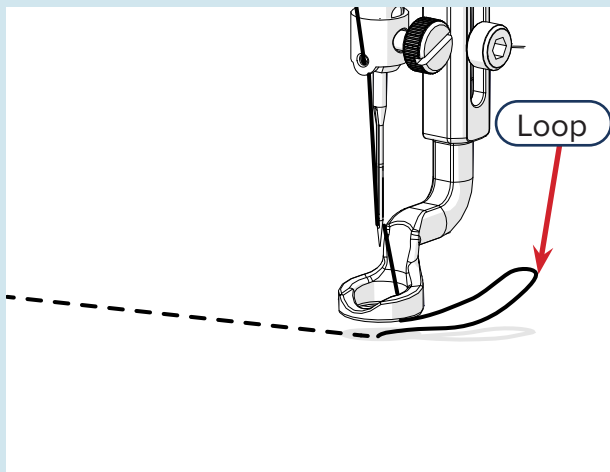


- 4 Now you need to bring up the bobbin thread again, to make sure it's not in the way as you do more quilting. The steps for pulling up the bobbin thread at the end of stitching are a little different from the steps for pulling it up at the start.

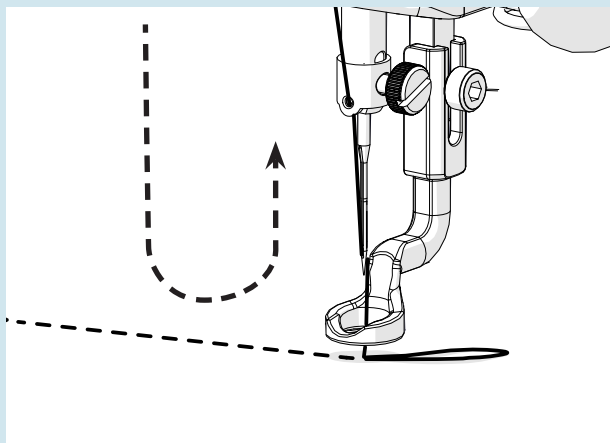
- a Move the machine away from the **last stitch**.



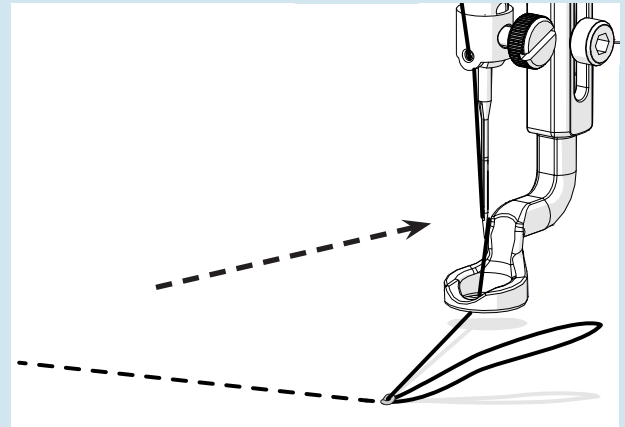
- b Hold the top thread to make a **loop**, and return the needle to the last stitch.



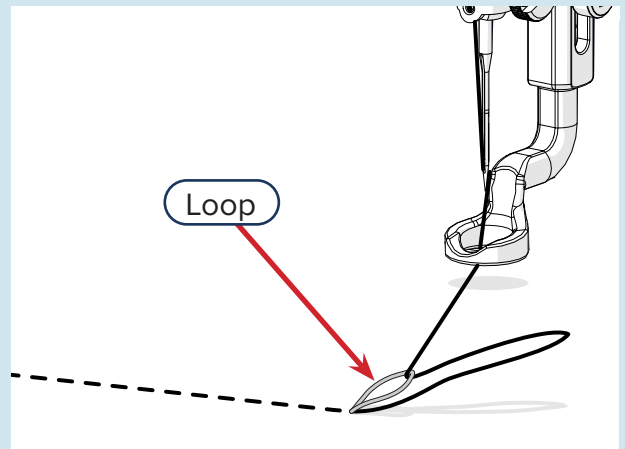
- c While still holding the loop, make a **single stitch** directly over the last stitch.



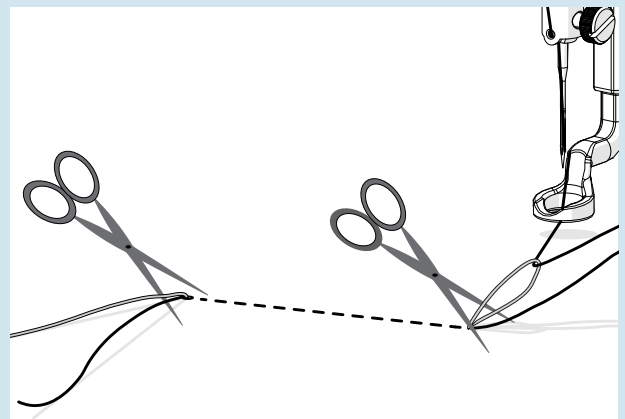
- d Continue to hold the loop and move the machine away from the last stitch again.



- e As you move away, a loop of bobbin thread is pulled up. Keep going until the loop is big enough to grab.



- f Trim away all the threads close to the last stitch. Also cut the thread tails from the beginning of your stitching.



7

Lesson 7: Quilting Your First Zone

KEY CONCEPT

When it's time to stitch with thread, use securing stitches to keep your designs neat.

If you're ready, it's time to quilt your first zone! This is the first performance, after the dress rehearsal (quilting without thread) and all the practice sessions (drawing with your pencil on paper). One way to know if you're ready to quilt with thread is to take a break.

If you come back and feel like you know what you're doing, that's a good indication you are ready to move on. If you come back and feel unsure, that's ok! You might not be ready to move on. Spend some time repeating Lesson 5 where you practice without thread until you're comfortable and confident.

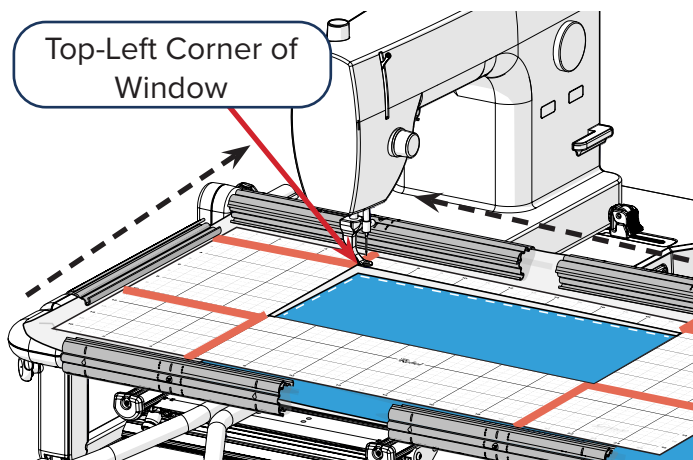
When you're stitching into your quilt, you want to start and end with some **securing stitches**: three stitches you make close together to help secure the thread.

PRACTICE STEPS

To quilt your first zone, you need:

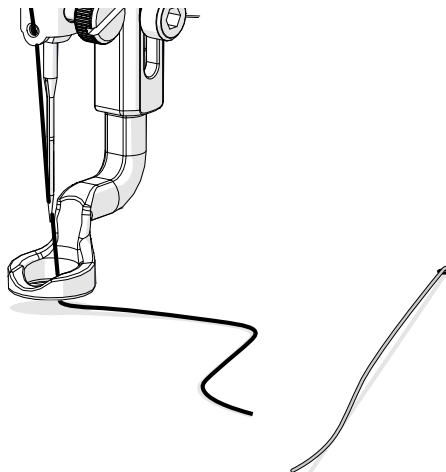
- Practice grid (with the window)
- Scissors (or thread snips)
- Thread (installed in the machine)
- Wound bobbin (installed in the machine)

- 1 Move the machine to the holes you punched for the start of the first row of designs in the **top-left corner of the window**, or wherever makes sense for the start of your design.

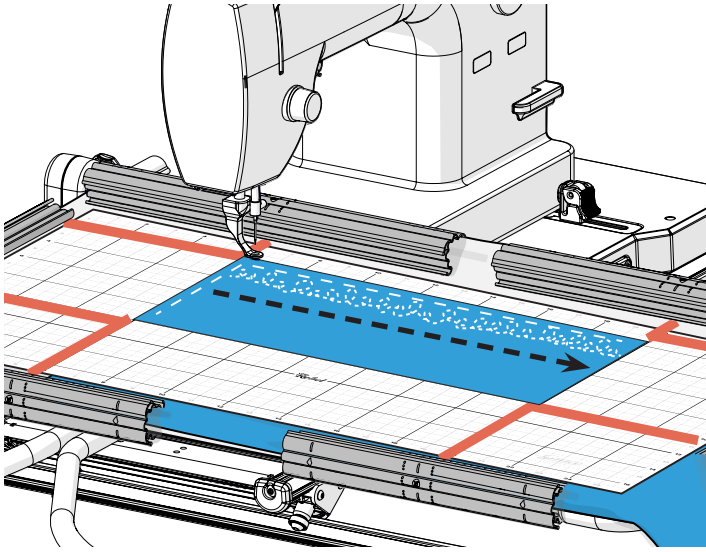


Tip: If quilting is a new skill for you, it is best to start in the top-left corner and work your way across and down, like you're reading a book. As you gain more confidence, you might decide that starting in the middle of the window or halfway down the edge might make more sense for your designs. For now, stick with starting in the top-left corner.

- 2 Pull up your bobbin thread. Follow the steps in "Pulling Up the Bobbin Thread (Start)" on page 28.



- 3 Make a few **securing stitches**, and then stitch across the quilt top, doing your best to follow the holes you made in the fabric with your practice. But remember, no one is going to notice if your design doesn't exactly match your plan!

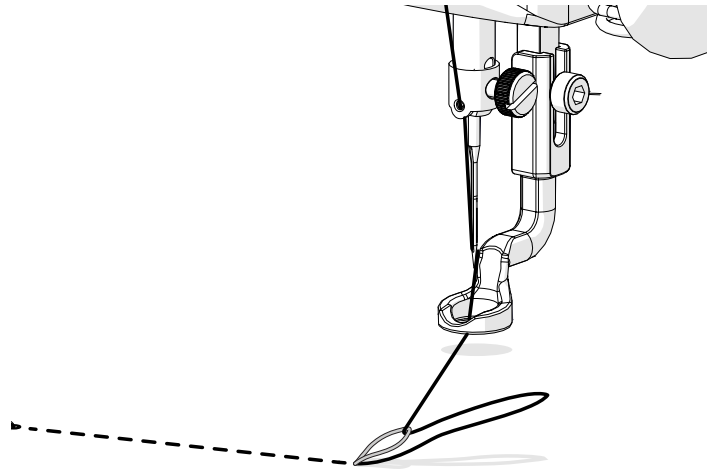


Tip: If you're really struggling to see the holes in the fabric, take a fabric marker (something that will wash off!) and draw your design right on the quilt top.

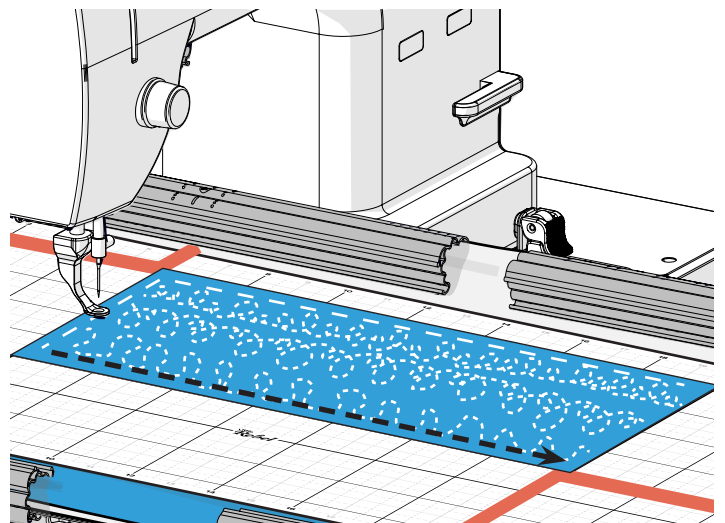
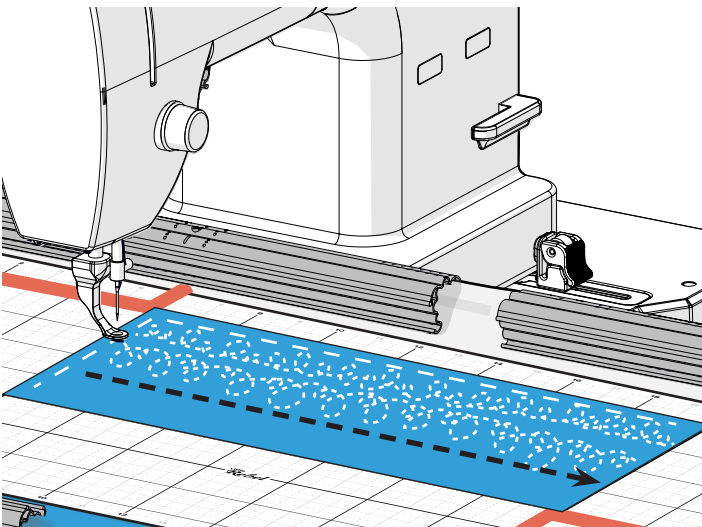
VOCAB REVIEW

Securing Stitches: A few stitches you make close together at the start and end of your designs to make sure the thread cannot come out of your quilt.

- 4 At the end of the quiltable area, make a few more securing stitches, and then pull up your bobbin thread. Follow the steps in "Pulling Up the Bobbin Thread (End)" on page 30.



- 5 Move back to the left and repeat steps 2–4, stitching until you cover the entire quiltable area.



8

Lesson 8: Shifting Your Fabric to the Left

KEY CONCEPT

Like reading a book, you'll be stitching across the quilt top from left to right until you have a full strip of stitching.

Use the practice grid to help you overlap your zones.

Congratulations on stitching your first zone!

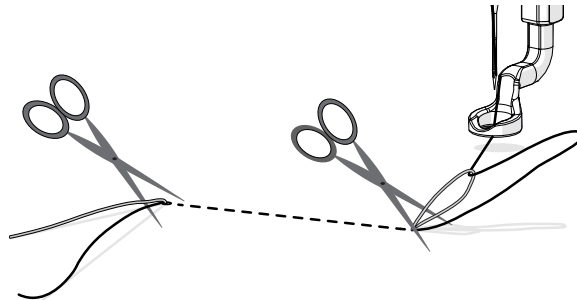
Now that the quiltable area is full, you need to **shift your fabric** to place a new zone in the quiltable area. When you shift your fabric, it's important to keep a little bit of your stitching from the previous zone in the quiltable area. This **overlap** of zones helps you line up your stitching, keeping your lines looking neat.

PRACTICE STEPS

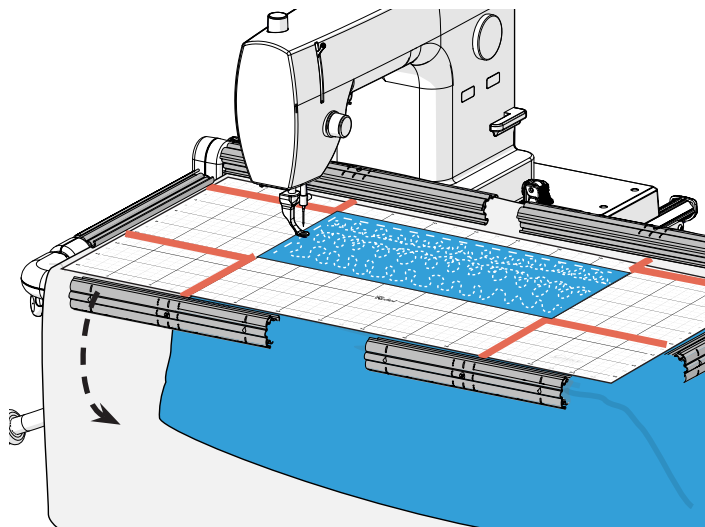
To shift your fabric to the left, you need:

- Practice grid (on your frame for now)
- Clamps (on your frame for now)
- Elastic clips (on your frame for now)
- Scissors
- Penny
- Placement template (or ruler)

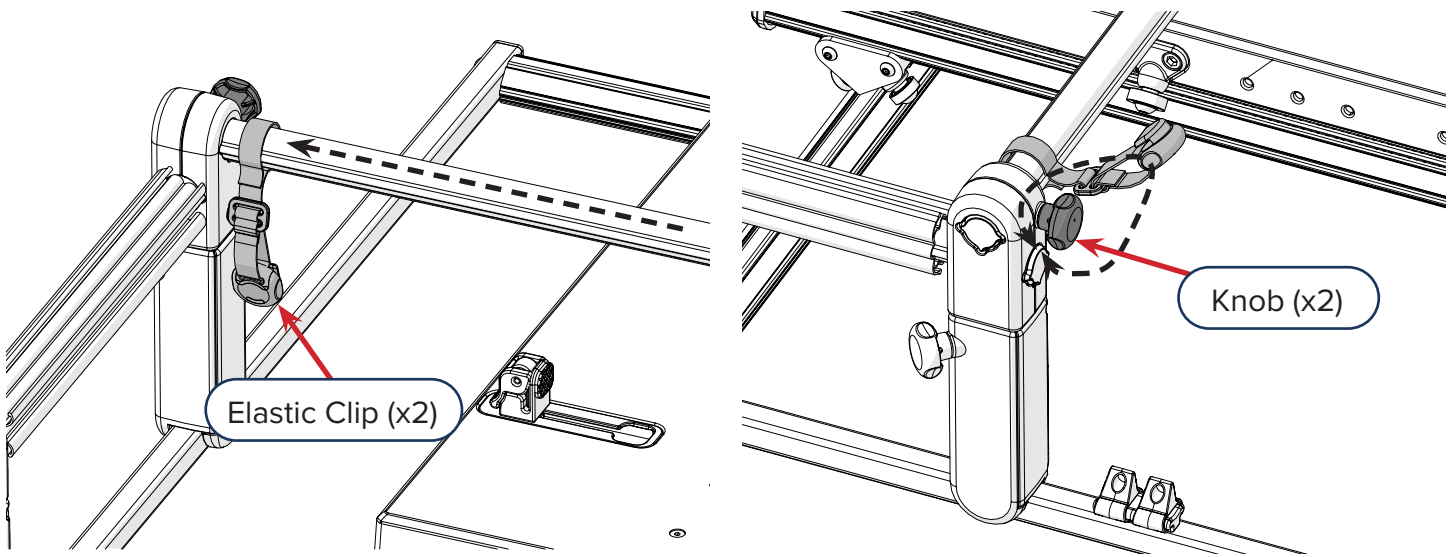
- 1 Make sure you've cut your thread tails and that your machine is free to move. Throughout the process of shifting your fabric, move the machine around to keep it out of your way.



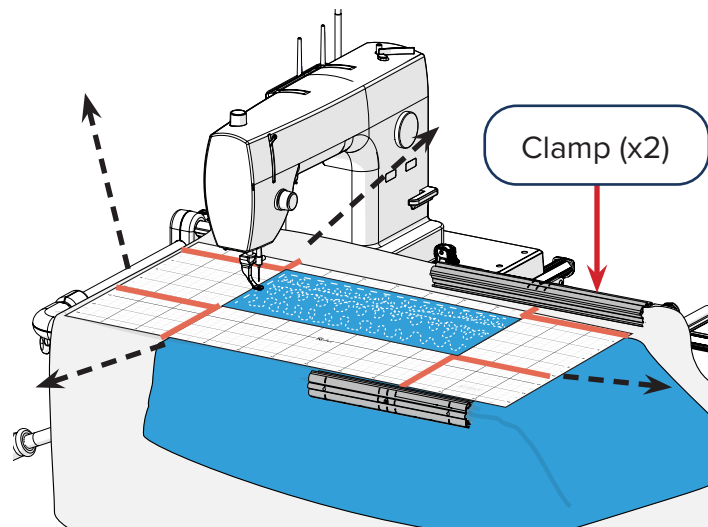
- 2 Take the clips off the fabric, letting the fabric hang free so it can move easily.



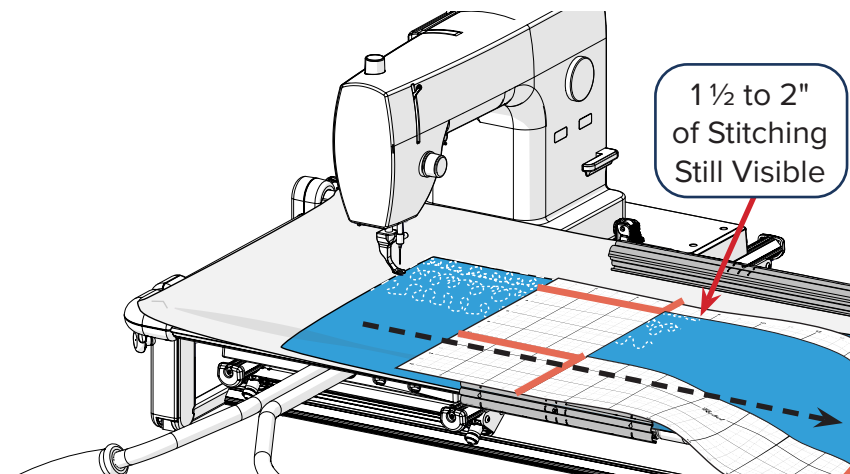
- 3 Slide the **elastic clips** to the end of the take-up rail (one to each side). Tuck them around the **knobs** on the take-up rail holders. This position keeps them out of the way while you move the fabric and clamps in the next steps.



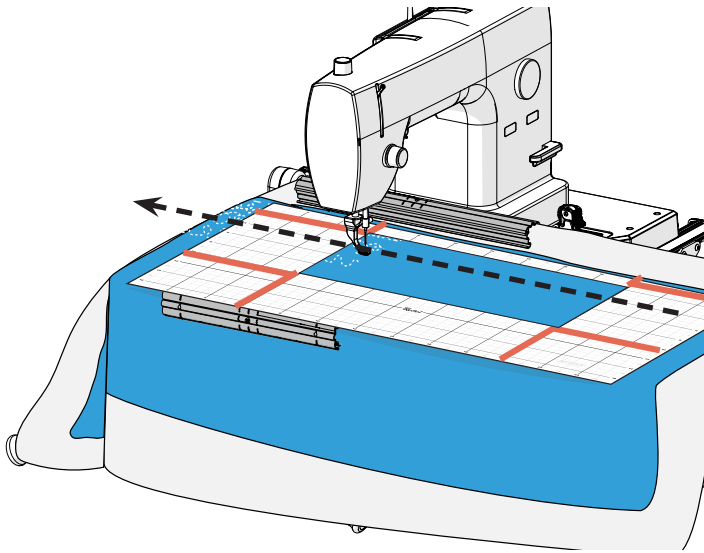
- 4 Take off all the clamps, except the **clamps** on the right of the take-up rail and the front rail.



- 5 Un-pin the practice grid, and then slide it so that the left edge of the window is **1 ½ to 2 inches** away from the edge of your stitching, and then *pin* it in the new position.

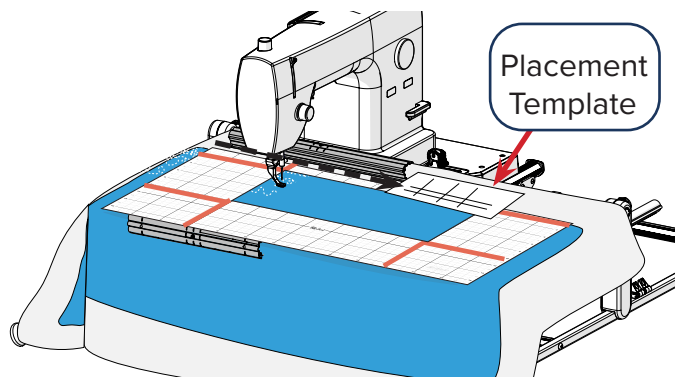


- 6 Shift your quilt sandwich to the left, pulling the fabric over until the practice grid is back in the home position. The clamps will slide along with the fabric, keeping the fabric more square with the frame. You might have to pull on the clamps too, if they aren't sliding cleanly.

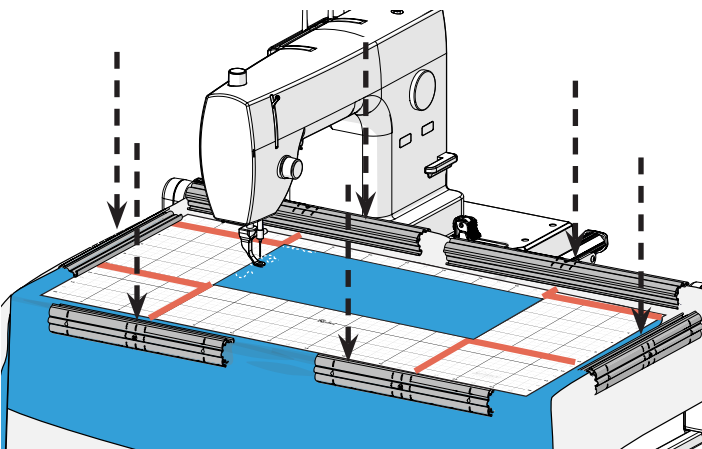


Note: The practice grid might get caught on the machine's foot. Pay attention when it's time to slide the grid under the foot, and help it get under if needed.

- 7 Confirm that the quilt is still square with the frame. Use **the placement template** to check the straightness of the quilt top compared to the take-up rail, and adjust the fabric as needed. Keeping the quilt top straight will help keep your stitching neat, but it's ok if the quilt is a little off. It's difficult to keep a quilt square with the frame when you're moving the fabric, especially when you're just learning this new skill!

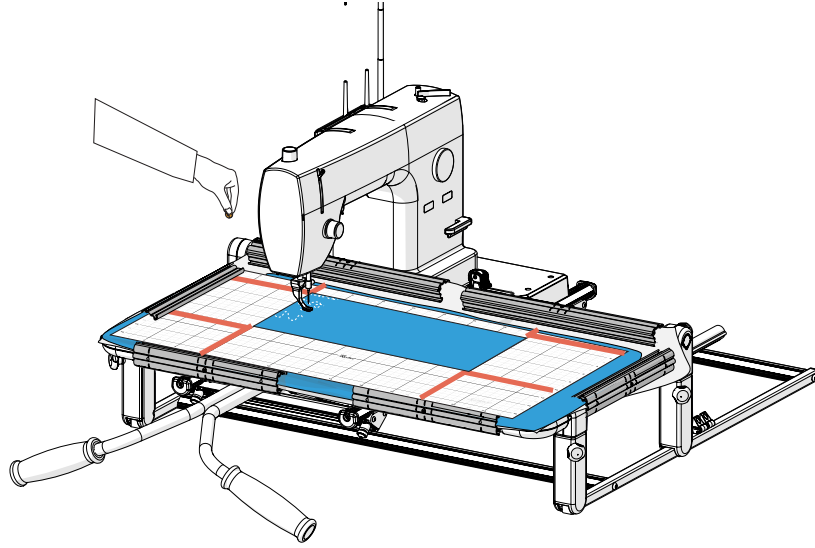


- 8 Reclamp the fabric in its new location. Remember to smooth out any wrinkles as you place the clamps. Pay attention to where you place the clamps. Refer to Lessons 3 & 4 for details about the clamp locations and how the lines show the quiltable area.

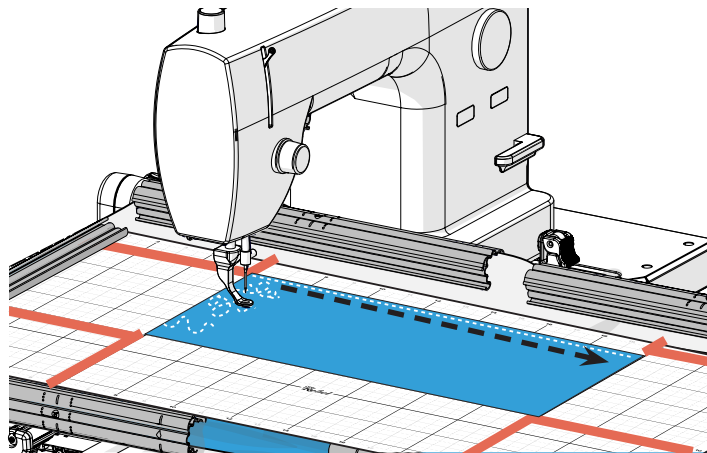


Note: As you gain confidence with your frame, you might decide that you don't want to use the practice grid to keep track of your quiltable area. You can use tape right on your quilt to "draw" the lines. See the *Assembly and Use Instructions* for the Mini-Quilter for more information. Eventually, you might find that you want to just use the lines on the clamps to keep track of things. Thinking about the lines on the clamps now as you use the practice grid helps you get ready to do that.

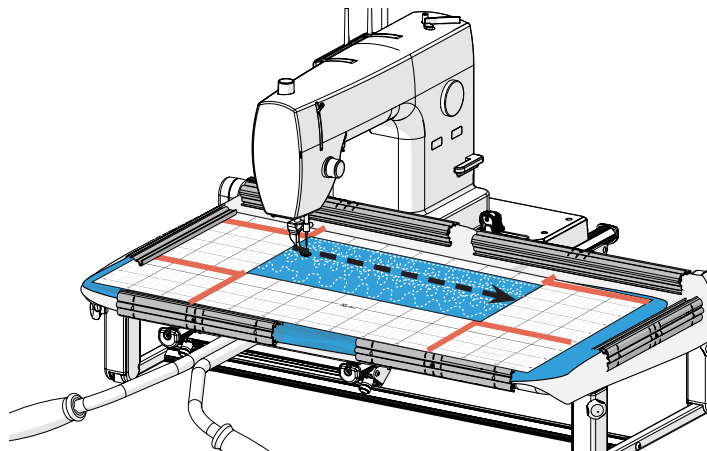
- 9 Use a penny to test your fabric tension again. See page 19 for detailed instructions. Once you're confident the tension is good, use the clips to roll up the draping fabric.



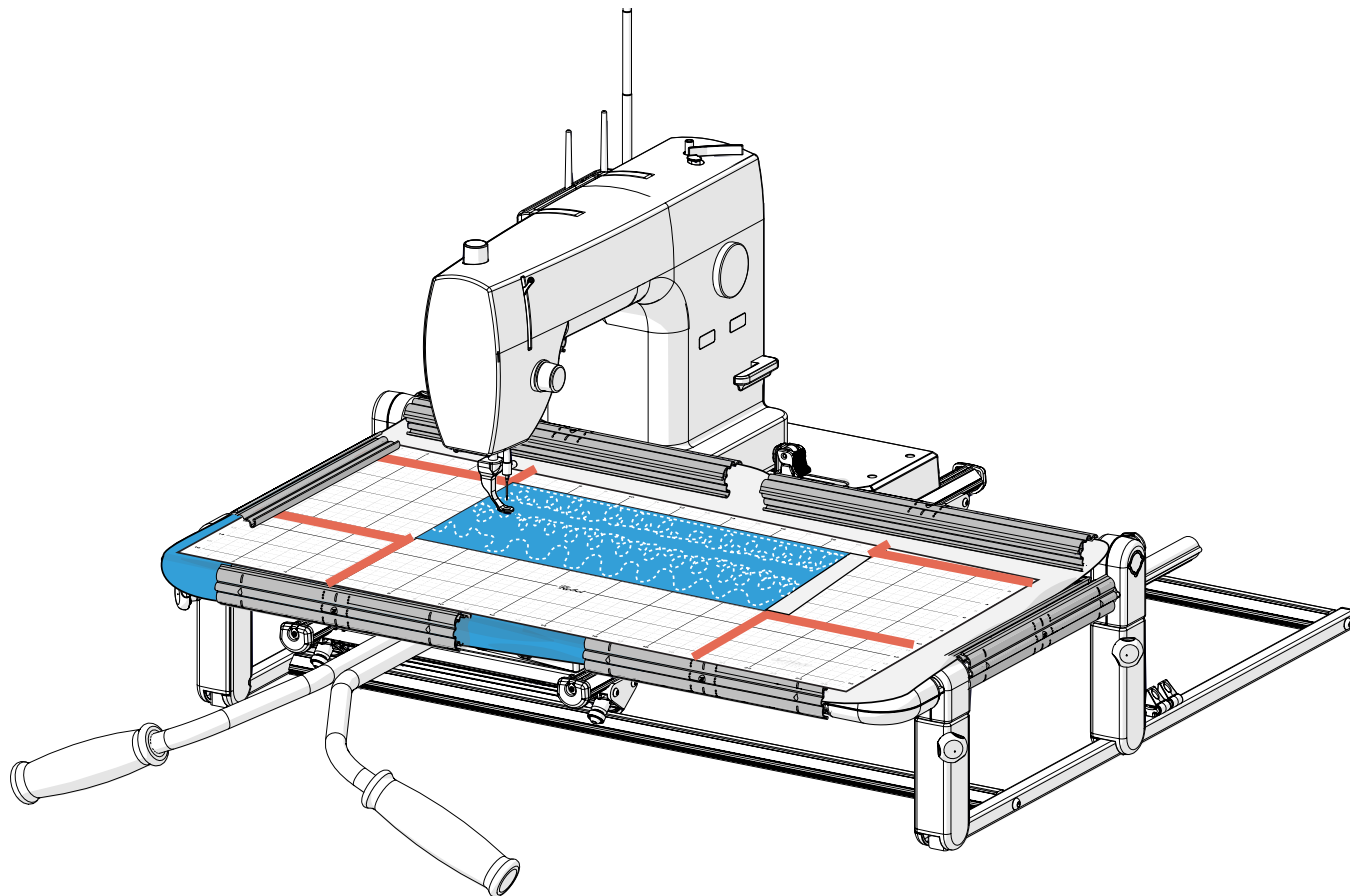
- 10 Tack down any edges of the quilt top you revealed. As you work across the top of the quilt, you'll be tacking down just the top edge, except for the final zone on the strip, where you'll also need to tack down the right edge.



- 11 Quilt your next zone using the same designs as your first zone. Use your paper to help you visualize the designs you planned. Remember to *pull up* your bobbin thread at the *beginning and end* of your stitches. Also remember to use a few *securing stitches* at the start and end.

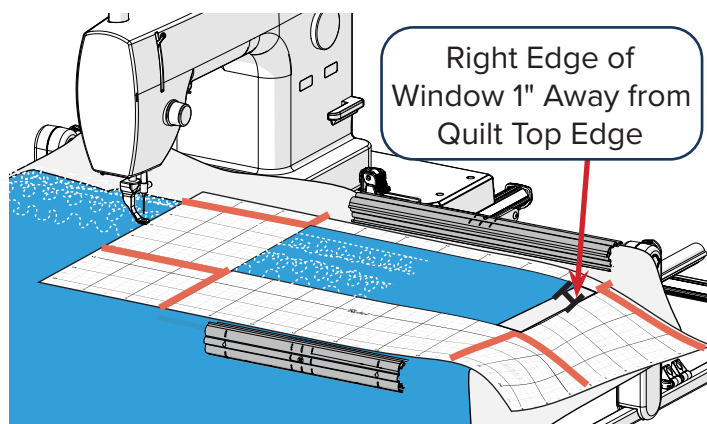


- 12 Repeat steps 1–11 until you have stitched to the right edge of the quilt top. At this point, your quilt top has a complete strip of quilting on it.



Note: As you reach the right edge of the quilt top, it will probably make sense to move the window a shorter distance to the right (step 5).

Instead of moving the grid over until there is only 1 ½ to 2 inches of stitching in the window, position the grid so that the **right edge** of the window is roughly **an inch** past the right corner of the quilt top.



This change makes sure that the quilt stays close enough to the right rail that the grid is supported, while still getting all of the last zone in the quiltable area. Remember, your zones don't have to be the same size!

9

Lesson 9: Shifting Your Fabric to the Top

Congratulations! With one strip of your quilt stitched, you're well on your way to completing this practice project.

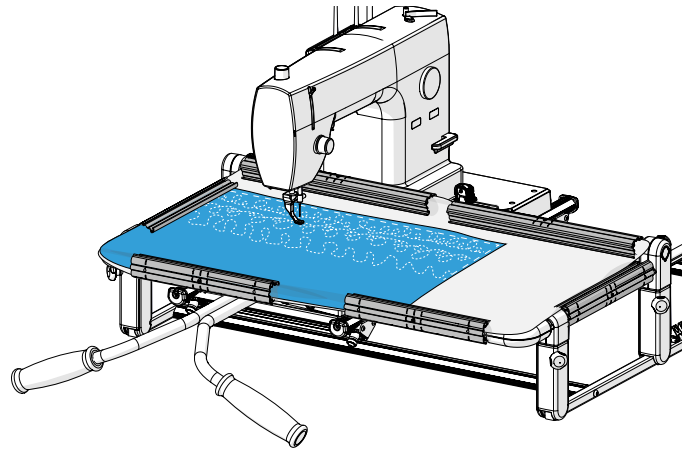
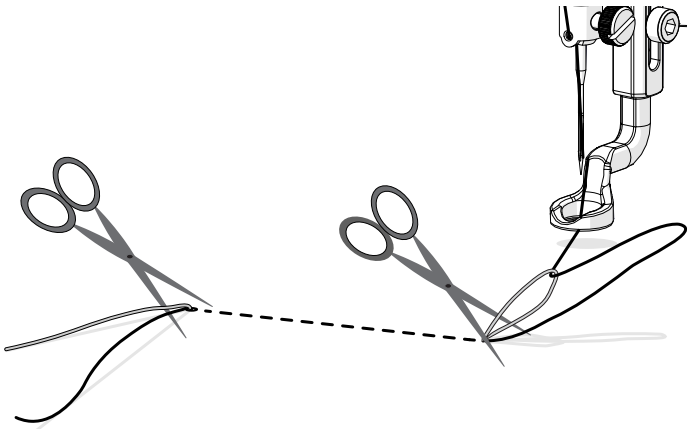
After you reach the right edge of your quilt top, you need to shift your fabric toward the top of the frame to start the next strip of stitching. The process of shifting the fabric to the top is slightly different from shifting to the left.

PRACTICE STEPS

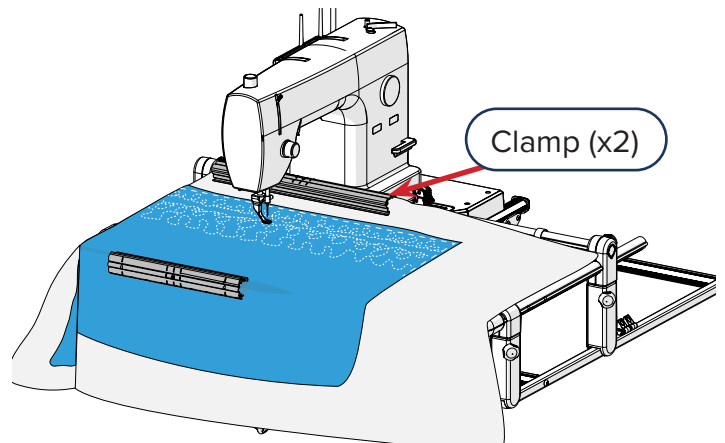
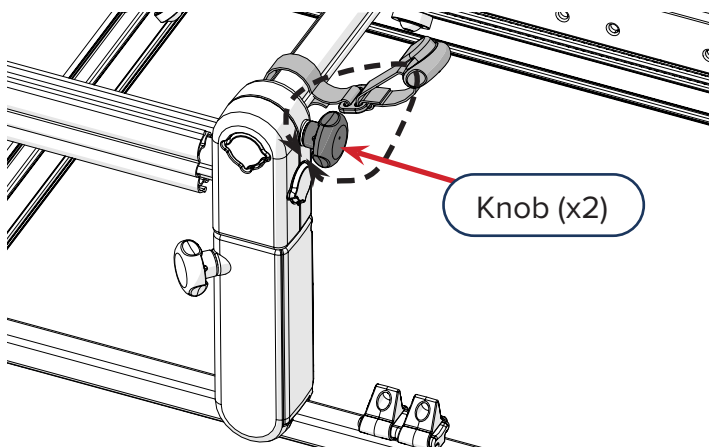
To shift your fabric to the top, you need:

- Practice grid
- Clamps (on your frame for now)
- Elastic clips (on your frame for now)
- Scissors
- Penny
- Placement template (or ruler)

- 1 As before, make sure you've cut your thread tails and that your machine is free to move. Take the practice grid off the frame.



- 2 Take the elastic clips off the fabric, and tuck them around the **knobs** again (see Lesson 8, step 3, on page 34 for details). Take off all the clamps except the **clamps** on the *left* side of the take-up and front rails.



KEY CONCEPT

Once you can't shift to the left anymore, shift your fabric toward the top to move another zone into the quiltable area.

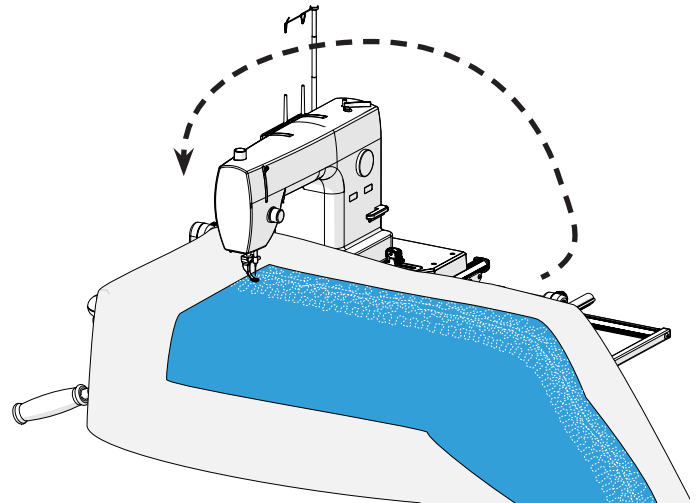
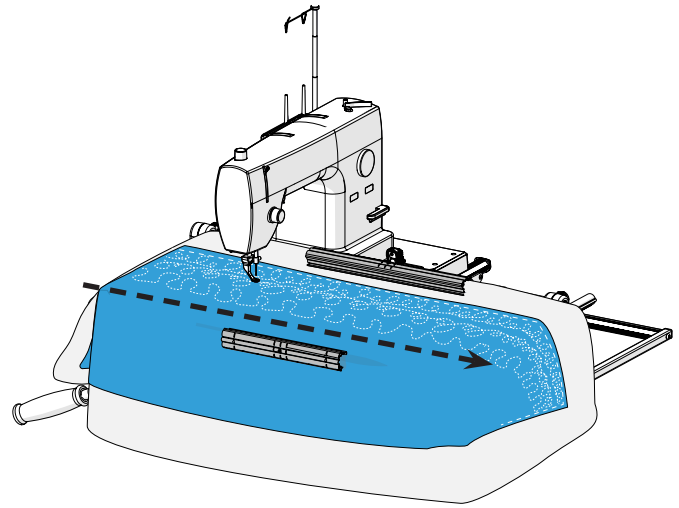
Repeat stitching zones and shifting your fabric until the quilt top is fully quilted.

- 3 Shift your quilt sandwich to the right, pulling the fabric over until the quilt top is back in its original position. **Tip:** If it helps, think of the frame as a really big typewriter, and the motions you're doing in this step as the return of the carriage before you "type" a new line.

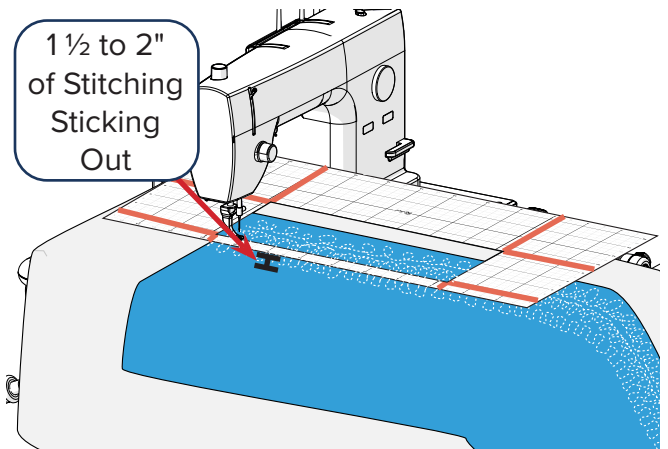
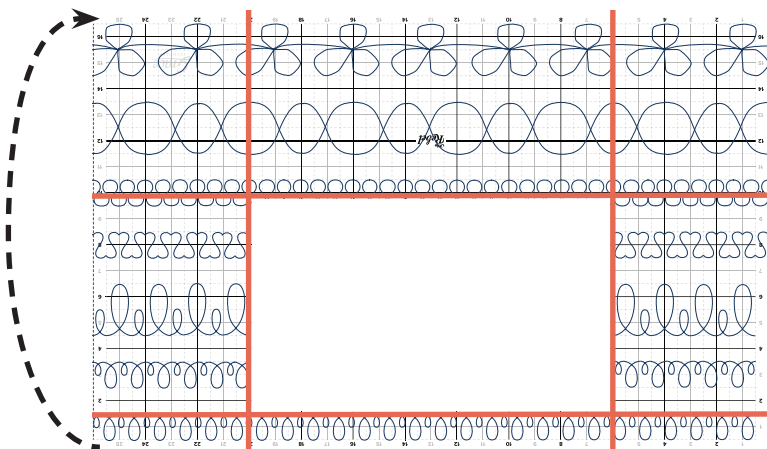
Note: Depending on how many times you shifted your fabric to the left, you might have to shift the fabric to the right further than the clamps can move on the rails. If this happens, do one of the following, based on your priorities and which choice feels better to you:

- Place a clamp on the left side of the take-up and front rails again, and then remove the clamps from the right side. Now you're ready to continue shifting the fabric. Keep shifting the fabric to the right until you get the left side of the quilt back where it was originally. Choose this option if it's important to you that your quilt sandwich stays square with the frame and you don't mind the process taking a little longer.
- Take the remaining clamps off the frame, and then move the fabric back to its original position. Choose this option if it's important to you that the process is fast and you aren't as concerned that the quilt sandwich stays square with the frame.

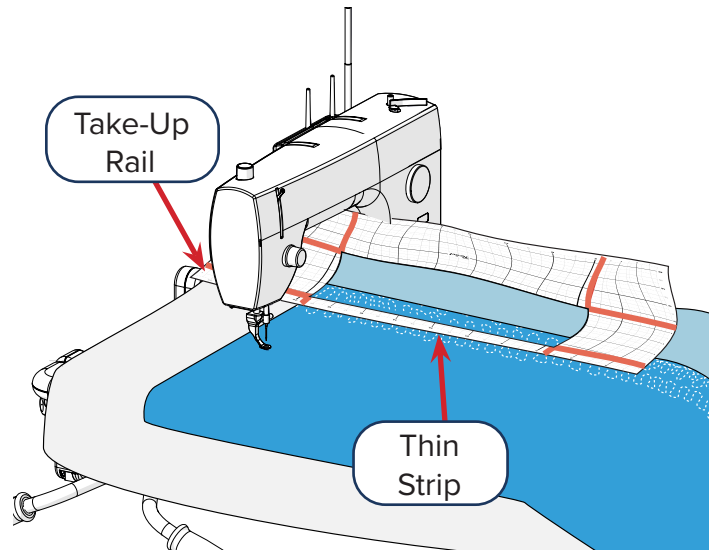
Once the quilt is back in its original position, *remove* the remaining clamps (if you haven't already).



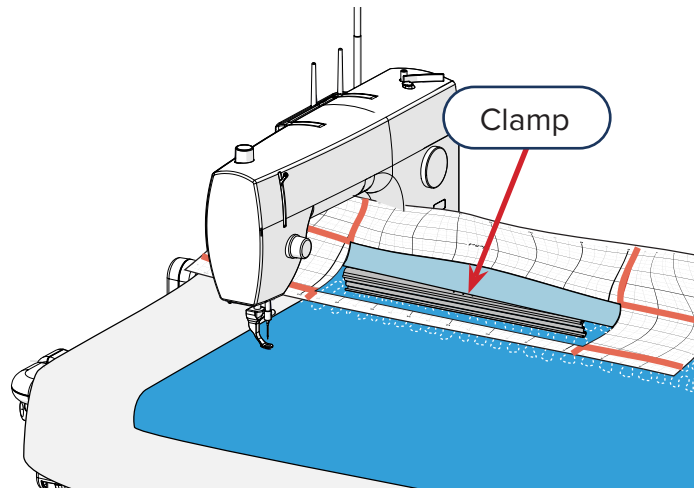
- 4 Rotate the practice grid 180° so that the numbers are upside down and place it on the frame again. Set the grid so that the "top" edge is lined up with the last row of stitching. Then shift it back about **1 ½ to 2 inches** so that the last row sticks out past the "top" edge of the grid.



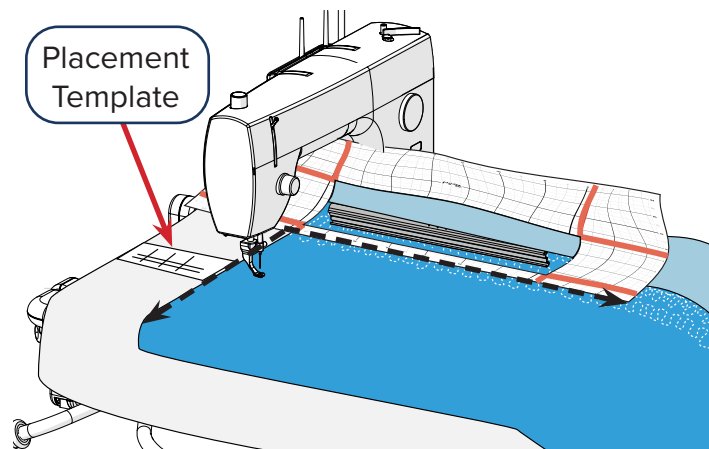
- 5 Pin the practice grid to the fabric once or twice along the **thin strip**, and then shift the fabric until the thin strip is touching the inside of the **take-up rail**, just like the grid does when it's in home position.



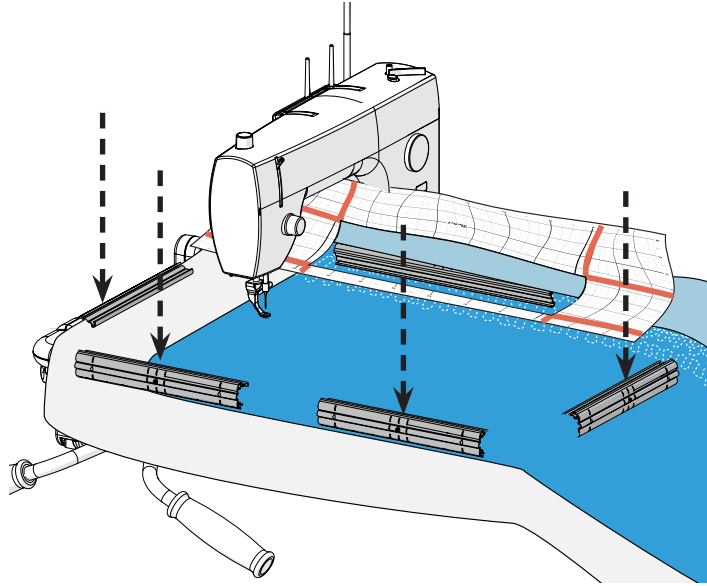
- 6 Place a **clamp** on the take-up rail, inserting it through the window. Having one clamp on the fabric helps to keep the quilt on the frame while you adjust it.



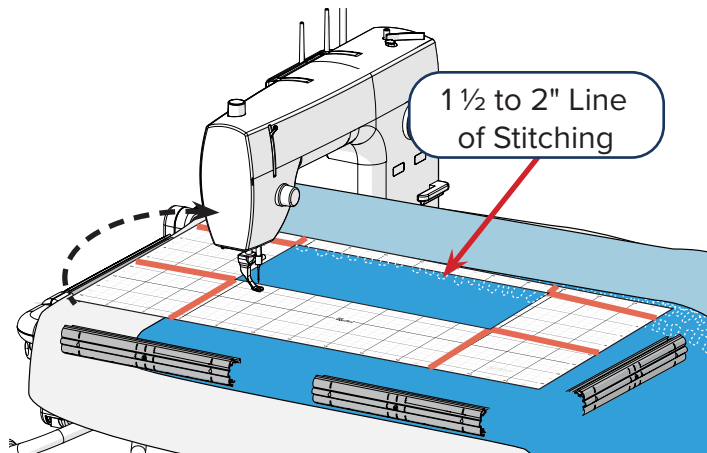
- 7 Make sure the fabric is square with the frame. Use the **placement template** as a guide again, and adjust the fabric's location until it is square. Feel free to remove and replace the clamp as you work, if doing so makes it easier to get the fabric square.



- 8 Replace the clamps on the side rails and the front rail (see Lessons 3 & 4 for details about where the clamps go).

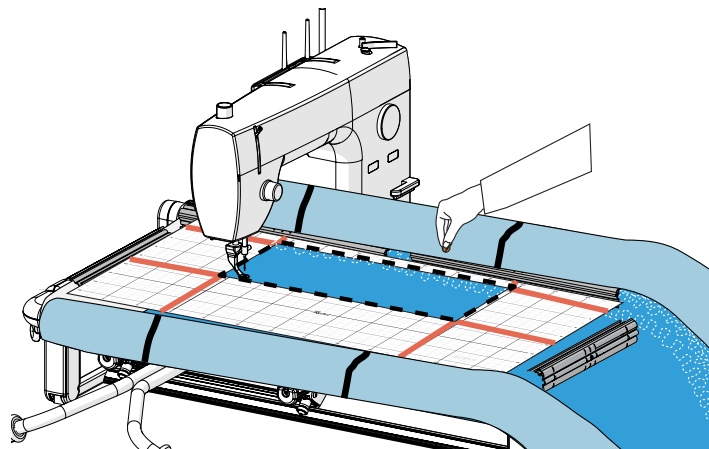


- 9 Unpin the practice grid, and then rotate it back into home position. There is now a **1 ½ to 2 inch line of your stitches visible** in the quiltable area. Remember, you are setting this overlap up so that it is easier to keep your designs neat and without gaps.

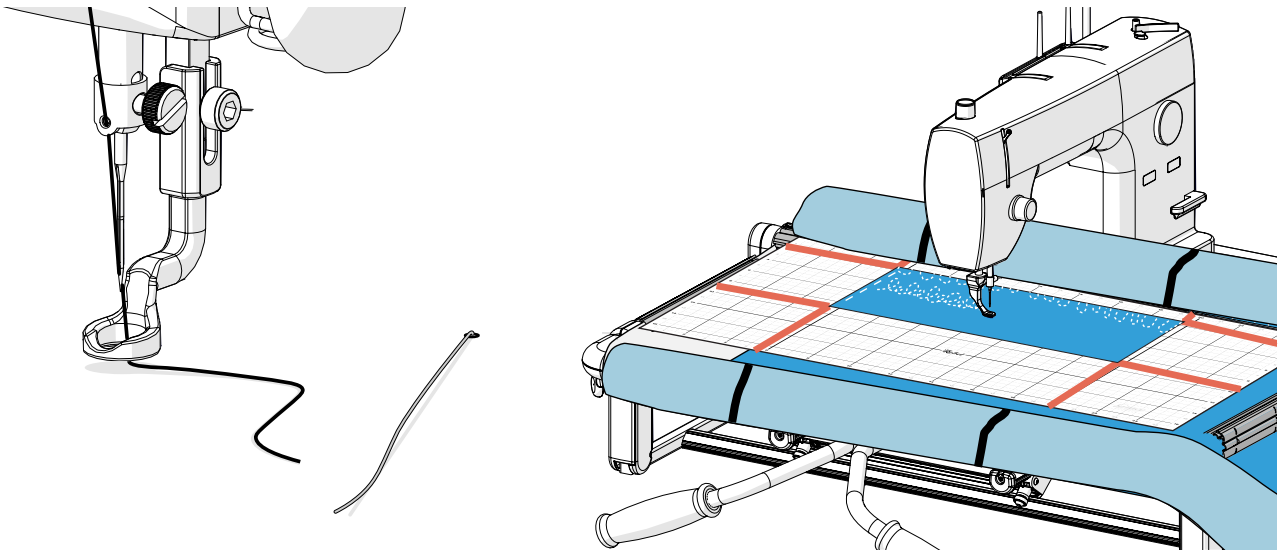


- 10 Set up your next zone in the quiltable area: Place the last two clamps on the take-up rail and use the elastic clips to hold the draping fabric (see Lessons 3 & 4 for details), test your fabric tension (see page 19 for details) and tack down any edges of the quilt top you revealed.

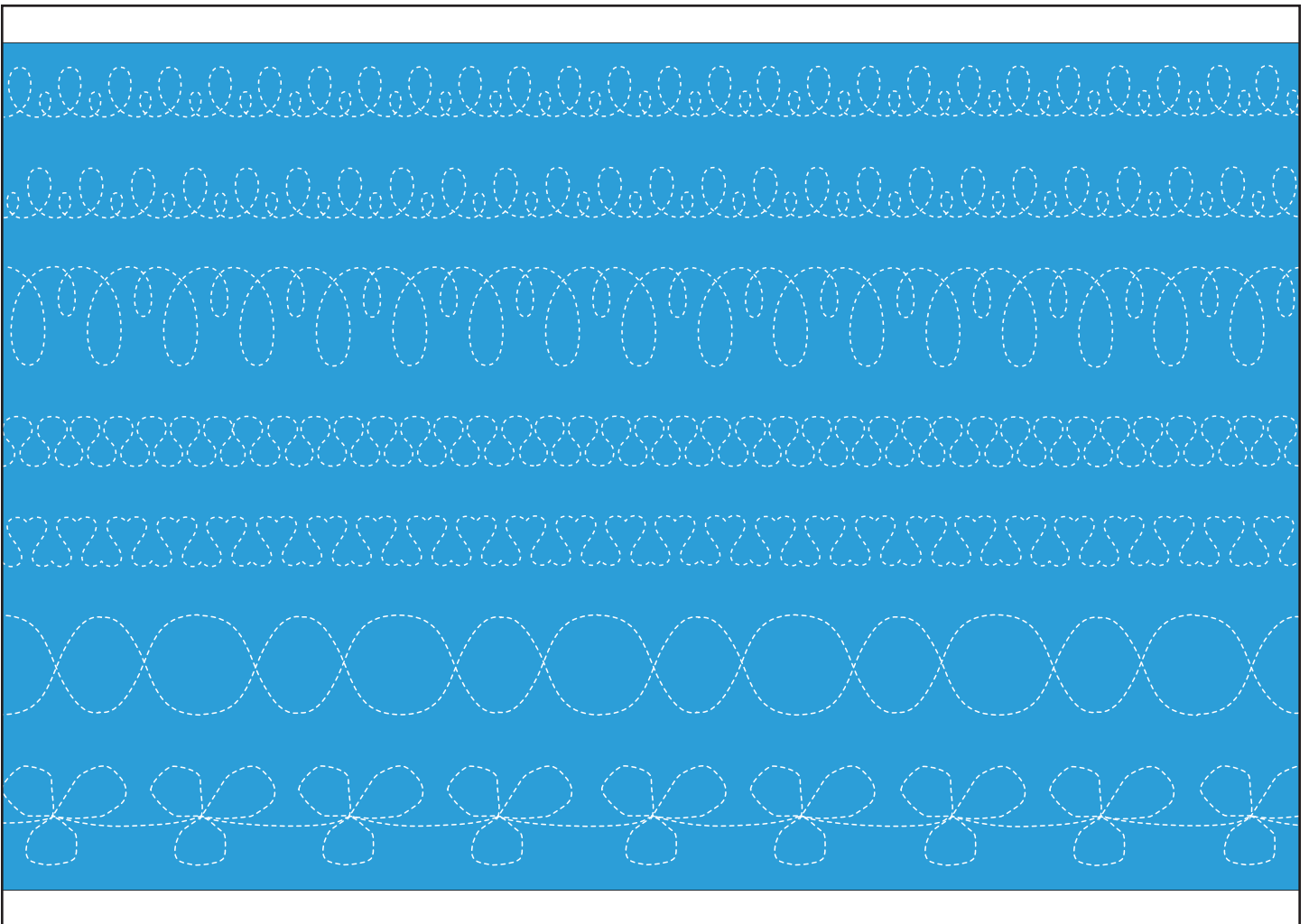
Note: Depending on the zone you might need to tack down the left, right or bottom edges of the quilt top.



- 11 Now you're ready to stitch your next zone. Remember to *pull up* your bobbin thread at the *beginning and end* of your stitches. Also remember to use a few *securing stitches* at the start and end.



- 12 Repeat Lessons 8 & 9 until your quilt top is fully quilted. Remember to take breaks as needed! You are learning a new skill, which can be challenging or even frustrating, even though quilting is a fun hobby. So take your time, and feel free to step away whenever you need to.



Congratulations!

You've finished quilting your first project on your Mini-Quilter frame.

Now you know how to size the backing and batting for your quilts, how to plan your designs, how to place your quilt top, how to find your quiltable area, how to tack down your edges, how to start and end your designs, and how to shift your fabric.

Whew! That's a lot of information you've learned. Good job!

Tip: You put effort into this project. Take the time to bind it and display it!

Go have some quilting fun!

FOCUS ANSWERS

- What size of quilt can you make with a hoop frame?
Any size you want!
- Why do you need to cut your backing and batting larger than your quilt top?
So that the quilt top is where the needle can reach in the hoop while the backing and batting still reach all the way to the rails.
- What is a zone?
A section of your quilt top that is going to be quilted all at once.
- Why is it important to mark your quiltable area before you start to stitch?
If you try to stitch outside of your quiltable area, you can harm your quilt, your machine, or your frame.
- Why should you pull up your bobbin thread at the start and end of your stitching?
To keep the bobbin thread from tangling up underneath your quilt and being stitched in place on accident.

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NOTES

Feel free to use this space to doodle your designs or to take notes while you practice.

NOTES



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