

*We have had an amazing response to a few of the videos we've put out on this series already. So thank you so much for all your positive feedback and comments and subscribing here to Man Sewing. So what we're doing today is we're going to start doing some skills and drills on free motion machine quilting. Today we're working just on straight lines and echo quilting. Let's get started.*

*I have had so much fun creating these tutorials for all of us. And when I say us I mean that. Because this, I hope this doesn't sound conceited, but I believe I was blessed with free motion machine quilting as one of my gifts from God that I really love to do. But I never knew how to explain it. So I have worked and worked to try to create drills that would help us grow as machine quilters, starting from the very basics. So I almost had to work backwards. So it's been really fun. So in the description below we have links to our printables. And for today's straight lines and echo quilting we have three different drills. And I'm going to stitch you through these but let me explain what you're looking at real quick. This first drill is a square in a square style. So just helping us practice more straight lines and changing of direction there. When you see these little triangles those are the arrows that are the direction in which we are quilting. So we're starting and moving our way around. And that's just helping us get dialed in for that motion, right? Ok, we also have a secondary drill here which will be a little more erratic. I like this because it looks like Aztec markings or just easy triangles. This one we're going to really work on switching directions and not spending too much time in the points, ok? Also we're going to be talking a lot about hand speed and tension and density while we're working a little bit too. So hang on for that information. It's coming. I've been reading your comments and I will be answering those questions today. And our last drill is kind of an echo quilting into another motif or same motif style drill that we're working on. And I'm going to teach you how to use your presser foot as your marking guide. A quick mention, when we're doing free motion machine quilting our feed dogs are down. So we're in control of all of our stitch length and the quality of the stitch. A lot of times we can have some issues because as we move our quilt, we're moving the tip of the needle while we're sewing. And that can cause thread breakage, needle breakage, stitch skipping, some shredded thread, some funky loops on the back. And so we've also created this cool compass style printable that you can look at and have a quick tip we've already created and designed and is uploaded for you. So you can check that out that really explains a lot more about what this motion means. So I might be referring to the compass so you may need to check that out.*

*So let's back up a little bit and start talking about breaking down these drills as we get started. So we're going to start on our square in a square drill. Let me show you what that looks like*

here. Now as I was working on this, you can even see, and we're looking at the bottom of the project. I've flipped this over so you can see the stitches a little bit better. And as we're doing this, you can see where my start and stop was there. And then basically just a following of a square in a square. It's a very simple design but it's a nice filler. We can do a lot with it. So let me show you what that looks like.

Now as I said, I have my feed dogs down. I have a sew slip mat on the bed of my machine. The supreme slider is also a nice way to make this really nice and slippery here. When we're free motion quilting we're normally starting in the middle of a project but for now we're just going to start over here on the edge because this is our practice. And we never practice on our best quilts. We only practice on samples like this, ok? And then one of the things we can do is I'm going to drop my presser foot and I'm holding onto the thread that's coming out of the eye of the needle. I'm going to lower this one stroke and bring it back up to the top. And then I can usually, I can see my little thread tail right now. But I can also take and kind of floss this underneath and get to my bobbin thread. I just used my thread cutter so it's very short. It didn't pull through. So let's talk about that, right? What I'm hearing from all of you is you love the way that I explain multiple ways to do this. So let's say you're using a thread cutter and you have a tiny little thread tail, the other thing you can do is just, let me get my foot control here, take a few stitches in place to lock it right in and then we can begin our stitching, ok? One of the things I always like to do is get this thread out of my way early on because it's just distracting mentally. Now for our straight line quilting, one of the things you're going to notice is this is a great way to practice your rhythm or your hand control. So one of the questions, what happens for small stitches, what happens for big stitches. Small stitches happen when the machine is running way faster than your hands. Big stitches happen when your hands are moving way faster than the machine. So this is a great place to practice that rhythm. So I'm just going to kind of stitch to the back of the machine a little bit. Switch at 90° and come down. Switch at 90°. And with so much of our free motion machine quilting, learning to switch directions is really key because we want to be able to keep our rhythm the same in all directions. And I'll tell you there's almost nothing harder than trying to talk and free motion machine quilt. You can even hear the rhythm of my machine changing as I'm trying to think of what to say next. But it's just a real simple drill, side to side. I'm not even looking really at the rest of the motif. I'm just trying to make my straight lines. These work great in borders or on big block quilts. You want to be able to see your stitches forming. I will be about a 2 ½ inch, or a 2 ½ millimeter stitch length if I was really looking at it. So that's easy. That's the first drill. Straight line on straight line. Square in a square if you want to call it. And it's so fun I don't want to stop. But let's get into those triangle drills, right?

*I'm just going to leave my machine set up here and bring you over to some of the triangles. I think they're in my sample here somewhere. Oh yes, right here I was starting to play with them. And the triangle is really fun. In the triangle unlike my square on a square, I'm going to try not to cross over my thread so I'm keeping more of an open pattern. But the triangle is great for switching directions. Now if you look really close down in here and I'm not sure we can bring the cameras in that close or not but that little point, that little knot, remember we're looking at the backside of the project. What happens in our corners is we often take a lot of stitches in a corner. And a lot of stitches will cause a little ball of thread. It doesn't mean we're having tension problems on the sewing machine. It just means we're having rhythm problems with our motion. So if you can just do a stitch or two in the corner before you change directions you're going to find the back of your project looks terrific as well. And I also want to point out something because we're talking about tensions and we're talking about some of this, especially on the back of the quilt. I purposefully left this in the project but this was an accident I did. What this is, this orange thread was from my needle. And what happens is your presser foot controls the open and close of your tension disks. So right here, this is an example, and it happens a lot with free motion machine quilting, because it's hard to see with that hopping presser foot if the foot is down or up. So this time I started with my foot up, my tension was wide open. And I've created a caterpillar on the back of my quilt. So you'll hear it happening. It sounds terrible like somebody just dropped a bag of marbles in your machine, right? Don't panic. A lot of times you're going to have to cut that out of your stitch plate and everything. But the reason it happened is you started quilting with your foot in the up position. So we always check to make sure it's down. I wanted to point that out for you real quick. Now when we're doing our triangle drill, let me show you here on our worksheets as well. As we're working through our triangles I like trying to keep an equal space between the lines of stitching as I'm going around. And you can also follow your little lines here.*

*Another great way to practice some of this stuff is take those printables, print them on cardstock and just take a pencil and draw over them, over and over. Because the more you draw on top of something the more we're ingraining that rhythm to our free motion machine mechanics as well. So I'm going to grab my chair so I can see a little bit better here. Get myself adjusted because body mechanics really count. And I hope you're not doing this at home this way. Standing, I mean. This is much more comfortable seated. Ok so for our triangles now I'm just going to pretend that that was a triangle. I'm going to come out of my point here. Switching directions. Trying not to have too many stitches in one corner. The triangles are great because you can cover a distance as well. I like to have different size triangles, big and small. If you're going to be doing straight line motif, do your best to keep your lines as straight as possible. And try not to*

cross those stitches. You saw some big stitches there so I started to move my hands fast. Let me show you if I, see if I can do that again. So big stitches come from fast moving hands. Small stitches come from slow moving hands. It looks like a straight line I bet to you. We've got these awesome new cameras set up on our machine so hopefully you can really see what I'm doing here. I'm so excited about this today. So there's your triangle drill. And doing this often and doing this as practice is really nice. So you should be warming up your machine quilting every time before you start on your real quilt project because you don't want to just start up. I even warmed up this morning before we started filming. So it's really important to be warming up and getting practiced out as well.

Now let me show you this last drill that I created. And it's basically just a plus sign or a cross. But what I want to show you is echo quilting. And we're going to start focusing on how we're going to mark out for echo quilting. I'm not much of a quilt marking kind of guy because then I get nervous about what I'm doing. So we're just going to follow the first set of stitches we make, ok? This is what it looks like on the sample here. There's that thread issue we had awhile ago, right? So here it is and it actually makes for a neat design. But I also want to point out to you that when we're machine quilting we can do a lot with what I want to call the, the, the crushing of the quilt and loft or the pucker of the quilt. So by doing some of this echo quilting, look what happens here by doing a square and then just doing some of these echo quilting lines around it. So I love the way that the texture happens. And I want to point out something else. And again I'm so excited about all this information I can share with you all. The more densely quilted areas the more the color of the thread starts to incorporate itself into the color of the quilt as well. So this looks lighter here and darker here because of the way I'm playing with my thread colors. So you can use that to your advantage as well. And the last thing I'll point out before we get right into the, the practice of it here, is here is that same echo style quilting and then just filling in some of the squares as well. So the things I love about machine quilting are getting that loft and that crush working together. Something that I am always trying to achieve. So let me see if I can do you something like a square.

Now as I'm sitting down getting ready to do this echo quilting for you, I feel like with echo quilting it really is important to try to be as accurate as possible. It really shows the best. So you see I've slipped into my Machinger's Gloves. I love these because these give me traction on the top of the quilt and I don't have to squeeze real hard so I don't fatigue. And if you need any of these supplies they're all just in the, the link in the description below for you. And so with our cross we're going to start with, let just kind of come down a ways. And basically we're doing like a square within a square style drill. And in a second what I want to point out to you, and I guess

*I could have just done it right there, is what I'm actually starting to look at is the edge of my foot along that stitch line. So the edge of the foot right along the line I had already created in my stitching, right? And so if I want to come around here to top that off, now what I a lot of times I'll do is I'm looking at the hole where the needle's going through or maybe half of the foot. Let's take another stitch over. So I'm looking at about half of the foot. And I'm not looking at my stitching, I'm looking at where my edge of my foot is coming into relationship with the original lines I set. You'll notice my pace has slowed down. But you can also see how accurate that makes it so you're not looking at what you're doing, you're looking at what you did. Nothing like the pressure of quilting live here for you, right? And in something like this you can also come back around because we don't want to quilt ourselves into a corner and go the opposite direction. The reason we quilt from the centers out is to keep the loft of the batting and the loft of the fiber of the quilt moving from the center out so we don't get as many puckers. And I know what you're saying, you're saying, Sure that's easy enough Rob if you're doing it on a small project, but what if you're doing it on a big project? So in just a second after I finish showing you how I would now put in this square, we're putting in the beast under the machine. And I'm going to show you what's going on. But watch me put this square in here. And now I'm alternating with that same echo quilting creating a secondary motif for you. And you can just only imagine what's going to happen from here. I can start to build the next cross or the next plus. And let me point out real quick, I'm stopping because look at this hand. I don't know if you were watching this hand at all very closely. But as I was quilting I wasn't adjusting my hand. So I never move my hands or never lift my hands off the quilt while the needle is moving. But I was at a point where I had no control and you could actually see my stitches were going downhill quality wise. So I need to put my hands back to where I can really see what I'm doing and then I can continue on my stitching. So don't stitch yourself to the point where you have to way too far through your machine or you're all over the place because if you do that you're going to lose control and it's all about the finesse of our stitch. And the best part about free motion machine quilting everybody is we're all in this together, right? And I truly believe that we improve with each and every stitch we do.*

*Now let me point this out. Let me clear off the deck. The challenge when I first started doing these tutorials on free motion machine quilting and everybody is right, all of us educators usually do it on a small sample like you just saw because it's easy to manipulate. So we have created this giant sampler quilt for you. And I apologize, I don't have a pattern yet. It's just blocks from a bunch of the tutorials we've already released like Slice a Block and Three Dudes and those kinds of things. But I've been doing all my quilting on my Baby Lock Jane at home. So it's just a little larger than a standard machine but it's not a big longarm machine by any matter. And what*

*I wanted to point out real quick, I have had the blessings of working with Angela Walters a few different times. And one of the best pieces of advice she's ever given me as a machine quilter was, Rob don't look at the entire project. Don't get overwhelmed by the whole quilt. Just look at it in one section at a time. So we're going to do that just now for you. I'm going to show you that I can quilt this big quilt just as easy as I can quilt a small sample.*

*One of the things I've done is I've put these bicycle clips around the girth of the quilt. And that's going to slide up inside the machine. Now if you're using a real small machine you might find the bicycle clips actually add a little bit too much meat here. So you don't need them but it really helps me keep the backing from getting tight underneath, ok? And I'm going to work myself around here a little bit so I'm just going to keep rolling that up. And I just want to show you. Let's say we're going to focus down here on this triangle right now, ok? I am only thinking about this triangle. I don't care about what's going on on the rest of the quilt. My hands are just like they would be if I was doing the real project. You heard me use my thread cutter so I'm not going to be able to bring that thread tail to the top so I've got to take a couple stitches down right here to lock it down. And then I'm just going to move myself out of the way. And I'm not trying to move the whole quilt, I'm just trying to move enough to be able to stitch in this area. So if I need to get myself a little fluffed up. I might need to bring some of the meat around here. But I'm just working on this area. We're just going to do some nice straight line quilting in this triangle. And by locking in the batting in the center of the triangle it's going to create a little extra loft for me. Right now I'm using actually my fingertips for a lot of the control and movement. Looking at the edge of my foot along the stitching that was created. And I'm just going to work this quilt one small section at a time until the whole thing is quilted. But I never have to worry about what I'm doing for everything, I just have to worry about what I'm working on in each little section. Now what's really fun is I love to lay down straight lines and you can probably see, next to some swirl lines and some swoops and things. So coming up real soon for you we're going to do a whole other series of tutorials based on swoops and swirls and circles and all kinds of fun with that. And as always we love the feedback. We love the comments and we love the fact that you're following along right here at Man Sewing.*