

I am having so much fun creating these free motion machine quilting tutorials and these skills and drills and sets. It is an absolute blast trying to think backwards from what I've been doing naturally for so many years to create in the simple step by step process so today we're doing swoops and swirls. I bet you're dying to get started.

Now our goal with these tutorials is to help all of us that are new at free motion machine quilting kind of walk through the process of learning how some of the basic shapes turn into awesome motifs down the road. A couple things I want to point out and recommend. I love this book by Angela Walters. It's loaded with all kinds of great motif and design ideas. But it really talks about taking your quilt and just looking at it one piece at a time. So I'm trying to think that way when I'm trying to break down swoops and swirls one piece at a time. If you drop down into the description or the link below we have these printables for you as well as you can get your supplies there if you need, like your sew slip mat for your machine. Maybe your Machinger's gloves that I wear all the time. I love these things for grip. So we're starting on a basic, it's like a puzzle piece. Or it's more of a like a stippling but it's wide open. But it's going to help us kind of tipping from a straight line into a curved line, ok? And I'm going to walk you into the swoops I'm calling them. And then from the swoops we're going to start to break ourselves into kind of a pointed or a, what could also become a flame style shape and we're going to work through those but we're not quite going that far today. And as a quick reminder, we have a quick tip that points out how to use your free motion machine compass if you're having problems with your skip stitches or shredded threads or broken needles, those kinds of things. We've got an awesome quick tip that will give you a bunch of info on how to control your body mechanics a little bit better.

Ok before we get started here on the sandwich or the little sample we're going to practice on, we never practice on the real quilts, right? We always practice on a little sample and we always warm up before we get started. I want to point out some of the bad before we point out some of the good. Look at this real closely here. Now we're on the back of the project right now so you're looking at the bobbin thread. This orange was from my needle and I left it there on purpose because that is what happens if we begin free motion machine quilting and our presser foot is up. The presser foot controls the open and close of your tension disks. And it's really hard to tell with a hopping foot, check this out on the machine. This is a spring loaded hopping foot, right? So when it's up versus down, it's very hard to see when the quilt is on. So if you get a bunch of crazy noise like loose marbles in your machine, you might have to cut this out. You wouldn't normally want to leave that but I just wanted to leave that to point out the difference between poor tension and no tension. So that's no tension. Now what we're going to do again, we're

going to start on this basic puzzle piece shape practicing kind of our moving from side to side. Kind of our fluid water style motion, right? And then we're going to go into some swirls and then we're going to start putting some sharp points on those swirls. Those are the three skills we want to work on today.

Now I have my feed dogs down because I am in free motion mode. I have my spring motion foot on. I'm going to sit down so I'm a little bit more comfortable here. And we're going to get ourselves started. Normally you'd be starting in the middle of your project as I am here today. I've got my presser foot down and I want to bring the bobbin thread up. So I'm going to take a single stroke by hand or if you have like a push button you can do that with. And then what I do is I lift my presser foot back up and I take my thread and I literally floss it under the foot like that. And that brings up both thread tails. If I had been using a thread cutter I would have such a small tail I wouldn't be able to bring that up so I just take a few stitches in place. But we're just going to lock this in real quick. And then I'm just going to begin curving out of here. And I want to cut this thread because it drives me crazy visually. And the other thing I want to point out is when we're doing our swirls or if we have a very large project we want to kind of think about our start and stop points. It's very difficult to start and stop in the middle of an arc and have it look good. And the bigger the quilt, when we restart the more the quilt wants to shift and the stitches can get out of sync. So I'm kind of up in the arc and as a start I have to take a few small stitches to make sure I'm on target. And you'll hopefully be able to see that in the camera.

So now with our swirls or our puzzle pieces we're just working on not actually staying in a straight line so almost more of a circular line. And I'm just going left to right. And I'm coming around. Now some of the questions we get is what about stitch length? Well when you're in free motion your stitch length is controlled by the movement of your hands. So if I'm getting really tiny little stitches like I'm doing right now, my machine is moving way too fast and my hands are moving way too slow. And if I get, oop, I'm going to go slow with the machine and move my hands really fast, I'm going to get these giant stitches that won't even lock in. See those big giant stitches. So that means that my hands are moving too fast. So now back to our drill. I just wanted to point that out. We're going to take our motion and just side to side. It's also stippling, right? But it's more organized than that. And the reason I want you to get organized on that is you'll notice maybe even on my fingers I'm doing a lot of my control with my finger tips. And I'm just looking at the equal distance between the stitching. This is a very easy one to start with. Now what happens though, I'm going to start working my way to the top.

And we're going to go right into our swirls drills. Because every now and again I'm going to come around a little too far and now I'm in this spot right here. And instead of doing a sharp point out, we're going towards the sharp points in a little while. But right now I'm going to arc around and arc back around. And then like in my straight line drills I'm just following the line. And a lot of times then I'll wrap it around one time. So say now look it's like a spiral. And then I'll come back out here and I'll start to do it all over again. One of the things I've always felt was important with machine quilting is even if it's a mistake, make it look intentional so that you're making it so that it happens over and over again. You can tell that it's very hard for me to talk and machine quilt at the same time. And it's really hard for me personally to stay within a motif. So this has been a really fun exercise. So curving it around. You can make big ones and small ones. Now from this point on, once you master that kind of comma shape or that swirl, let's work our way over to another section. And we're going to start to put in those flames, right?

So as I come around, I shouldn't say flames, at least some sharp points. But as I come around this time I'm going to stop at the point and then I'm going to arch it back around. So that is not a rounded tip at all. That's comes in, comes again and stops. Now when we're doing our corners we want to make sure we don't spend too much time in the corner because what it will often do is it make a real big ball of thread on the back of the project. So you want to be able to with your free motion both be able to go rounded and back around. As well as to come out and do sharp points so that you can continue to build on all styles and different motifs just using the basic swoop or swirl. And then that pointed line of course is going to go into flames if we want to. And then we're going to break those down for you in a little bit longer. What I really enjoy doing is actually doing combinations of both. The swirls with the sharp points included like this one right here. Oh I'm having so much fun. Now I could do this all day long on this little sample. And I really suggest you do it until you're really comfortable with it. But what I also want to show you really quick here is one of the ways we can do this on our bigger quilts because that was the challenge. This is where I started this whole series of tutorials. Is what do you do when you've got a ginormous quilt? And like I said with Angela. She wants us to focus on just one small section at a time.

And right now because I'm over towards the smaller edge of the quilt, even though I have these cool bicycle clips holding the meat of the quilt wrapped up out of the way, I don't need to put this underneath the quilt right now because I'm getting closer to the edge. So I'm just going to bring my quilt around this way. This would be what we call the fluff and stuff method. So I have a little bit of this in here fluffed in location. And I'm just going to work back to where I was quilting. Because we want to quilt from the middle outward. That pushes all the batting and the loft back

out, ok? Now I did use my thread cutter just a moment ago so I won't have the opportunity to bring that, that stitch up. But look what I'm going to do here I'm just going to focus in here on these, maybe this one triangle shape. Maybe I'll continue to carry it through. I'm not worried about the whole quilt right now. I'm just thinking about what I'm going to do for this one motif. And I'm going to start where I stopped before. Take a few stitches. I want to double check to make sure that presser foot is down because I don't want a caterpillar on the back of my project. And then I'm going to immediately come out of here into a nice arcing swirl. I'm going to stop at that point because then I can cut my threads. And remember I said it's hard to get a good start and stop point. So instead of making this round, this is going to be one of those hooks. Coming back out. See how nice that looks. Now I can either continue to hook so that my motif remains consistent. Coming down off of the bottom coming to my hook. Back around. Coming down to the bottom, up to my hook. Back around. But I can also bring around the soft side of it this way. And maybe I can do myself one of my swirls. Follow that hook, back around with another hook or two because I want to get myself where I can do another swirl. So there's nothing wrong with mixing your motifs as you work.

So you can see how easy free motion machine quilting can be even on a big project if you'll just take the time and focus on the basic elements of your design and your motif as well as just look at one small section of your quilt at a time, not worry about the overall project. I want to remind to please bounce below into the description. Print out these skills and drills printables. They're there for you to use. You can even take a pencil and draw across the top to the designs, right? One of the keys to that is don't lift the pencil up. Because that way you're practicing it just like you would be quilting it. And we're getting that motor memory going. And as I said I have all kinds of other tutorials we're building around this concept of the basics of free motion. So make sure you're following along and we'll see you next time at Man Sewing