

INTRODUCTION TO RULER WORK

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Free motion quilting (fmq): Stitching quilt layers together with feed dogs lowered which enables the quilter to move the quilt sandwich in any direction.

Ruler work: Free motion quilting in which specialized rulers are used to obtain precise lines or designs.

Process	Regular sewing/piecing	Free motion quilting	Ruler work quilting
Feed dog position	Up	Down	Down
Foot type	Sewing feet(various)	Free motion feet(various)	Ruler foot

Supplies:

Ruler foot: Determine whether your machine has a low or high shank. You must use a ruler foot to fit your specific machine. Check this article to help make this determination--

<https://quiltadvice.com/blog/is-your-sewing-machine-low-or-high-shank/>

Rulers: These are NOT the same rulers used for cutting fabric with a rotary cutter. Quilting rulers are thicker than rotary cutting rulers so that the ruler does not slide under or over the foot, causing needle breakage and potential costly damage to the machine.

Non-slip product (tape, spray, sandpaper dots) applied to bottom of rulers to prevent slipping

Teflon sheet to cover surface of machine which assists in moving fabric smoothly

Gloves with rubberized fingers/palms to aid in grip of fabric and reduce stress on arms

Extension table provides a flat surface on which to place the ruler

Procedure:

1. Attach the ruler foot to the machine.
2. Lower or cover the feed dogs.
3. Set stitch length to 0.
4. Set needle to stop in the down position.
5. Adjust chair/table height so that forearms are parallel to table.
6. Needle down at starting point, bring bottom thread up. Hold securely and take a few very small stitches to begin. Alternatively, knot threads and bury in quilt sandwich.
7. Position ruler against ruler foot. Place hands on both ruler and fabric (some fingers of each hand on ruler, some on fabric). Apply just enough pressure to hold ruler against foot and to press ruler against fabric.
8. Begin stitching, moving ruler along foot. In general, keep machine speed constant. You can then focus more on the speed at which you are moving the fabric and you will obtain a more even stitch length.
9. Use reference lines on ruler as an aid in positioning the ruler.
10. Any time you need to reposition your hands, STOP the machine.
11. Check top and bottom of quilt sandwich for thread tension just as you would for regular sewing.
12. RELAX your arms, shoulders, neck, and back or you will tire easily. Take breaks.
13. Rulers can be used in combination to create a wide variety of designs.

Resources:

Rulers and accessories:

Most local quilt stores carry quilting gloves, non-slip products for rulers, Teflon sheets. Some carry ruler feet and rulers.

Quiltersrule.com—rulers and quilting accessories; sign up for mailing list to be notified of sales in Bargain Barn

Sewsteady.com--Westalee feet, rulers and accessories

Creativegridsusa.com--Look under Designer Angela Walters for quilting rulers

Handiquilter.com--rulers and accessories for longarm and sit-down longarm quilting

Teflon sheets--Supreme Slider, Free Motion Glider—available at local quilt stores, Amazon (If ordering from Amazon, make sure the Supreme Slider is made by LaPierre Studio.)

Classes:

Many of the local quilt shops have classes on fmq and ruler work. It is best to first take an fmq class before delving into using rulers, though some beginner fmq classes include instruction on ruler use.

Videos:

Google “free motion quilting with rulers” and you’ll find many videos by **Angela Walters, Leah Day, Westalee**, and others.