

9 Tips for Quilting a Huge Quilt on a Small Machine

By Lindsay Conner

Quilters, do you usually do your quilting on a small machine, a midarm or a longarm? If you said a small machine, you are not alone! Many, many quilters regularly quilt large quilts (queen, king and larger!) on a domestic machine.

But how does it all fit within the machine's small neck? With a little practice and by following these tips, you should be able to get better results when quilting a bed-size quilt on your small machine!

Our best tips for quilting large quilts on small machines

1. Wear gloves

If you're planning to quilt a large quilt on your domestic machine, a great tip is to wear quilting gloves. The gloves are made to grip the fabric as you move it around, taking some of the weight off your arms and shoulders. If you've ever felt your body tense up when quilting or even machine binding, wearing some gloves like Machingers (or even gardening gloves!) can help ease that.

2. Pre-wind all the bobbins

Nobody likes to get into a quilting groove only to realize that their bobbin is empty! Prepare several bobbins in advance so you won't miss a beat when it's time to replace the bobbin.

3. Use that table!

You probably keep your sewing machine on a table, right? Depending on the size of that table and the length of your quilt, you might want to set up additional tables around your sewing space. More surface area helps support the weight of the quilt and keep it from dragging down.

If having a permanent table isn't convenient, maybe you can move to the kitchen table or look for a folding table to set up by your quilting station. Some quilters recommended height-adjustable tables from [Costco](#). Others use two tables at a right angle, so one can hold the machine while the other supports the rest of the quilt.

Additionally, setting up your table flush against the wall keeps your quilt from falling behind the machine and weighing you down as you work.

4. Scrunch, don't roll

If you've tried rolling your quilt into a tube and aren't getting great results, try scrunching it instead! By squishing the excess quilt into the machine's neck, you can get it out of the way without limiting your ability to flatten out and maneuver the rest of the quilt.

A quilt sandwich rolled into a tube is a little more cumbersome to work with, especially if you are free-motion quilting and need to move about the quilt top from side to side.

5. Start in the center

This tip works for walking foot quilting as well as free-motion work. If you start quilting in the center and work to the sides, you'll only have to fit half of the quilt in your machine's throat at any given time.

Rotate your project to quilt the opposite side instead of trying to scrunch the whole thing. You can also try quilting on the diagonal, so you get the largest diagonal row of quilting out of the way first thing, and the weight of the rest of the quilt feels lighter.

6. Turn the machine long ways

Ready for a tip that will blow your mind? Turn the machine so the needle is closest to you and the body points away from you. At this angle, some quilters find it easier to push the quilt straight forward into the machine's neck as they quilt, rather than off to the side. This is the setup of sit-down [midarm quilting machines](#) and it can help save your shoulders!

7. Create a slippery surface

If you want the fabric from your quilt to just roll across the table, try a Teflon oven liner or special quilting slider to make your table a slippery surface for the quilt to glide across. You can tape it down to the table and quilt right over top of it.

8. Be courageous

A big part of learning to machine quilt is being brave enough to try. So take your time, grab a glass of wine (like our [quilting idol Angela Walters](#)) and practice! It may take several sessions to finish a large quilt, and that's OK. Admire your progress, and take breaks as needed. After a few quilts, it should feel more natural.

9. Quilt as you go

If all of this seems too intimidating for you, you can always tackle a large quilt by quilting smaller sections and joining them together. When you [quilt as you go](#), you can break the quilt into as many sections as you'd like and join them later.

What are your best tips for quilting big quilts on a small machine?

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