

RIGHT SIDES TOGETHER

stitches & spunk



Oct 2
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The Secret to Perfect Curves with a Walking Foot

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As I'm sure you've noticed if you've followed Right Sides Together for any length of time, I don't FMQ. Free-motion quilting just isn't in my wheelhouse, and I'm perfectly okay with that. I've never been talented at drawing or doodling, and I'd rather use my quilting time focusing on the techniques I have a shot in hell at improving. So I do **digital long-arming** most of the time, and straight-line quilting with my walking foot for the rest.

But as Jacquie Gering's ragingly popular **Craftsy class** indicates, it's possible to go beyond just simple straight lines with a walking foot. Curves, waves, squiggles, and spirals are definitely a possibility for even those among us not gifted with any Zen in our Tangles. I recently worked on a baby quilt (that I can't show here as it hasn't yet been bestowed) where I used a spiral quilting motif. I was pretty sure how to do it, but I consulted **this tutorial** first—and I'm glad I did, because Amanda Jean has some pretty fantastic tips.

I marked out the first few turns of my spiral, got the walking foot on, started quilting, and started struggling with feeding and twisting the quilt all at once. Some of the curves were okay, but others just weren't feeding at the same speed through the machine, resulting in tiny little stitches and a disgraceful-yet-typical number of expletives. And then I thought, *HUH*.

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Behold: THE PRESSER FOOT PRESSURE ADJUSTMENT. Does your machine have one of those? Most decent quality machines do, and most are, by default, cranked up high. You want a lot of pressure on the foot, usually. It's what helps two pieces of fabric feed evenly: feed dogs underneath and presser foot above. But I wondered what would happen if I raised the presser foot a bit. Like, as light as the dial would go. My machine will not run if the presser foot is actually lifted with the lever, but I theorized that lightening the pressure just might allow enough "slip" in the process to let the quilt wiggle around a bit.

And you know what? It was perfect. For those of us who are not FMQ-friendly enough to lower the feed dogs, we don't have to. They'll still pull the quilt through. But not having the additional pressure of the foot forcing more weight on the quilt sandwich let it smoothly guide through and let me have more control of the quilt underneath. Perfect curves!

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I'll have to do some more experimenting with other options. Because the feed dogs are still pulling the fabric forward, it's not a substitute for FMQ. But raising the presser foot does allow for more flexibility and, to my mind, more possibility for creativity. Guess I'll go sign up for Jacquie's class now!

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Have you experimented with quilting curves with a walking foot?

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3 Comments on *The Secret to Perfect Curves with a Walking Foot*

Kathryn MCV

October 2, 2015 at 9:08 pm (10 months ago)

I have (waves hand), after taking Jacquie's class last year. One of the things she teaches is to slow down, that helped me immensely. I did circles in a queen sized quilt with my walking foot. I love how it came out, deemed it to good for a gift, and it's on display in my home now, over the top railing of my loft space (overlooks the living room). Even if I was off in spots, I found the design incredibly forgiving. I can't wait to do it again, I think I'll try overlapping circles next. Here's a link to the album of pictures: <http://imgur.com/a/0BBpa>

Wait until you wash what you did, you will never notice the imperfections.

Pat P

October 3, 2015 at 9:18 am (10 months ago)

Good for you! I love Jacquie Gering and her class is great. I was also fortunate to attend a one-day workshop with her. She's even better in person. I love Amanda Jean, too and have signed up for her Craftsy class. Your post on digital longarming is very interesting and I intend to find out more about that, too.

Pat P

October 3, 2015 at 9:20 am (10 months ago)

Hmpf! I wasn't finished. I have spiral quilted a couple of quilts. It just takes patience, a big table, and strong shoulders. I also find it helps to let some time pass by before trying it again. I'm just about due. lol

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