

Introduction

What were you thinking? It seemed like a great idea to make that California King quilt that reaches to the floor as a wedding gift. Caught up in the excitement of the engagement party it was easy to say, "Yes! Of course I can do that!" Well the commitment was made, the deed is done and the piecing is finished, now is the time to gather some tactics to get that quilt quilted before the first anniversary.

Suggested Supplies Mentioned in this Handout

- Sewing Machine with large area to the right of the needle and added quilting features such as a Digital Dual Feed foot (The Baby Lock Altair is featured in this video.)
- Stitch in the Ditch sole for Digital Dual feed foot
- Sewing Studio such as Koala or Kangaroo with Extension or Folding Tables
- Sew Steady Extension Table
- Comfortable and adjustable sewing chair such as a Koala Sew Comfort chair
- Quilting thread, matching top and bobbin thread
- Batting, choose a thinner or less bulky choice that requires less quilting.
- Spray baste or fusible batting instead of safety pins if possible
- Large bent handled scissors
- Wash Away thread
- Floriani Fusible No Show Mesh, iron and ironing board with large surface area
- Wash away pen
- Free-motion ruler foot and rulers
- Iron that is easy to move such as the Dritz Mighty Travel Steam Iron

Instructions

Set Up for Success

In quilting a large quilt on a domestic machine bulk, weight and gravity are our challenges. Let's look at some techniques for overcoming the things that will wear us out.

- Create a large work area to support the quilt. If possible, set up a large work area to support the bulk and weight of the quilt. A **Koala or Kangaroo sewing studio** with a drop in well and extension would be ideal, but **temporary folding tables** also work. Locate an area where the machine and tables can be set up for a few days so you are not rushed through the process and can take breaks. Pushing a larger table setup into a corner will give the quilt enough space and keep the quilt from falling off the edge or catching a corner of the table. It is very important to use an extension table such as the **Sew Steady large table** on the machine to support the quilt and your hands during the quilting. Some extension tables have a special angle for free-motion quilting.
- Use a **machine with the largest area** to the right of the needle (harp of the machine) and features that will save time and energy. Consider the entire area of the harp including the height and width. Features that help keep your hands on the machine and in control of the quilt include; knee lever to lift and lower presser foot, multi-function foot control, pivot feature to automatically raise the presser foot, auto presser foot lift/lower, start/stop button to sew without foot control and the ability to lock the screen of the machine.
- Choose a lighter, thinner and **less bulky batting**. Newer battings on the market can offer the same warmth as the older cotton styles. Shop for battings by noting the weight of similar sizes and the density of quilting required. Some battings need to be quilted every 2-3" and some only every 10". Less quilting means less time manipulating the quilt under the needle.
- Choose a thinner thread that matches the quilt and use a matching bobbin. The process of quilting can get tiring and affect performance over time and mistakes happen. Thread tension and quilting designs will be effected by sewing when tired. Matching thread colors in the top and bobbin threads will not show a few tension issues and a thinner thread will not show as many mistakes in quilting designs. Use a quilting needle in the machine that matches the thread size to avoid thread breakage. Does the project need a big thread to create a splash? Take more breaks! Wind a bunch of bobbins for an easy quick change out when you are "in the Zone".
- Sew in comfort when you set yourself up ergonomically. A well-positioned and adjustable sewing chair can be a necessity when spending so much time in front of the machine. **Koala Sew Comfort chairs** are adjustable three ways with additional lumbar support. Position yourself so you are not bending or reaching for the machine. If the chair needs to be raised for better access, put the foot pedal of the machine on a sturdy

box to raise it as well. Do you have a good sight line to the needle without contorting yourself? Do you have adequate lighting? Stay hydrated, but keep your beverage in a covered container. Is the room hot or cold? Add a fan or a heater.

- Choose a quilting design that is compact if possible or bundle the quilt to allow for it to easily pass through the harp of the machine. Traveling a design over a long area means that the quilt must be moved along that whole distance multiple times. The **Digital Dual Feed foot** will help move the quilt and is adjustable to ease in the quilt top to avoid accidental puckers. Quarter turns are easier than full half turns because the quilt can bundle in the harp of the machine for a short time before returning to the beginning orientation. Sometimes it is just easier to stop and start a line of stitching (including burying threads) than turning the entire quilt a number of times. If the quilt design has many different directions, consider free-motion or free-motion with a **ruler foot and rulers** to avoid turning the quilt. With these quilting styles, the quilt can stay in the same orientation and not need extra manipulation.
- Layer the quilt with strategies to reduce weight and bulk (*see section below*). When layering the quilt use a **spray baste** or use a **fusible batting** if possible to avoid the weight of safety pins. Spray the adhesive on the fabric and not the batting. If using **safety pins**, baste the quilt or stabilize with stitching and remove the pins as you go. Some quilts are easy to stabilize by stitching in the ditch around any areas with seams. Without any easy areas to stitch, use a **water soluble thread** and baste a grid over the surface. If the batting is cut to avoid bulk as described below, use **Floriani Fusible No Show Mesh** and an iron to re-join the edges without overlap.

Prepare the Quilt to Avoid Bulk and Weight

The batting creates the most bulk and weight in a larger quilt. Remove some batting and then re-introduce it to the project when two thirds of the quilt is quilted. This is not a “Quilt As You Go” method and the quilt sections do not have to be sewn together when they are completed. Read all instructions before proceeding.

- Layer the quilt as usual with the top layer, batting and backing. Think of the quilt in thirds and consider the quilting design to fit into each of the sections of the quilt. Pin or **spray baste** two thirds of the quilt up to, but just short of the last one third. Lay the quilt on a flat surface that will support the length of the quilt. Pull away and fold back the top of the quilt to expose the batting under the final third of the quilt. This section of batting will be removed and re-introduced when the other two thirds of the quilt is quilted.
- Being very, very, very careful to **not cut the backing**, cut the batting only just outside the fold. **Large, bent handled scissors** are ideal for this. Cut the sections apart with a gently wavy line and do not lift or remove the batting section. Make marks that will

cross over the cut between the sections to help replace the section in the same orientation. Use a **wash away pen** or thread tacks to create unique marks along the cut at least every 6-7”.

- Gently remove the cut section by loosely rolling it up. Place it in a bag and put it away in a place where it won't be disturbed, discarded or forgotten (ask me how I know). Fold the quilt top back and pin or baste the top and backing together along the cut to secure and avoid distorting the cut section. The top and backing can be loosely rolled and pinned to help stabilize this section and keep them out of the way.
- Quilt the center section with the batting-less part bunched in the harp of the machine. After completing the center section, quilt the next third of the quilt by turning the now quilted center to the left of the needle.
- Lay the quilt on a flat, heat resistant surface the fold the top back to expose the cut line. Flatten out the back and replace the missing batting section being careful to align the placement marks and gently flattening out the batting without overlapping the sections. Cut 5” wide strips of **Floriani No Show Mesh Fusible** and lay on top of the joined batting. Press the stabilizer in place following the manufacturer's directions to join the batting pieces. The batting acts as insulation and the bottom of the quilt should not be too warm, but use a heat resistant surface and be extra careful to not burn or over-heat the surface. Fold the quilt top back into position, flatten and baste or pin the layers together. Add extra pins or basting along the cut line and through the stabilizer. Quilt the final section with the already quilted section to the left of the needle.

