

Supplies

- Brother Stellaire Sewing/Embroidery Machine
- Brother Compact Dual Feed foot (Muvit) Foot or Baby Lock Compact Digital Dual Feed foot
- Stitch-in-the-Ditch Sole for Digital Dual Feed (BLDY-SDDF)
- Very thin thread such as Quilter's Select Poly Cotton 80wt.
- Machine Quilting Needle size 80
- Iron
- Thick Wool Mat (recommended)
- Best Press or water mister



What is Stitch-in-the-Ditch?

Stitch-in-the-Ditch refers to a method of quilting the three layers of a quilt together in the seam line. When the stitching is very close to the natural visual line of the seam, the stitching is almost invisible. The effect results in a method of holding the layers together effectively without creating a secondary design over the piecing. Stitch-in-the-Ditch is also effective in stabilizing the quilt before adding machine quilting to the project. Machine quilting, especially dense quilting, can distort the quilt top and pre-stabilizing the project with stitch-in-the-ditch will help minimize this distortion. Stitching in the seam line only around large blocks is usually not adequate quilting for a quilt that will receive heavy use. Additional quilting within the block will hold the quilt together for the long term. Consider a batting that has been needle-punched when the quilting is not dense. A needle punched batting or batting with a scrim does not need close quilting to

maintain it's integrity. Check the information on the batting packaging for a recommended minimum quilting distance.

Stitch-in-the-Ditch

After piecing the quilt pieces the seam allowances are generally pressed to one side and not pressed open. Open seams allow for minimal bulk, but are not as strong nor do they provide a barrier to batting migration. Should the seam fail the overlapping seam allowances will help to hold the batting in a little bit longer than a wide-open gap. Because the seams are pressed to one side, the effect on the top of the quilt is a ridge on one side of the seam we will call a “hill” and a depression on the other side of the seam we will call a “valley”. Stitching in the valley is the most effective way of hiding the stitching.



Before layering the quilt top with the batting and the backing, press the seams to one side according to a plan. For ease of quilting, a consistent seam direction minimizes seam bulk by avoiding twisted seams that create extra bulk. On the top of the piecing, check the seams are not obscured with a crease. Re-press if necessary to make the seam visible without any tucks. Use steam or a mist of water to hold the seam in place. A thick wool mat is very effective in holding the steam of the iron and creating a good press. The quilting path is determined by the location of the valleys. A consistent pressing plan takes all this into consideration and is well worth the time to prepare the quilt for layering and quilting. Some quilt patterns include a pressing plan for the piecing of the block. It turns out that an iron and good pressing surface such as a wool mat are almost as important in quilt piecing as a good sewing machine is.

Set Up for Stitch-in-the-Ditch

Attach the Dual Feed Foot (or Digital Dual Feed) to the machine and plug the attachment into the back of the machine. This foot has a band that provides contact with the top layer of fabric to pull it consistently under the needle at the rate



the feed dogs below are moving the lower layer of fabric. The tail regulates the speed of the band and is adjustable within the settings of the machine. In the settings screen, choose to increase the speed of the band or decrease it by selecting a plus “+” number or a minus “-” number. The degree of adjustment is entirely dependent on the project. Sew a test sample to check the adjustment before starting on the larger project. After adjusting, the setting will remain after the machine is cycled on and off. Remember to re-adjust the setting when starting a new project.

A specialty sole is available for the Dual Feed Foot. The special sole has a metal guide to ride in the ditch between the hill and the valley of the seam. Adjust the needle position to strike just within the valley of the seam. The Stellaire is adjustable to sing the width and within .5mm .25mm using the L/R adjustment. The position to the left or right of the metal guide depends on the location of the valley to the left or right. The machine has four different straight stitch options. Each of these stitch are adjustable. Since the valley can be on the right of the guide and sometimes on the left of the guide, select and memorize a stitch setting for both options using two different stitches. Toggle back and forth between these two stitch options while quilting.

Thread the machine with very thin thread and a size 80 machine-quilting needle. Choose a thread color and color value (dark or light) that will blend very well with the quilt top. Lay a few inches of thread on the quilt in a puddle to check the color. Invisible thread is available and the quality has improved. Choose the best quality available for ease of use. It is available in clear and a dark, smoky version. It can reflect light and be actually visible after stitching.



When using invisible thread stitch a sample to check tension. Invisible thread is very strong, very thin and very stretchy. All these factors make adjusting and overriding the automatic tension necessary (see photo above of stitching without adjustments). Also, be cautious of invisible thread scrap pieces. The thread can be damaging to pets if eaten and vacuum cleaners if tangled in the brushes.