

# Free-Motion MASTERY IN A MONTH

A free-motion quilting workshop with RaNae Merrill



PLEASE NOTE: If you are taking this class through a STORE, please get the materials list from the store, as they may have additional information.

Learning free-Motion quilting does not have to take months or years of “practice, practice, practice.” Free-Motion Mastery in a Month’s unique teaching system will have you quilting successfully from your first day. You’ll learn to quilt the fundamental shapes that build all designs, then combine them to quilt any design. You’ll quilt individual practice blocks, then join them up to finish a quilt. You’ll make a giant leap in your FMQ skills during the class and go home knowing exactly what and how to practice to continue improving. You’ll finish this class saying “I can DO this!”



### **You will learn how to:**

- Pre-train your hands anytime, anywhere, before quilting
- Set up your sewing machine for free-motion quilting
- Quilt the 6 Basic Shapes that make up all quilting designs
- Build any quilting design from the 6 Basic Shapes
- Join pre-quilted blocks to make a quilt of any size
- Look at a quilt and decide what to quilt where
- And much more!

### **Required Materials:**

1. A copy of my book ***Free-Motion Mastery in a Month***, 2nd edition. If you have the 1st edition, email me to ask for the update. Purchase the book and get familiar with it before class. The following pages are excerpted from the book to give you the information you need to prepare.
2. The ***Free-Motion Mastery in a Month*** tool kit, or assemble your own from the list on page 5 of this file (page 32 of the book).

We will be making a quilt from 16 10" x 10" blocks with 5" borders on all sides. Please follow the cutting and sandwiching instructions on the next page to prepare for the class.

## About Fabric

Working with the right fabrics is fundamental to the FMM30 learning process, so choose fabrics carefully, based on these descriptions.

**Motif Blocks:** These need to have a large-scale design with clearly outlined figures. Ideally, they should have about 50% empty space. The empty space is used to practice fill patterns. Denser fabrics will work as well; you'll just have less space to practice background fills.

Preprinted blocks often work well but, if you plan to cut up your Motif Blocks in the final layout, an all-over design would be a better choice. You don't want blocks with animals that would end up having their heads chopped off!



Large-motif fabrics can be used in different ways. Cut whole blocks featuring a single motif...

...or, cut four identical squares then join them into a Pinwheel block.



**Solid Blocks and Borders:** These should be cut from one or more solid colors. Solid means absolutely flat color or slight mottling. A print will make it difficult to see clearly what you are quilting, and will hide the quilting when it's finished. The fabric may seem boring at the start, but will let your quilting shine in the end.

**Joining Strips:** These can be solid, a small print or even a stripe. Use more than one color if you wish. If you want to hide them, match the fabric of the blocks they are joining.

**Backing:** Any fabric. If you coordinate it with the top fabrics, you can turn some pieces over for more variety.

*Hint* If you're worried about your quilting looking imperfect, choose a large-motif fabric with a hand-drawn or primitive design. The imperfections of the fabric design will make the quilting look just right!

## FABRIC & CUTTING LIST

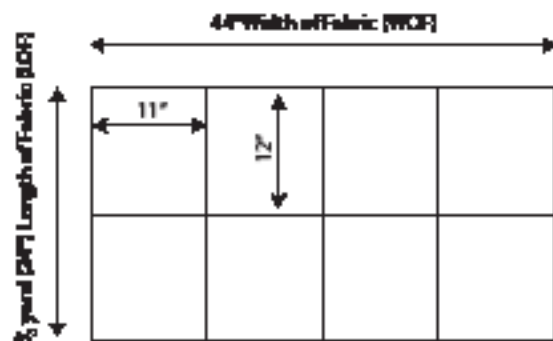
<b>Large Print Fabric— Front of 8 blocks:</b>	2/3 yard of fabric cut into 8 blocks 11" x 12"
<b>Back of Large Print Blocks:</b>	2/3 yard of fabric cut into 8 blocks 11" x 12" Can be print or solid, should coordinate with other fabrics
<b>Solid Block Fabric— Front of 8 blocks:</b>	2/3 yard of fabric cut into 8 blocks 11" x 12" Can be different colors All should coordinate with large print fabric
<b>Solid Block Fabric— Back of 8 blocks:</b>	2/3 yard of fabric cut into 8 blocks 11" x 12" Color should coordinate with large print fabric If front of solid blocks is light, these should be dark
<b>Border Front &amp; Back</b>	1-5/8 yards solid
<b>Joining Strips</b>	At least 1 yard, more may be needed depending on how small you cut blocks after quilting. Choose a contrasting color if you want joining strips to "pop", a matching color if you want them to blend in. You may want both.
<b>Binding</b>	1/2 yard. Coordinate color with joining strips.
<b>Batting: Recommended: Hobbs Heirloom Fusible</b>	16 blocks 11" x 12" or slightly larger 4 strips 5" x 50" Hobbs Heirloom Fusible comes in Crib or Queen size pkgs. You'll need a Queen

If you want to check fabric choices before cutting, bring uncut fabric to class and cut it there.

*Hint* Prepare an extra block or two. Use them for warm-ups and tension testers. And, if you make a cutting mistake later on, you'll already have a replacement.

## CUTTING BLOCKS

If fabric is 42" wide, cut blocks 10½" wide.



# Tools

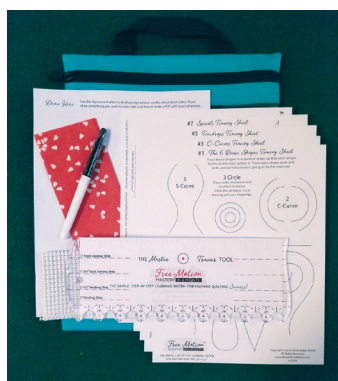
## FOR THE LESSONS

- ▶ The Master Trainer tool (or make a simple trainer of your own, see page 33)
- ▶ Copies of the Tracing Sheets in *Tracing Sheets and Quilting Guides* beginning on page 111 You may want to laminate them. (Tracing Sheets in the FMM30 tool kit are laminated.)
- ▶ Dry-erase marker and erasing cloth
- ▶ Grippy pads (see page 86)
- ▶ Sketchbook (one you can carry with you, so you always have it for doodling)
- ▶ Pencil and eraser
- ▶ A pair of dice (For what? See page 168)
- ▶ A bag to carry everything (with a closure)

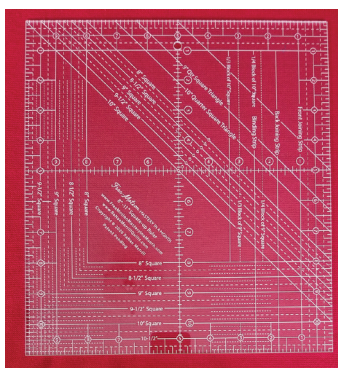
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## FOR MAKING THE QUILT (ALL MACHINE TYPES)

- ▶ Basic sewing tools (scissors, ruler, seam ripper, needle and thread, etc.)
- ▶ Domestic sewing machine for assembly
- ▶ Sewing machine needles (See *Needles*, page 89)
- ▶ The instruction manual for your machine
- ▶ A small brush for cleaning inside your machine
- ▶ Sewing machine oil
- ▶ Rotary cutter, mat and ruler
- ▶ Square rotary cutting ruler at least 10" x 10" (The FMM30 Square Up Ruler)
- ▶ Removable fabric markers
- ▶ Masking or painter's tape



The FMM30 Tool Kit contains the Master Trainer, laminated Tracing Sheets, white board, dry erase marker, grippy pads, erasing cloth and tote bag. A video class is also available. See *Resources*, page 174, to purchase.



After quilting your practice blocks, use the FMM30 Square-Up Ruler to trim them to 10" square. It also includes guides for 1/4-, 1/3- and 1/2-block cuts; diagonal cuts; and all joining strip and binding measurements. (See *Resources*, page 174, to purchase.)

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## FOR DOMESTIC SEWING MACHINES

- ▶ Quilter's safety pins or basting spray (if you don't use fusible batting)
- ▶ Free-motion foot (see page 85)
- ▶ 1/4" foot (for assembling your quilt)
- ▶ Quilting gloves, or grippy pads (pieces of padded shelf liner, see page 86).
- ▶ Walking foot or dual feed (optional)
- ▶ Ruler foot (optional, see *Ruler Work*, page 164)

### WHAT KIND OF SEWING MACHINE DO I NEED?

FMM30 works for all types of sewing machine—domestic sewing machines (DSM), sit-down longarms (SDL) or frame-mounted longarms (FML). Use the machine you have. If you have more than one, use the machine you want to improve on.

# Thread

## FOR QUILTING

**Top Thread:** 50-weight or 40-weight cotton

- ▶ **For Motif Blocks:** A color that is slightly darker or lighter than the background of your Motif Blocks. You should be able to see the thread against the fabric when you are quilting, but without too much contrast, so errors won't be really evident.
- ▶ **For Solid Blocks & Borders:** Thread color(s) should be much darker or lighter than your Solid Block fabric(s). The high contrast allows you to see clearly what you are quilting. (Don't be shy about letting your quilting show—this is to help you learn, not to impress anyone else!) Also, if you are doing an online class, a thread with high contrast is easier to see on screen.

**Bobbin Thread:** Use the same weight and color of thread for the bobbin. This makes it easier to balance tension, and the matching color will help hide small tension errors. If you turn some pieces over when you assemble the quilt, having the same thread on both sides will help unify the pieces.

If you do want to try a different thread in the bobbin, Bottom Line from Superior Threads is quite popular. It is a 60-weight 2-ply polyester and pairs well with just about any thread.

## FOR ASSEMBLY

- ▶ A color that matches your joining strips, or a neutral
- ▶ A color that will hide against your block fabrics, or invisible polyester thread, for stitching along edges of joining strips

### NOTE

It's important to use fresh, high-quality thread.

Aurifil and Superior are two excellent brands.

Read more about thread on pages 90-91.

### Hint

If you're using more than one color of fabric, match thread color to the different fabrics. Then, mix up the thread colors on the fabrics. The contrasting thread will help pull together the fabrics in the design.

# Batting

Get Hobbs Heirloom Fusible batting. It is a double-sided fusible that makes sandwiching the blocks easy and secure, without pins to get in the way. It is 80% cotton 20% polyester, slightly tacky before being fused, and repositionable even after being fused. It does not release fumes when ironed, and will not gunk up your sewing machine. (See *Resources*, book page 174.)

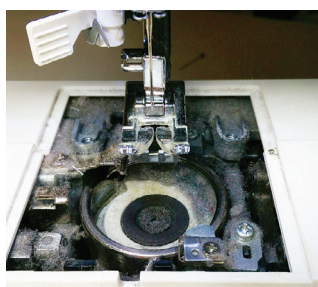


Fluffy polyester or wool are not suitable for this project because they are too flexible to provide the body that will make it easy to manage a block in your sewing machine, and the layers will tend to shift because of the loft.

# Setting Up Your Sewing Machine

It's really important to have your sewing machine in good working order for free-motion quilting. Here's a pre-flight checklist to get your machine set up and ready to go. Most of this applies to DSMs, SDLs and FMLs; where there are differences I'll mention them as I go.

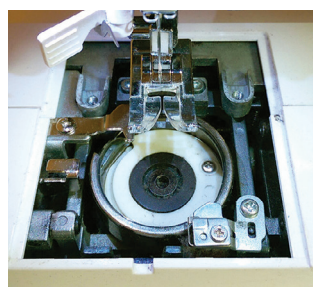
**DSM = Domestic Sewing Machine**  
**SDL = Sit-Down Longarm**  
**FML = Frame-Mounted Longarm**  
**FMQ = Free-Motion Quilting**



Remove the throat plate



Use a soft brush to remove lint and threads



All clean! Oil per manufacturer's instructions



Glad that's out of there!

## CLEAN & LUBE

Clean and oil your machine before you begin. If it hasn't been serviced in a long time, take it in for a tune-up. Quilting requires a sewing machine to take a lot more stitches than normal sewing, and through a lot more bulk, so don't make it work even harder by having it full of crud and feeling stiff in the joints. Check your instruction manual for directions. Get in the habit of cleaning and lubricating frequently.

Be absolutely sure to use the right oil, or you run the risk of permanently gumming up your machine. Don't use "canned air," as it forces dirt further into the machine. Lift dirt out with a small, soft brush.

## SEWING MACHINE FEET

For quilting on a DSM, you'll need a quilting foot. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes (see photos at right). All of them float just above the fabric, which allows you to move the quilt freely (see Hint on page 92). Start with what you have available, then try different styles to find which you prefer. For assembling your quilt on a DSM you will also need a  $\frac{1}{4}$ " foot.

## FRESH NEEDLE

Put a fresh needle in the machine. On a DSM, for 50-weight thread, start with a size 80/12; for 40-weight use a 90/14. Start with a Universal, but also try different types to see which you like. If you're having problems with thread breaking or skipped stitches, try a different size or type. (See *Needles*, page 89.)

## FEED DOGS

On a DSM, you need to drop the feed dogs for free-motion quilting. Check your instruction manual to find out how. The control may be a button on the back of the machine behind the bobbin assembly, or near the on/off switch. Longarm machines don't have feed dogs.

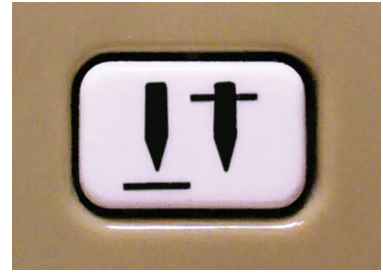
## STITCH LENGTH

With free-motion quilting on a DSM or sit-down longarm, *you*, not the feed dogs, are moving the fabric, so you don't need to set the stitch length (see page 95 for more about stitch length). If you're using a stitch regulator on a longarm or a BERNINA BSR, set the stitch length at 12-15 stitches per inch (see *Stitch Regulators*, page 94).

## NEEDLE-DOWN POSITION

You will often stop with the needle down to hold the quilt in place while you look ahead or reposition your hands. The needle up/down icon will look something like this:

The needle-down function works differently on different machines. If you haven't used it before, get familiar with it now.



## BOBBIN

Wind a bobbin and load it. (If you know what bobbin thread you're going to use, wind several.) If your machine has a front-loading bobbin (as opposed to a drop-in bobbin), look for a wire loop on the bobbin case or a hole in the bobbin case arm. If it has one, run the thread through it. This helps avoid skipped stitches by keeping the thread in proper alignment during free-motion quilting (and embroidery).



## Quilting Feet



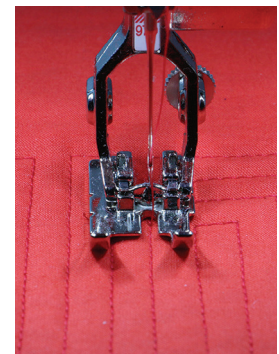
Open-toe darning foot (BERNINA #24)



Closed-toe quilting foot on BERNINA stitch regulator



Echo-quilting foot on BERNINA stitch regulator



1/4" foot.

Though not a quilting foot per se, a 1/4" foot is great for quilting lines and shadowing. Use it with dual feed or a walking foot if you have it. For assembling your FMM30 quilt, you'll need a 1/4" foot that is 1/4" from the needle to the LEFT OUTSIDE of the foot, as well as to the right outside, to get exact 1/4" seams on the joining strips (The foot above, BERNINA #97D, is 1/4" to the right outside and 1/4" to the left INSIDE. BERNINA #37 or #57 is better.)



Ruler foot (BERNINA #72)



Clear plastic darning foot comes with many machine brands. It bounces a lot, and it's hard to see the needle.



Longarm quilting foot (Handiquilter)