

# Free Motion Quilting Troubleshooting Checklist

By Dana Kuhnline Instagram: @DanaWaterPenny Blog: Waterpenny.net

Skipped stitches, eyelashes, bird's nests, snapped threads, oh my! It's a common story – your machine is working perfectly until you try to free-motion quilt! Try each item, and then try quilting before moving onto the next one.

1. Practice, practice, practice! If you are getting loops in some areas and not others, the tension is **probably not** the issue – the ratio of **speed** and **movement** is most likely the issue.

Usually your machine controls the ratio of speed and movement using the feed dogs. So you may have to practice a while to get as good at it as your machine is! Often, you need to move the needle faster – your foot pedal is not keeping up with your hands. **As your hands move the quilt faster, your machine can't keep up.** This gives you long stitches, but can also cause the bobbin thread to pull the top thread to the back of your quilt, causing dots, loops, or eyelashes on the back.

2. Re-thread your machine, slowly and carefully. They can get pulled out of whack. You may also wish to try a new thread – some machines like polyester better than cotton and vice versa. You may have an easier time with a finer thread (try 50 wt).
3. Change to a fresh needle, or try a needle with a larger eye– like a topstitch needle - or try a quilting needle.
4. Adjust tension. If your top stitches are too tight (bobbin thread showing on top) loosen top tension. If your top stitches are too loose (top thread showing on the bottom) try tightening tension.
5. Clean and oil according to your manual and/or bring your machine in for servicing. You may also ask people who have your same machine if there are tips or tricks that helped them – each machine has its own special preferences!

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