

Extract from *Quilt Now*, October 2019

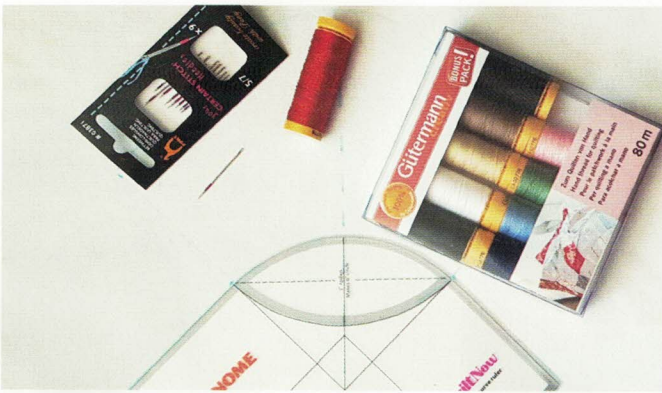
CURVED QUILTING BY HAND

1 Pay extra attention at the basting stage and when securing your layers because the project is going to get moved around a lot as you work. Many sewists hand-baste when hand-quilting, which means using a white thread (dark thread may discolour fabric) to hand-stitch with big stitches of about 3-4" long. Work in a grid, starting from the centre outwards. It is time-consuming but worth the effort!

2 Mark your stitch line. This is even more important when hand-stitching because as you work the fabric will become distorted in your hands and so a curve can be lost. Test your marking medium first – it may behave differently on different fabric, and you don't want to stain your finished piece.

3 The choice of needle is personal, but getting a good one can make sewing easier. I like a between needle for hand-quilting. It's short, thin shaft is easier to feed in and out of quilt layers than a larger needle. Between's come in sizes 5-12 (the larger the number the finer the needle). I have been using Certain Stitch Needles by Pony, which have a marking on the needle too, so you can gauge exactly how long the stitch length will be for even-length stitches.

4 Choosing thread is also a personal choice. Hand-quilting thread is slightly thicker, stronger and more hard-wearing than standard sewing thread. If your quilting is decorative, you can use any thread that gives you the look you are after.



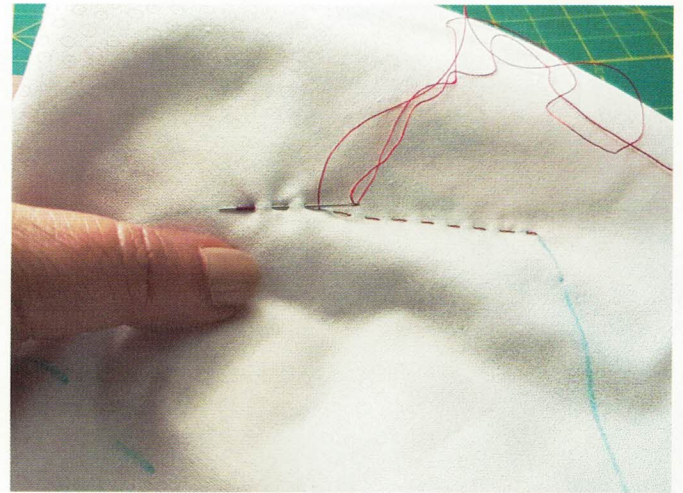
ENSURE YOU ARE USING THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB, INCLUDING GOOD QUALITY NEEDLES AND HAND-QUILTING THREAD

5 Whether or not to use a hoop is an age-old question that keeps experienced quilters discussing it well into the night. Hoops help keep your stitching area flat and maintains the tension as you quilt. However, if you are using a small hoop, you will have to move it often. A large hoop is far less portable but you don't need to reposition it as much.

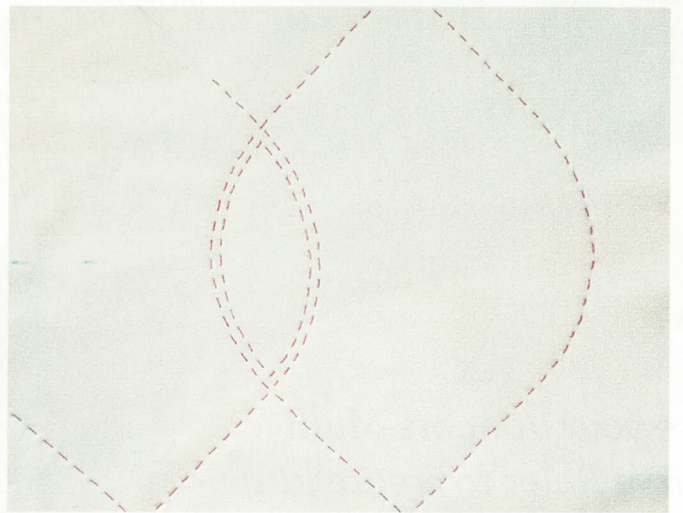
6 Starting your quilting line is important. Thread your needle with approximately 18" of thread (any longer and it can become tangled) and tie a knot in one end. Insert your needle about 1" from where you want to start, through the wadding and bring it up in the starting point of your quilt. Tug on the needle until the knot pops into the quilt

top. The knot should embed itself into the wadding and will secure itself.

7 Start stitching. Hand-quilting stitches are small and even, and keeping your stitches even is the most important part for beautiful hand quilting. If you wish to be accurate, six stitches per 1" is a good number for beginner and intermediate quilters to aim for with quilting. Keep one hand underneath the quilt to ensure your stitches are passing all the way through the layers. Use your other hand to move the needle down into the fabric and up again. Keeping lines consistent can be achieved by loading two or three stitches onto your needle before pulling the needle all the way through. Keep the tension smooth because it is very difficult to loosen or tighten stitches later.



LOAD STITCHES ONTO YOUR NEEDLE TO KEEP EVERYTHING SMOOTH



HERE IS THE FINISHED HAND-QUILTED SECTION ONCE THE MARKINGS HAVE BEEN REMOVED

8 Finishing your quilting line. Leave about 3" of thread. Tie a knot about 1/2" from the surface of the fabric, pass the needle into the final hole and the wadding (not through to the other side). Pull the needle up about 1" from its starting point and tug the knot in the wadding as before and repeat to ensure everything is firmly attached. Continue quilting with a new thread.