

Thinking of buying a new sewing machine?

Before you agree to purchase a machine, take the time to give it a good workout - you will probably be using this machine for many years, so make sure you like it!

For machine quilting and free motion work ...

Must have needle up / needle down setting

- feet:**
- walking foot / dual feed foot (in-built in some Pfaff machines)
 - darning foot / pogo stick / quilting foot

Very desirable

- needle threader
- knee lift (I just wish my overlocker had one!)
- in-built scissors
- feet that clip-release on the shank, saves using a screwdriver every time
- able to set motor speed slower

foot: $\frac{1}{4}$ " foot Even if you can move the needle position, so you get a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam, the $\frac{1}{4}$ " foot has handy markers to aid stopping exactly $\frac{1}{4}$ " before or $\frac{1}{4}$ " after a particular point.

Nice to have

- built-in stitch regulator (Bernina BSR, and other brands) makes free motion work easier - as you move the fabric the machine goes at the appropriate speed to give consistent stitch length. Wow!
- several buttonholes
- a few fancy stitches

Machine quilting is based around straight stitching.

Take along some strips of fabric e.g. 2" wide by 42" long, and a 20" square quilt sandwich with wool or cotton batting (NOT cheap polyester as it tends to creep)

Suggested workout ...

With the $\frac{1}{4}$ " foot attached:

Seam together some 2" strips

Check that it tracks nicely and stitches absolutely evenly.

Check that the underside of the seam looks as good as the top.

With the walking foot attached:

Do some rows of stitching on the quilt sandwich

Check that the layers feed through evenly, without creep.

Check that it tracks nicely and stitches absolutely evenly.

Check that the back looks as good as the front.

With the darning foot / pogo stick / quilting foot attached and the feed dogs dropped:

Do some small stipple and some large meander

Do some small motifs e.g. figure of 8, a flower and leaf

'Write' your name

Check that it moves nicely for you, that it 'feels nice'.

Check that there are NO skipped stitches, NO snarls on the back.

Check that the back looks as good as the front.

Check that you can see to work with the provided foot - you may need an open-toed or a see-through plastic one as well.

Try several brands and listen to the sound each machine makes while you're sewing.

Check that its sound pleases you. (My favourite machine *sings* when I'm sewing!)

If a shop can't provide this experience, ask yourself:
Do I really want to buy my new machine here?