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# Getting from Here to There

Twenty years ago, machine quilting was considered “cheating” by a great majority of quilters, and it was rare to find a machine-quilted project among show winners. Now hand-quilted quilts make up only a small percentage of completed quilts.

The fast-paced world in which we live has contributed to the decline of hand quilting. The Internet connects us instantly with quilters around the world. We can buy fabric in our pajamas and can find inspiration online. It’s no wonder machine quilting is now the top finishing method—we’ll never live long enough to complete all those projects we want to stitch by hand!

While we may secretly aspire to make a Best of Show quilt, most of the time we make quilts simply because they are fun! Many times we fell in love with the fabric or the pattern. Since we have so many quilts to make and so little time, machine quilting is a natural decision. We can cover the territory quickly with an allover quilting pattern. But if we do want to pay special attention to parts of our quilt, it’s nice to know some secrets for speeding up that process as well.



I’ve chosen flying geese to illustrate how to rethink the pathways that can help you finish quilts faster. The quickest way to quilt a project is to use the same blending thread color throughout, but that isn’t always the most desirable choice, especially if you have high contrast between your fabrics. The key to speedy machine quilting isn’t necessarily moving your machine or fabric faster. The secret is taking the time to plan your route so that you can efficiently move from patch to patch with few starts and stops. It means quilting your background sections at the same time as your main fabric sections if you can use the same color of thread. However, if you want contrasting thread, you must think about your designs in a different way so that you can connect shapes instead of allowing them to float inside a patch of fabric.

To understand this concept, look at the teardrop shape in *Design 1*. It starts and ends at the bottom of the block, and it “floats” inside the triangle. If I have several of these flying geese units in a row, I won’t be able to get to the next unit unless I stitch in the ditch, start and stop for every single one, or travel in the background fabric to get to the starting point for the next teardrop shape. As long as I’m comfortable with how my thread will look on the main fabric as well as the background fabric, I can use continuous quilting to travel to the next block (and get the background quilted at the same time!) That pathway is illustrated in *Design 1*.

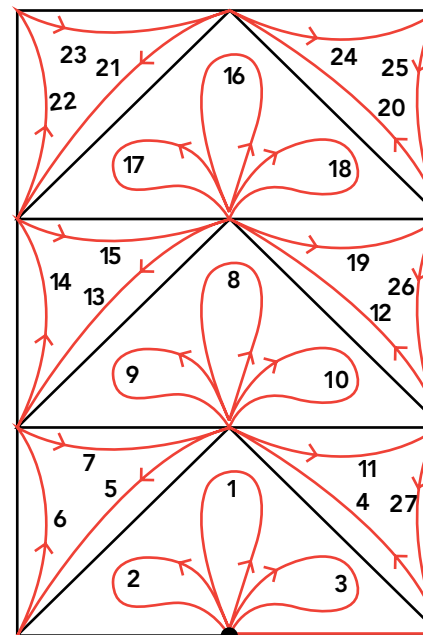
But if I want to use a different thread color in the goose sections and the background fabric, my only choice

is to start and stop for each one—unless I stretch my teardrop shape to reach the next block as shown in *Design 2*. I can move from goose to goose in one continuous motion, completing half of the teardrop shaped design on the way up, and the other half on the way down. Study *Design 2* to see how this works for both the teardrops in the goose design, and the pathway for

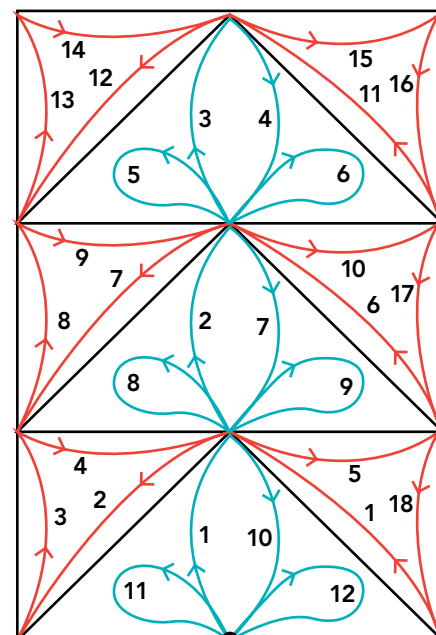
the background design. The photo of *Section A* on my sample quilt illustrates these two techniques side by side for comparison.

In *Section B* (page 78) on the quilt sample, I’ve quilted a different shape inside the goose sections, but it can still be completed with one pass (or with two if you want a different thread color for the goose triangles.) This works well by

DESIGN 1



DESIGN 2

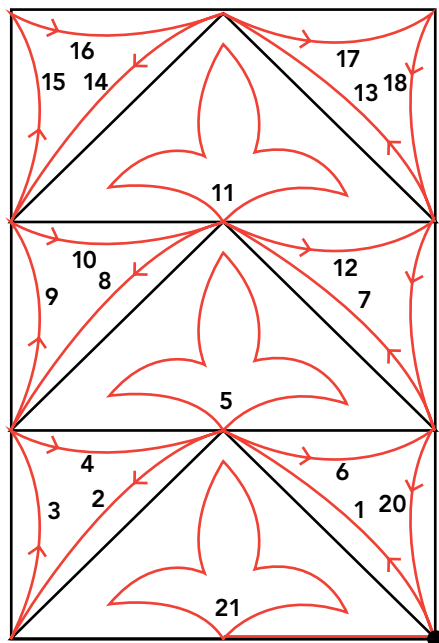


SECTION A

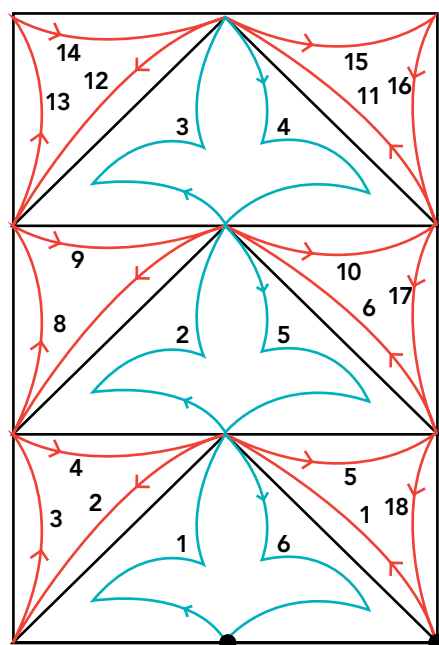




DESIGN 3



DESIGN 4



using the background pieces for traveling. *Designs 3 and 4* illustrate the paths I chose to connect the goose blocks.

*Section C* shows a spiraling design through each goose. You can stitch the spirals close together or far apart, depending on the density of quilting you desire. *Designs 5 and 6* show

you the pathway with the same and contrasting threads.

Look at *Section D* and study the shape in each goose triangle. This design starts and stops in the far corners of the triangle. I can quilt both the background and the goose design at the same time with the same thread color.

SECTION B



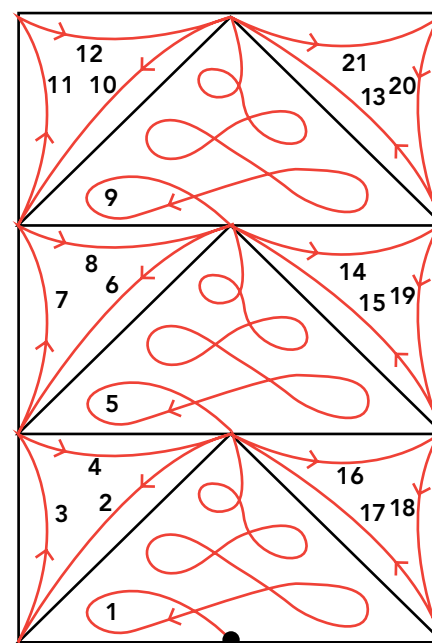
SECTION C



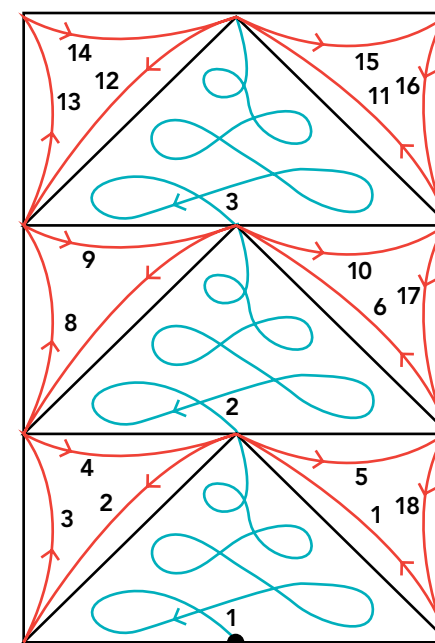
SECTION D



DESIGN 5



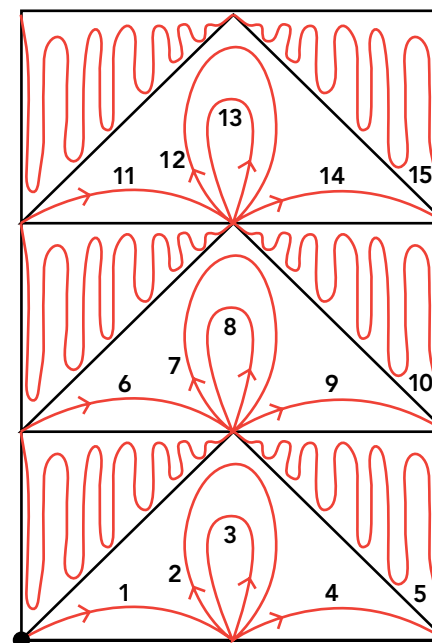
DESIGN 6



Look at *Design 7* and notice that only one quilting line travels out from the corners to the teardrop shape in the center. This provides the connection from patch to patch with the same thread color, but I will not be able to join the shapes inside the triangles with that same shape if I want different thread. I need to add a second line that takes me back out of the corner and returns to the intersection at the top of the goose so that I can travel to the next block. *Design 8* shows how I chose to make that jump.

Even though I've laid out a path for you with each of these design ideas, you can vary the path to your liking. Maybe you prefer quilting up the right side and then coming down the left. Maybe you want to do the goose design at a different time than what my sequence suggests. How you get from "here to there" isn't important as long as you achieve your desired result. Experiment to find what works best for you. Try these techniques to speed up your machine quilting, and have fun!

DESIGN 7



DESIGN 8

