



# quilting

## THE QUILT

BY Dawn Cavanaugh.

## Bitty Border Quilting Ideas

You've seen them, you've probably used them, and you've possibly ignored them! Skinny little "separator" borders help us frame blocks, set off larger borders, and make our quilting math come out right. Sometimes these small little "frames" are needed to add pizzazz, but more often they simply allow our eyes to rest for a moment before moving on to the next interesting quilt section.

Skippy borders are so small that it's challenging to come up with clever or creative ways to quilt them. Unfortunately, we often take the lazy way out and choose to do nothing inside the border. This choice could cause that little border to take on a more dramatic role than you anticipated—especially if you quilt other areas of your project more densely. Dense quilting flattens out the quilt, causing other areas with less quilting to puff up. If you don't

quilt that small border, but quilt heavily next to it, your unobtrusive border will suddenly take center stage and become the first thing viewers see, calling attention to the wrong spot on your quilt.

The first step in helping small borders do their job is to stabilize them by stitching in the ditch on each side. Without this extra effort, even perfectly pieced straight borders can appear wavy.

Once you have stabilized those

small borders, you can decide whether the border really needs a design element or if it can remain unquilted. As long as your quilting density is consistent in other areas of the quilt, you may be able to leave that border empty. The distance between stitching lines in *Photo A* is about the same as the width of the small border in the photo. The border does not become the focal point; it separates the blocks from the outer frame appropriately



without drawing undue attention.

In *Photo B*, the quilting density on the blocks is very heavy. To prevent the pink spacer border from rippling or becoming more dramatic than the feather quilting, extra quilting was added. Use the edge of your hopping foot or presser foot as a guide when stitching straight lines in borders. Stitch in the ditch first to prevent shifting. If you choose not to quilt those narrow borders because you don't know what design to use, remember that simplicity is the key. You aren't trying to make this one-inch border the focal point of your quilt; you want it to frame your art. I've included several easy designs (*Border Quilting Designs* on page 80) to get you started.

Use the natural reference lines created by your patchwork to help determine spacing for your design elements. This eliminates any need for marking. For example,

if your patchwork seams are two inches apart, use the seams as one target point, and the center of the patchwork block as a second target point. (*Illustration #1*).

As you choose designs for bitty borders, decide whether you need to create more interest between your patchwork and the outer borders, or if the bitty border should be downplayed. Use designs that are directional to draw the eye around your quilt and create movement, such as designs 1–5

on page 80. Designs 6–9 (*page 80*) are symmetrical and appear to anchor the border.

Some designs can stand alone, or you can add extra quilting lines to increase the density. Design #1a can stand on its own. However, if you make a second pass, as indicated by the dotted line and arrows in version 1b, you'll create another unique shape that fills the border more completely. Design #9 gives you flexibility to fill a border as small as ½" simply by controlling

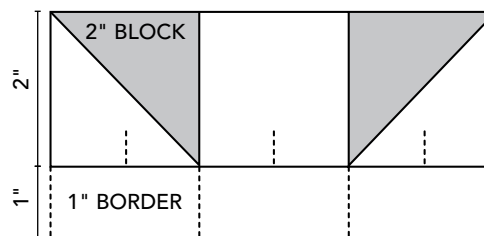


Illustration #1

the number of “echoes” after the first shape is stitched. You can complete the design in separate paths (*Illustration 2*), or as one continuous line (*Illustration 3*). When executing designs on a smaller scale, longarm quilters can improve their accuracy and control by adding smaller “microdrive” handles to their machines (*Photo C*). These handles allow you to use your fine motor skills for detail quilting, keeping your hands close to the needle for ultimate precision.

As you plan your next quilting project and add bitty borders, avoid the temptation to leave them unquilted. Now that you know about stitching in the ditch and have some design ideas to get you started, use these small spaces to show off both your piecing AND quilting!

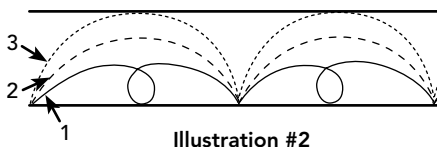


Illustration #2

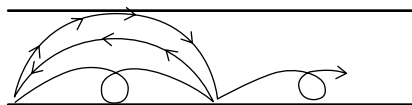
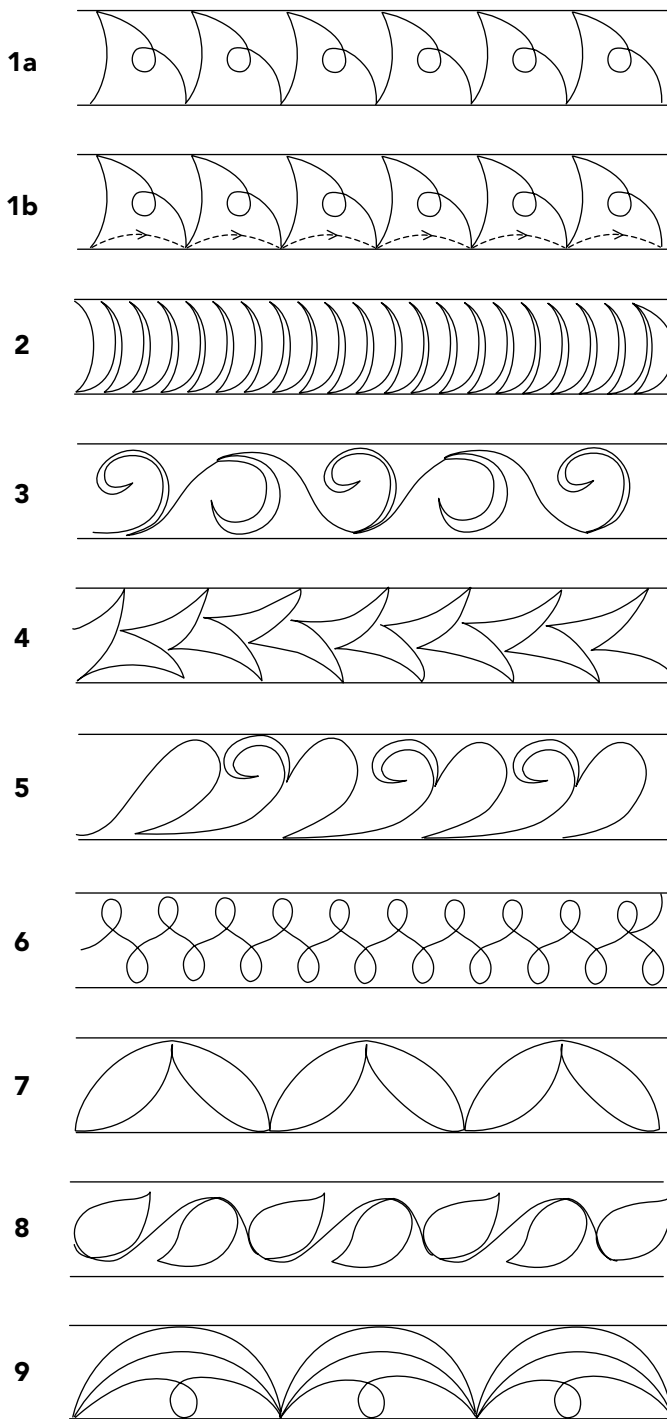


Illustration #3



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### Author Profile

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