

Troubleshooting Stitch Quality on the Bernina Q24/Q20

There is nothing more frustrating than less than perfect stitch quality when machine quilting - whether it is wonky tension or skipped stitches and shredding thread. When you start fantasizing about giving your machine a viking funeral, it is time to step back and figure out WHAT the culprit is - chances are it isn't your machines fault!

Types of Stitch Issues:

1. Skipped Stitches - an incomplete stitch, one that doesn't lock into itself, top locking into bobbin thread
2. Shredding Thread - when your thread seems to have 'a run in it', where you either have it seeming to unravel at the needle or higher.
3. Tension that is "off" - just doesn't look right, you don't see stitch formation/individual stitches, just looks like like thread sitting on top of the fabric.

Solving Stitch Issues:

1. Skipped Stitches - the culprit here can be a few things, but in general I have found the issue to be one of two things: wrong needle for the fabric type or wrong needle for the thread type. Every time we put a quilt on our frames, we have some new combination of ingredients. The fabrics in the quilt top, the batting and the fabric of our quilt backing - so that means, we are potentially working with a brand new set of rulers for our thread and needle to behave with. Be patient with this process - it takes time to figure out the tricks. The needles I always have on hand in my studio are: SCHMETZ Topstitch 90/14 & 80/12, SCHMETZ Quilting 90/14 and SCHMETZ Stretch 90/14. Between these four needles I can always find one that solves my magic ingredient needs!
2. Shredding Thread - typically shredded thread is a needle issue, as in your needle eye is not large enough to handle your thread size. Sizing up a needle size (ie: going from an 80/12 to a 90/14) is a good place to start. The second thing to consider is the age of your thread. If you're trying to use super old thread, there is a chance that it is just too dry or brittle to handle the stress of machine quilting. Swap your thread for something newer and keep quilting!
3. Tension that is "off" - when you're looking at tension that is "off", the best place to start is RETHREADING! I know, seems silly, but 99% of the time with our Qseries machines, we just missed a guide/tension disc somewhere and need to fix it. If that doesn't solve your problem, two words: Digital Tension! With the Q20/Q24 we have this amazing digital tension that allows us to quickly and easily play with our tension settings. You have permission to adjust your tension, so play around with different settings until you find just the right one!