



10 Questions To Ask Before Buying a Stitch-Regulated Quilting Machine

1. *Is the machine a solid cast or a stretch machine?*

Stretched machines are cut and inserts are added. Glues and bonds used to secure the inserts tend to crack and fatigue. Commercial grade machines are solid cast and are not extended or stretched.

2. *Is the machine upgradeable? Does it have integrated computerized quilting capability?*

Machines that are built with the ability to upgrade when new technology or components are available provide you a better value as you will not need to purchase a new machine. Many machines can be retrofitted for computerized quilting. Integrated computerized quilting functions provide you better control, increased functionality and more quilting options.

3. *Are belts or other dangerous moving parts mounted on the outside of the machine? Is the motor inside the machine?*

Machines with exposed belts can be a significant safety hazard. Motors mounted inside the machine are safer and quieter than outside mounts.

4. *How much does the machine weigh? Does the machine run smoothly at both high and low speeds?*

A machine that is too heavy will cause stress on back, neck and arms. Test any machine for 5 minutes or more to get a sense of what several hours of quilting might feel like. A comfortable weight is usually 40-60 pounds. Too much vibration can cause excessive noise and poor stitch quality.

5. *Does the machine have a "quilters" hopping foot?*

A quilting hopping foot "hops," eliminating dragging and unwanted folds in the fabric. This foot should be round with 1/4" equal distance between the needle and the outside of the foot. The hopping foot should be thick enough to accommodate 1/4" thick acrylic templates and rulers. Rulers help quilters perform precision quilting, including stitching in the ditch or echo quilting around pieced seams. Also, a hopping foot is important to be able to "hop" over a quilt's seams.

6. *Does the machine have integrated functions as well as additional add-on accessories such as laser light, electronic micro handles, additional lighting?*

Lasers provided a convenient way to trace pantographs and patterns. Make sure that the laser is not battery operated and can work from the front and back of machine. Micro Handles provide you with a way to have additional stability and control when doing detailed work. Additional light and electronic finger tip controls are important features, as well as adjustability.

7. *How much quilting space is available?*

The throat space and quilting space are not equal. Be sure to ask about available **quilting space**. When considering a quilting machine, remember bigger is not always better. The best quilting space is always a comfortable distance for both sight and reach. The recommended distance is between a 12"-14" "stretch" for comfortably-controlled quilting.

8. *Is the bobbin large enough?*

M Class bobbins are the largest in the commercial quilting industry and hold nearly 3X as much thread as an L Class bobbin (depending on the thread weight). Large bobbins save time, while maintaining superior stitch quality.

9. *Do you need to continually adjust the frame system as you roll your quilt?*

Making adjustments to your quilting surface, by either raising or lowering your quilt frame to provide a flat surface on which to stitch, each time you roll your quilt, becomes very inconvenient and extremely time consuming.

10. *Does the machine company provide a trusted warranty, customer service, and training?*

A trusted warranty for mechanical, electrical, and the outer casing provides you a guarantee of quality craftsmanship when investing in a quilting machine. Reputable companies will provide and stand behind their written warranty and will provide you convenient customer support services. Hands-on training should also be included by dealers or sales representatives when you purchase.