



# HAND QUILTING TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

## UNEVEN STITCHES

**Problem:** Uneven stitches showing up on the quilt top

**Possible Solutions:**

- Go slower, especially when first starting: be more intentional and mindful with each stitch, focusing on the entry and exit point of the needle
- Practice! Sandwich an orphan quilt block to practice on something smaller
- Try using a different thread weight, or needle- or combination of both

## QUILT BACKING STITCHES

**Problem:** Stitches are not showing up on the quilt back, or are showing up unevenly

**Possible Solutions:**

- Adjust the hold on your needle- rather than entering the quilt top at an angle (or parallel to the quilt top), make sure you are entering the quilt top perpendicularly
- Aim for an even push through all layers
- Practice making sure the needle picks up the batting evenly- check the loft of your batting; high-loft battings can make it harder to achieve even stitches for novice quilters
- Utilize your non-dominant hand underneath your quilt to feel that the needle is being pushed through the backing of the quilt, and guide the needle to the top (using the pressure of the needle point to get an idea of the stitch length)

## THREAD ISSUES

**Problems:** Knotting in thread, thread tangling, and/or thread breaking or fraying

**Possible Solutions:**

- Use a high quality thread (see page 3 in the Hand Quilting Quick Start Guide for high quality brands), and avoid using old, vintage/antique thread (age causes it to become more brittle)
- Use thicker thread (lower weight)
- Finer thread (higher weight) gets twisty and tangles easier than lower weight thread, let the needle dangle from the quilt top until it is untwisted
- Try using a waxed thread (specific quilting thread comes pre-waxed and is very hardy)
- Condition your thread using thread balm or wax
- Avoid using excessively long lengths of thread (18-24 inches is ideal)
- Change your needle: the eye of the needle could be causing the breakage (continuous stress on a single point of thread will shear it and make it more fragile)



## TENSION PROBLEMS

**Problem:** Difficulty in pushing the needle through the quilt top

**Possible Solutions:**

- Use a high quality thread (see page 3 in the Hand Quilting Quick Start Guide for high quality brands), and avoid using old, vintage/antique thread (age causes it to become more brittle)
- Replace your needle: the coating may be worn down (increasing friction), or it's not as sharp due to frequent use
- Use finer thread (higher weight) with thread conditioner
- Press seams open to avoid having to go through thick seams; or use this tool to help pull the needle through

## QUILT TOP PUCKERING

**Problem:** The fabric of the quilt top (or quilt backing) is puckered and/or gathered

**Possible Solutions:**

- Ensure the quilt sandwich is basted evenly and is taut before quilting- if using higher loft batting, consider doubling up the basting methods (i.e. spray/glue basting WITH safety pin basting)
- Use consistent, gentle tension when pulling the thread through the quilt top
- Use a hoop, or frame to create proper tension
- If using a hoop or frame, avoid pulling the fabric too tight
- Check your batting- some higher loft battings stretch and shift more

## PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT

**Problem:** Pain in hand or fingers while quilting

**Possible Solutions:**

- Use a thimble to protect your fingers
- Use a hoop or frame to take the weight of the quilt off your joints and hold the bulk of the quilt at a comfortable angle
- Take regular breaks to stretch your hands
- Experiment with ergonomic tools made specifically for sewists
- Be mindful of your posture while quilting and make adjustments accordingly

## NOTES

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