

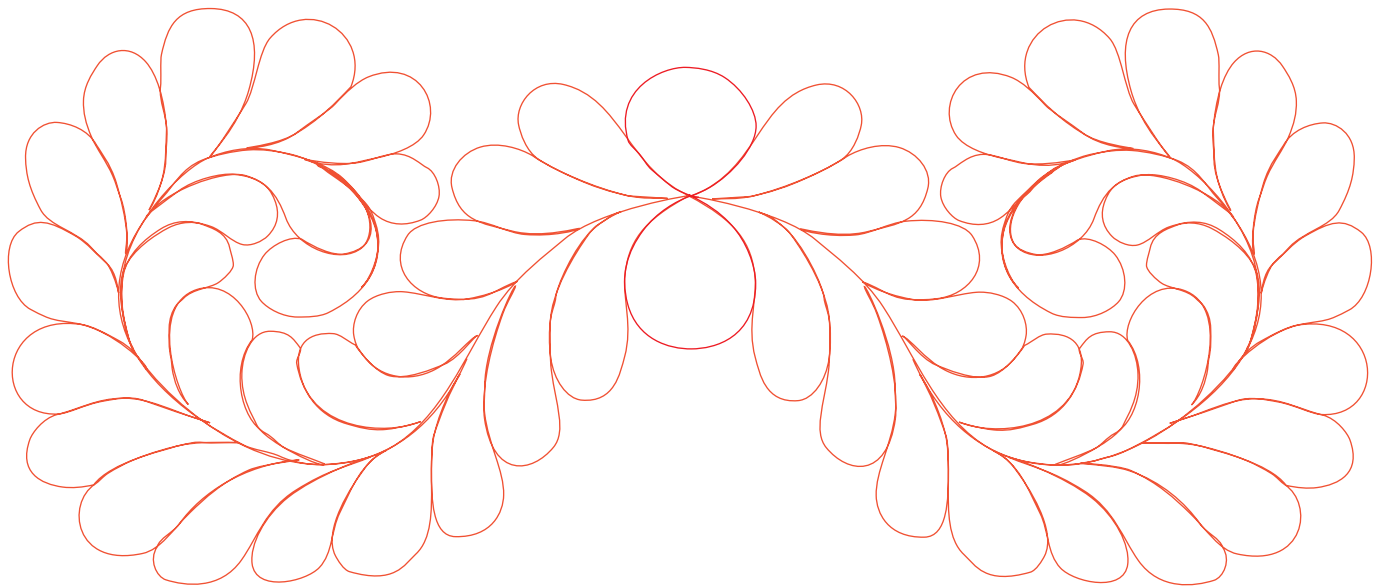
Pathing Your Design

By: Linda Lawson

When we talk about “pathing” we are talking about what direction the design is going to stitch, and how it’s going to stitch it. Wrong pathing can equal a design that does not meet up to it’s backtracking, areas that are not even and so on. While we can’t avoid issues entirely, due to all the variables in fabric type, tightness of quilt sandwich, grain, and batting, etc, we can try to create a pattern that gives the design the best possible path to run where it’s suppose to run.

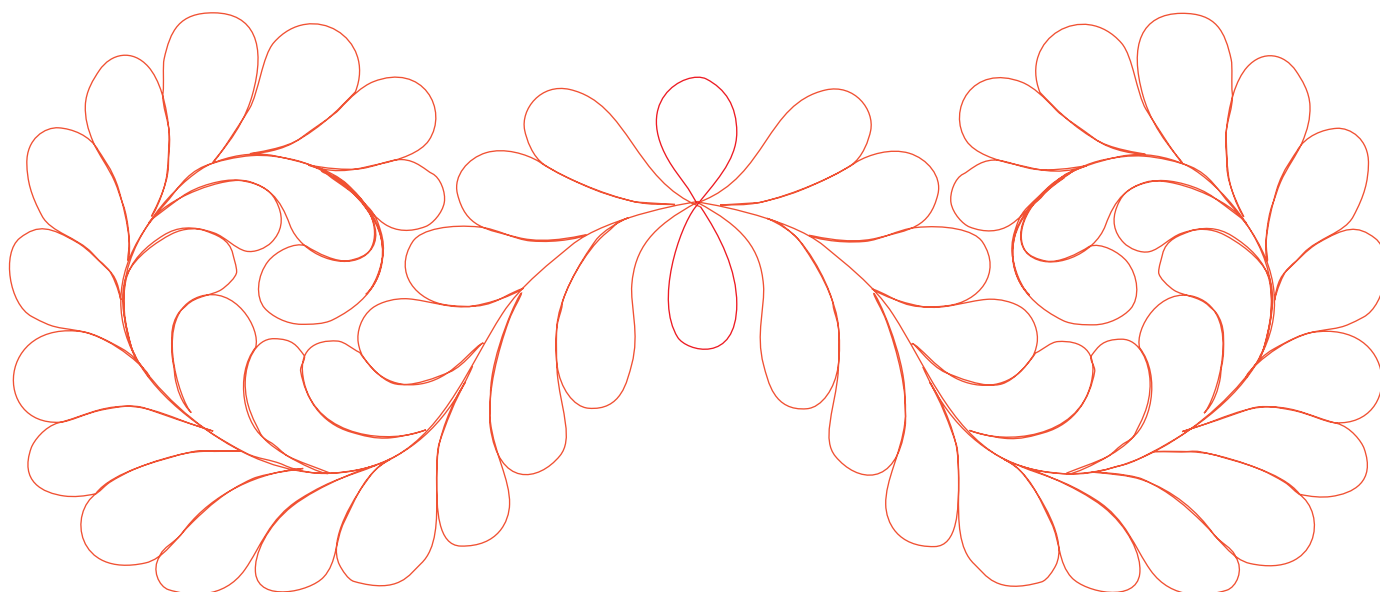
As you all know by now, fabric can shift while designs are run. The computer cannot see where it’s going and so therefore if the fabric shifts while it’s stitching out one section, the design may not meet up towards the end. Most of the time this is unavoidable due to the characteristics of all the variables. However, when we are digitizing this is a thought process that needs to be foremost in our minds. It starts with before we even open up our digitizing program. We need to look at our design and really think about how it needs to run. I have a few examples below that I want to talk about.

This first example is a design that is very similar to a pattern that one of my customers was having issues with. Take a good look at it and see if you can figure out what might be wrong with it.



This is a really beautiful design and calls for being stitched out fairly large. My IQ customer wanted to stitch this out in an 18” x 5” size. The pattern first starts at the left side and stitches the whole spine out. Then it backtracks the spine to come back to the left side where it started. It then starts stitching out all the bottom feathers over that large span from left to right. On the original design the feathers did not come up to actually meet the spine. There was suppose to be a little space left between the spine and the feathers so all looks good at this point. If the spine shifted at this first row of feathers, it was not noticeable because of the space left. Then the design goes and stitches out the top row of feathers. All looks okay until it gets back to the left spine. As it comes around to the last 5 - 7 feathers, the feathers are overshooting the spine and it is quite noticeable. The problem was that spine being laid first, so far ahead of the ending feathers. Remember, it laid the spine first? There really is no way that the fabric can just sit there in one spot and not move while all that stitching is going on.

In this next diagram I want to talk about how we can get a design like this to work with proper digitizing.



Here is a design that is almost like the first but let's talk about how we can get better results. The way that I would digitize this is a little different than the first design. Notice the center area? Keep this in mind as we discuss this.

The first thing I would do is to start this design in the center. I then would have it stitch out the spine to the right side and do all the feathers on that side. Since the spine has not been stitched on the left side yet, it would be okay if the fabric shifts. Next I would then have it come back and stitch out the left spine and feathers. Since the right side has already been stitched, even if the fabric does move, the left spine would be placed in a spot after the fabric has shifted. The last feathers would then be the ones in the center. Then I would have it stitch out the center loops. Notice how I thought about this (in the design process) before it was digitized? If those center loops were like our first design on page one, the problems would now be the overlapping the loops might do on the right feathers (since they were the first to be stitched out). In this design I made sure the loops were free, set apart from the first few feathers. This gives a little room for the design to get shifted if it's going to at all. It would probably be less noticeable if those loops were a little off center than stitches overlapping one another.

Not all designs are going to be this black and white when it comes to figuring the stitching path. Many times it's very difficult decide what the best possible path might be. I hope however in this example you will begin to at least think about what could happen if one section of the design is all stitched out and then the other area is added after that.

Note to IQ owners only: Our system lets us split designs. In this last diagram we can opt to split this design in two, stitching the right side, then realigning it to stitch the second side. On a very large span 18" or wider, I would probably stitch it this way to be sure things end up where they need to be. On the first design (page 1) that was similar to the purchased one, this was not possible. Since that design went and stitched the whole spine (left and right sides) in the beginning of the stitch out, there really wouldn't have been any good spot to split it in. This same method holds true for those quadrant designs. Many times when a design has been digitized in sections and then arrayed into 4 quarters, the last part of the design does not meet up to the first because of shifting. With the IQ, we could also split these types of designs out and realign areas so that they match up better.