

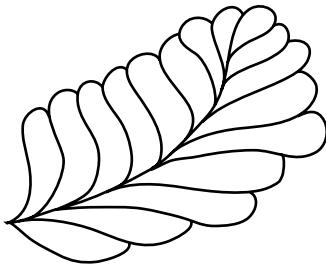
Shapely Feathers

Now that you have the basic stitch pattern down it is time to think more about the shape of your feathers.

Here are some guidelines to help you understand what makes a beautiful feather. I have only one rule that I do not break, the rest are guidelines, not hard and fast rules.

The Rule

Freehand Over the Top Feathers are always stitched from the **bottom** towards the **top**. I have found it to be physically impossible for me to stitch these FREEHAND in the other direction. If the feathers are marked, (i.e. with a stencil), I can stitch them in the opposite direction. However, 99.9% of the time I am freehanding my feathers, which means stitching from the bottom towards the top.



If you try to make your freehand feathers by going in the other direction, you wind up with a completely different design. The design to the left was created by drawing the feathers from the top to the bottom. It is actually quite pretty, but the shapes of the individual motifs are not what we are after in this book. Don't believe me? Give it a try!

Shape Guidelines

You can use these guidelines to help you analyze your feathers, but remember that they are only GUIDELINES. Your feathers are freehand, and some variation in size and shape will occur. You should not be using these guidelines to nitpick every one of your feathers. Instead, use them as troubleshooting tips to help you figure out what you might do differently for your feathers in general.

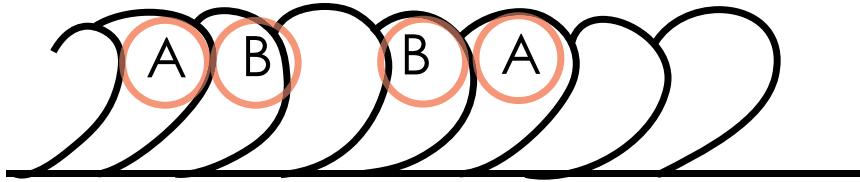
ROUND TOPS

When hand quilters draw feathers, they often start by drawing circles for the tops of the feathers and then filling in the lines of the feathers to connect them to the spine.

You can use this idea as a guide to check the shape of your feathers. As you look at your feathers, check the tops by drawing in circles. Does the circle fill the space with no leftovers outside the circle? Does a circle even fit at all?



Think about the red circles I have added to these feathers as a clock. You will notice that

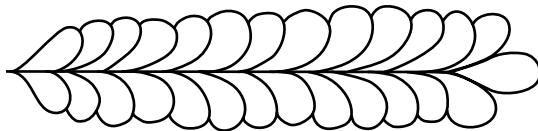
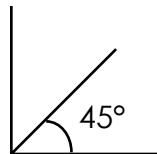


in the feathers marked with an A, there is a lot of leftover space outside feathers at the 10/11 o'clock area.

The feathers marked with a B are what I call Potato Chips. In addition to too much space at the 10/11 o'clock area, the feathers swing out too far away from the out feather, resulting in a feather that is a C curve, rather than the more elegant hook shape that we prefer.

SKINNY BOTTOMS

In addition to making feathers with nice round tops, you want to make sure that the bottoms stay skinny.



In order to keep the bottoms skinny, you need to make sure that the angle of the feather in relation to the spine is 45° or less. When you go around an outside curve, the angle of some of the feathers might be more than 45°, but in general, keep your feather angle to 45° or less.

Another way to think about this is to think of making your feathers so that they almost **lay down** on the spine. They will not be laying down completely, but they definitely should not be standing up.

In the drawing below, the feathers are nearly standing up, with lines that are almost perpendicular to the spine. I usually call these Hot Dogs. Yummy at a picnic, not so great on your quilt.

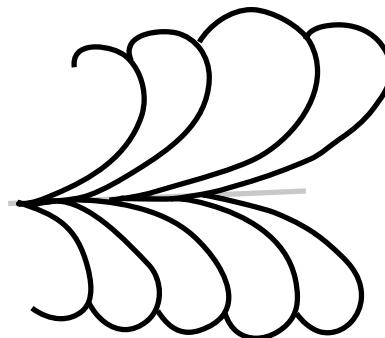
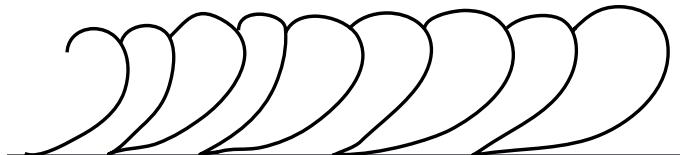


BACKTRACK THE SPINE

When you are returning to the spine, do not fall to the temptation to touch the spine and then branch out immediately with the next feather pair. You should backtrack along the spine until you meet the stitching from a previous feather. Then you can change direction and make the next feather pair.

If you do not backtrack far enough, you will wind up with what I call Touch-and-Gos. These are not quite as unshapely as the other issues I have mentioned, but you will find that when you start quilting, the unevenness of quilting along the spine will become quite noticeable. In addition, the angle of the feathers is not quite right.

Touch-and-Gos



Drawing Assignment 2

For this assignment, you will need your favorite drawing set up.

As before, try to devote at least 15 minutes of uninterrupted time to your drawing assignment.

GENTLY CURVING SPINES

Feathers on a straight line are pretty uniform, but when the spine starts to curve, the feathers need to change subtly in order to keep their shape.

There is a lot to remember, but over time it will become natural and you will not have to think so hard with each feather you make. Most of us prefer not to learn by rote, but in this case, continued practice of the same motion over and over again is the best way to get the desired results.

TASK 1

The last page of this PDF is a feathered plume with a gentle curved spine. Print it out and start tracing the design. As you trace, pay attention to the angle of the feathers as they relate to the spine, the rounded tops and the amount of negative space within each feathered shape.

Notice that the design has a slightly different group of feathers to start. Instead of teardrops on either side, it starts with a single teardrop, followed by Over the Top Feather pairs on either side.

TASK 2

After several minutes of tracing, turn to a blank page in your drawing pad, take a deep breath and draw a gently curved line that you are going to feather.

TASK 3

Rotate the tracing page 90 degrees and trace some more. Work back and forth between your drawing pad and the tracing pages, working on your feathers in all directions.

Keep the curves of your spine gentle. Deeper spines will be covered in the next section.

Step by Step Feathers

