



## Checklist

### Budget Quilter's Machine Buying Guide

This checklist is designed for quilters ready to purchase their first dedicated machine without overspending. It helps the reader cut through marketing noise and focus on the technical specifications that actually matter for quilting. Use this list while browsing online or take it with you to the local dealer to ensure you don't miss any critical details.

#### 1. Define Your Needs and Limits

- **Establish your hard price ceiling.** Decide exactly how much you are willing to spend, including tax and shipping, before you look at a single machine.
- **Measure your physical sewing space.** Ensure you have room not just for the machine, but for the quilt to drape behind and to the left of it.
- **Identify your primary project size.** Determine if you are making placemats and runners or planning for queen and king-sized quilts.
- **List your non-negotiables.** Write down the features you absolutely cannot live without based on your sewing style.

#### 2. Evaluate Technical Specifications

- **Verify the throat space measurement.** Confirm the distance from the needle to the housing is at least 6 inches, though wider is always better.
- **Check the feed dog mechanism.** Make sure the machine has a lever or switch to lower the feed dogs for free-motion quilting.
- **Confirm the bobbin style.** Look for a top-loading drop-in bobbin system with a clear plastic cover for visibility.
- **Inspect the lighting.** Ensure the LED light is positioned directly over the needle bar to eliminate shadows while working.
- **Test the weight of the machine.** Lift the unit to ensure it is heavy enough to remain stable at high speeds but light enough to transport if needed.

#### 3. Test Drive and Inspection



- **Listen to the motor sound.** Run the machine at top speed and listen for rattling or straining sounds which indicate poor build quality.
- **Test with a real quilt sandwich.** Sew through three layers (cotton, batting, cotton) to check if the machine struggles or skips stitches.
- **Check the needle up/down function.** Verify that the needle stops in the fabric automatically when you take your foot off the pedal.
- **Examine the included feet.** Confirm the box contains a Walking Foot and a Darning/Free-Motion foot so you don't have to buy them separately.
- **Run a slow-speed test.** Use the speed slider to sew very slowly and ensure the pedal is responsive and smooth, not jerky.

#### 4. Post-Purchase Setup

- **Register the warranty immediately.** Fill out the manufacturer's form online to protect your investment in case of defects.
- **Perform a burn-in test.** Sew on scrap fabric for 10-15 minutes to ensure the tension settles and any factory oil clears out.
- **Organize your accessories.** Separate the quilting tools from the general sewing tools to keep your workflow efficient.
- **Schedule your first cleaning.** Mark your calendar for a maintenance session after your first major project or 20 hours of sewing.