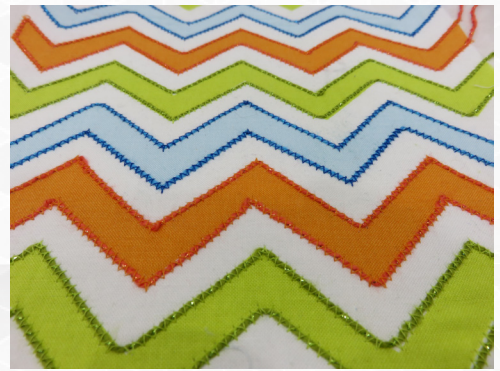


# Introduction to Couching

## By Joanna Marsh of Kustom Kwilts and Designs



You may have heard of an interesting technique called “couching”. Basically, couching uses stitches to tack down a piece of thread, yarn, etc. to create a unique look and texture. The material being couched doesn’t actually penetrate the fabric, but rather sits on top of it. Regular weight sewing thread (a 50 wt. is good) is used to stitch the larger fibers down and secure it in place. Couching can be found on embroidery projects, art quilts and some quilters even use couching to quilt with. This technique can add a lot of depth, dimension and drama to any project and can be added to even the simplest of projects to create more interest. Couching might look intimidating, but just take it one step at a time with your Janome Memory Craft 8900QCP Special Edition and you will have this awesome technique mastered in no time!

### Janome Supplies Required:

- Memory Craft 8900QCP Special Edition
- 3-Way Cording Foot H
- Satin Stitch Foot F
- Convertible Free Motion Quilting Foot with Closed-Toe Foot Attached (QBS)
- Pre wound bobbins of various thread colors
- Empty bobbins
- Red Tip Needle

### Supplies for this Technique:

- Quality machine quilting thread in various colors that contrast or coordinate with your yarns
- Quilting thread that blends with your fabric, monofilament or vanishing thread
- Lion’s Brand Bondon yarns (multipack)
- Metallic cording
- Various sized rick racks
- Various weights and colors of yarn
- 1 yard of fabric or various fat quarters
- Embroidery stabilizer
- Embroidery scissors or small snips
- 1 fat quarter of fabric with a simple design that can be couched on

### Suggestions for Ways to Use Couching:

- Outline applique
- Add a decorative element to fabrics
- Use as “thread” in free motion quilting
- Art quilting
- Add depth and dimension to a project

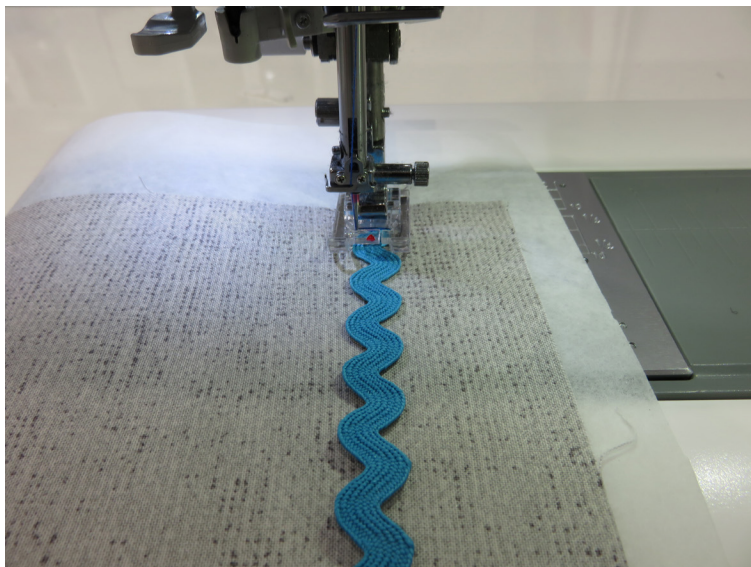
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### Different Feet and Installation:

First, let's install the Janome 3-Way Cording Foot H. This foot is instrumental in guiding up to three different threads easily through the machine to be stitched down by the thread. This foot easily snaps onto the machine. We'll mostly be working with this foot, but let's also look at some other options to add variety to the techniques.



The Satin Stitch Foot F is a great foot to use for decorative stitches and other stitches that are heavier. This foot also provides a little extra room underneath to allow easier passage for thicker materials that may not fit through the small guides on Foot H like bulky cording, rick rack and heavier weight yarns. Foot F attaches to the machine the same way Foot H does.



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The Convertible Free Motion Quilting Foot with the closed-toe foot (QBS) attachment will allow you to feed the yarn through the hole of the quilting foot to free motion quilt. To attach this foot, you will need to remove the set screw and loosen the foot holder that held the previous two feet discussed and remove it. Then attach the convertible free motion foot to the presser bar and install the screw that will hold it in place. The convertible free motion foot comes with the closed-toe foot already attached to it, but if you've changed the feet out prior to this, just double check that you have the right foot on. It is important to use the closed-toe foot because it will hold the yarn in place more securely than any of the other foot attachments. You will also need to lower the feed dogs and change the needle setting to D4S.



Those are the three feet we'll be working with, but don't let that limit your experimentation. There are many other feet that are compatible with this technique, so let your creative side run wild.

### Preparing Materials:

Couching is similar to embroidery, in that amount of stitches used to secure the item being couched can be numerous, causing the fabric to pucker. Stabilizing the fabric prior to couching is extremely important. If the couching you plan to do is very close together and not spaced out, you may want to use two layers of stabilizer to ensure the fabric behaves. The heavier your stitching or couching, the more stabilized your fabric needs to be to prevent puckering. If you use canvas or a heavier weight fabric, you may not need to use as much stabilizer.

Gather the various weights of yarns, cording, rick rack and threads that you've chosen to work with for this project. There are several minor changes you can make to have a big impact on the finished look of your couching.

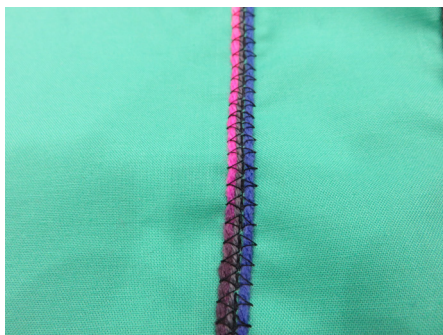




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Monofilament thread can be used when you don't want the thread that will secure the yarn to the fabric to be visible. If you are using lots of different colors of yarn and you don't want contrasting thread, monofilament thread would be the ideal choice for your project. This will decrease the amount of time you would have to spend changing the thread color every time you move on to a different colored yarn. You can use a thread color that blends with your fabric in the bobbin.

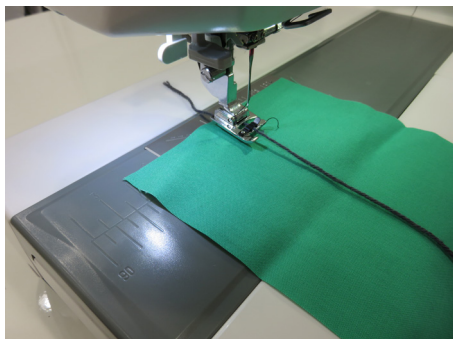
Contrasting thread can be used if you want an added element of interest or design to the couching. In this image, the black thread really stands out against the variegated yarn. Monofilament would also be a good choice with this yarn if you didn't want the thread to be visible.



The type of stitch that you select will also make a difference in the way your couching appears. When using feet H and F, you can use a simple zig zag stitch. Joanna selected stitch #9 on the MC8900. Even the simple zig zag stitch offers variety when you change the width or frequency of the stitch. The zig zag stitch will be simple to select and begin with when you start couching, but don't forget about the huge selection of decorative stitches the MC8900 has to offer.

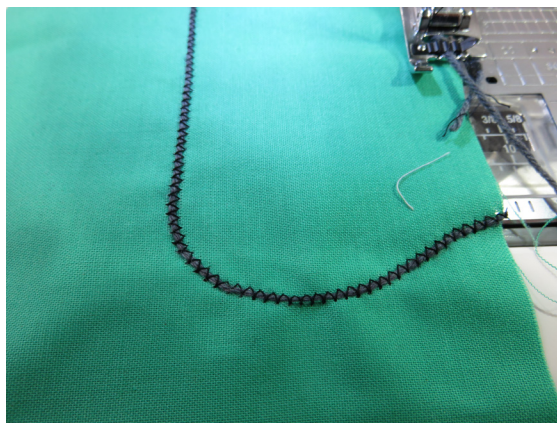
### Couching with a Simple Zig Zag Stitch

Prepare a few sample fat quarters with stabilizer to try the various feet. Refer to the instructions above to attach the 3-Way Cording Foot H. Select a yarn that is a thin enough weight that it will fit in one of the grooves of the cording foot. We will start with just a single strand of yarn. Select a thread that either contrasts or coordinates with your yarn and thread the machine. To insert the yarn into the cording foot, you will simply lift the the small black lever that is on top of foot H and slide the yarn under into the center groove. Pull the end of the yarn through a few inches behind the foot.



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Select stitch #9 (zig zag stitch) and adjust the width of the stitch as needed. Make a few stitches in place to secure the thread and yarn in place prior to starting the zig zag stitch. Begin zig zag stitching with the yarn hanging a few inches off the fabric and then trim later. You want the zig zag stitch to cover the entire width of the yarn to properly secure it in place. If your yarn is wider than the zig zag stitch, you will want to adjust the width to fit. This is great for couching straight lines and gentle curves. While zig zag stitching, hold the yarn in one thread to continually feed into the presser foot, keeping a small amount of tension on the yarn so it doesn't tangle or kink. Try couching some straight lines with the yarn, then gradually curve the yarn to create some flowing curves.



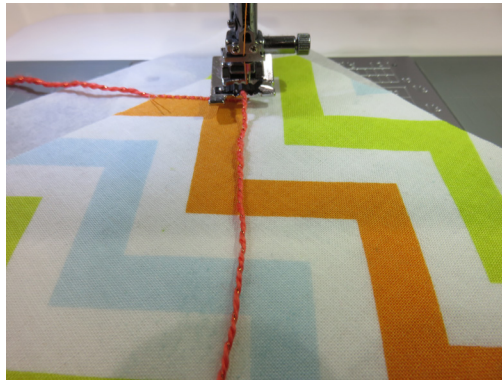
To go a step further with the single yarn couching, select a fabric that you can follow the lines to embellish it. Chevron is a great example that you'll see demonstrated here.



I selected three yarns that coordinated with the colors of the chevron design and outlined the edge of the chevron with the couched yarn. Begin with one of the yarn colors a few inches off of the edge of the fabric, as you did before, with just a single color of yarn at a time.

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Secure with a few stitches in place and check to make sure that your zig zag stitch #9 width is wide enough to cover the width of the yarn. Zig zag stitch until you get to a turning or pivot point.



Lift the presser foot with the yarn, then with the needle still down in the fabric, pivot the presser foot so it is lined up with the next edge or curve that needs to be couched. While couching, remember to maintain just a small amount of tension to the yarn to keep it feeding into the foot straight. Continue following the line of design on your fabric and change yarn colors as needed.



Once you've used couching in this way to enhance the design on the fabric, the end result will be well worth the work!

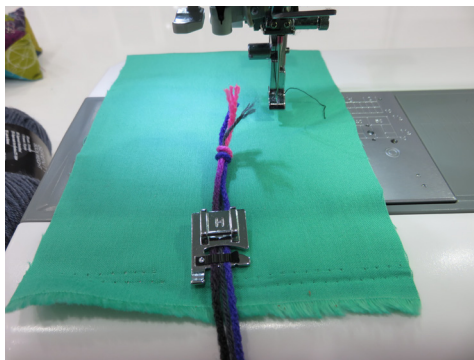




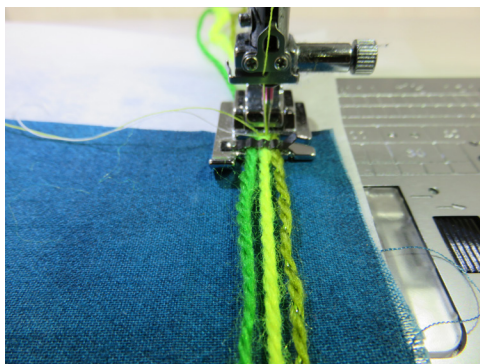
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### Couching with Decorative Stitches

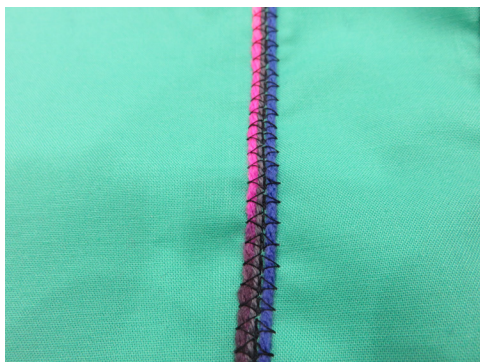
When using decorative stitches selected from the MC8900, use the 3-Way Cording Foot H as you did in the example above. For this exercise, use three strands of yarn. They can be all different colors, the same color or even some variegated yarn. Secure the yarns, one at a time, in each groove of the 3-Way Cording Foot. Pull the yarns behind the presser foot a few inches and then tie them in a knot together.



This will keep the yarns feeding through the foot evenly. It is probably easier to do this by detaching the foot and re-attaching after you have completed that. Get another piece of fabric that has been stabilized, already to prepare. Select a thread and start with stitch #59. Secure the yarns with a few stitches in place.

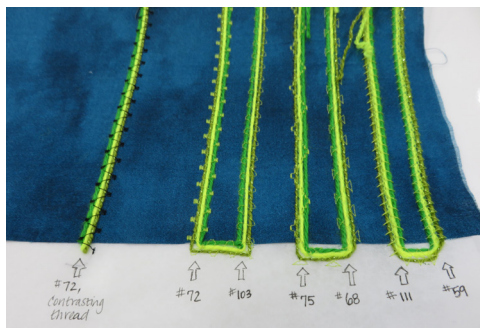


Begin stitch with stitch #59. This is an excellent decorative stitch, as it easily secures all three yarns.

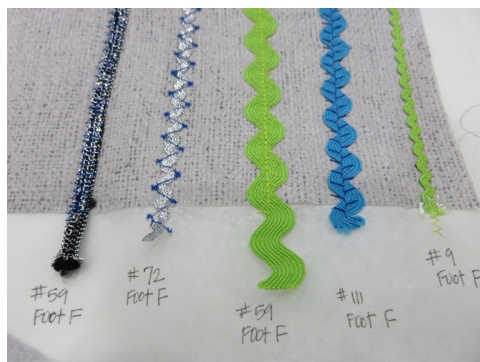


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Try out other decorative stitches that are wide enough to secure all 3 yarns. Some decorative stitches that Joanna particularly enjoys using for couching are stitches #59, 68, 75, 103 and 11. Be sure to add enough stabilizer to the fabrics when utilizing heavy decorative stitches.



You can also use decorative stitches to secure other items besides yarn to your project. Change your foot to the Satin Stitch Foot F to secure things like various sized rick rack and other decorative trims. There are countless decorative stitches you can use for this technique, so really experiment and have some fun selecting different stitches and various colored threads to achieve a unique look!



### Couching with the QBS Free Motion Foot

Another awesome way to really add some personality to your project is to use couching as a quilting technique.

Follow the instructions above to attach the QBS Free Motion Quilting Foot and select the settings to go with it. To begin quilting the yarn, select a single strand of yarn to start with (add more as you become more confident in your couching skills). Thread the yarn through the small hole of the QBS foot that the needle moves up and down through. Pull the end of the yarn through to the back of the machine a few inches, just as you've done in the past with the other feet.



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Secure the yarn with a few stitches in place and you are ready to start quilting! You can use couching as a simple quilting technique or you can use this method to create art installations or other yarn drawings.



For this technique, try some circles, wavy lines and even filling in some of the shapes with more couching. Joanna change yarn colors several times throughout to get a varied look with more interest. The more shapes you attempt, the more you will feel confident in feeding the yarn through the eye of the QBS Free Motion Foot. You will want to keep a small amount of tension on the yarn while feeding it and direct the yarn while keeping it from getting tangled.



Now that you have couching in your tool belt as a sewing and quilting technique, there are limitless ways you can use this to embellish and add dimension to your work.

