

Questions for Your Longarm Quilter

Cindy Roth, Longarm University

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Many people use the services of a professional longarm quilter. A professional longarm quilter will do the quilting on your quilt and may even offer binding and other quilting related services. Each professional longarm quilter is an independent business person. Many professional longarm quilters' take classes, attend machine quilting conferences, attend longarm group/guild meetings and practice, practice, practice to expand and hone their quilting skills. Each quilter has their own pricing structure and it will reflect their quilting skill level. A good professional longarm quilter can take a so-so quilt top and make it wonderful! Professional longarm quilters are skilled, technical and artistic craftsmen and deserve to be compensated as such.

If you are contemplating using a professional longarm quilter (or already use a professional longarm quilter) here are some questions you may want to ask about them and their services.

Questions you may want to ask a professional longarm quilter :

How long have you been professionally longarm quilting? Have you taken any longarm quilting classes or attend machine quilting conferences?

How much do you charge and what is covered in this charge?

Do you have different charges for different patterns and techniques?

Do you give estimates? How firm are they and how long will the estimate last?

When can I expect to have my quilt finished?

Do you have batting available or should I bring my own? What batting do you like to work with?

How much extra backing fabric do you like to work with? Will you stitch backing fabrics together if needed and how much does this service cost?

Do you bind quilts? How much do you charge?

Do you work your quilting designs from patterns or do designs free hand? Do you have patterns that I can look at and choose from?

What kind of thread do you use and what are your thread charges? Is there any kind of thread(s) you will NOT use?

Have you won any prizes with your quilting?

Can I see samples of your quilting?

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Are your hours by appointment? Can you meet me at a different location?

What if I'm not happy with the quilting when it is finished? Do you have a refund policy?

Questions a longarm quilter may ask before seeing your quilt:

What are the dimensions of your quilt? Professional longarm quilter's often charge by the square inch or square foot. Please be as accurate as possible.

What is the quilt piecing/appliqué pattern? Log Cabin, Flying Geese, etc. What book/pattern is it from? This will help determine the price of the quilting.

What type of fabrics are in the quilt, such as Hoffman's, Batiks, Thimbleberries, scrap fabrics? Did you purchase the fabrics at a discount department store or the local quilt shop?

What predominant color are the fabrics?

Would you say your quilt is traditional or "artsy"?

Is the quilt for a man, a woman or a child?

What is the quilt's ultimate use? A couch or snuggle quilt? A show quilt? A gift? A charity or raffle quilt?

When do you need this quilt finished by?

What is your vision for this quilt?

Do you have any patterns/designs that you love and are there any patterns/designs that you don't like?

Would you like to see samples of my work?

Questions NOT to ask a longarm quilter:

Where is the computer and does the machine run itself?

The majority of longarm quilting machines are hand guided. This means that if the machine is to work, someone needs to be in control of and moving the machine.

How long does it take you to quilt a quilt?

Each quilt is an individual and each quilt will take a different length of time.

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Can I rent time on your machine so I can do my own quilting?

Would you ask your doctor if you could rent time in his operating room to do your own or a family member's operation? Would you ask to borrow a friend's new car?

Can I watch you quilt my quilt? Many quilters work in the early morning or late at night. Many quilters' business insurance policies prohibit people from being around the machine while it is running

That looks so easy, anyone can do it!

You can purchase your own machine for \$15,000 or more, take the classes, practice, practice, practice, break the needles, re-time the machine, practice, practice, practice some more on muslin, sheets, charity quilts, etc., and after more practice, practice, practice THEN you can quilt your own quilts.

Before dropping off a quilt:

If you make an appointment, please make every effort to be prompt. Professional longarm quilters are busy business people. They will wait for a while if you are late, but if you are going to be very late, please be courteous and call. Be understanding if your quilter reschedules your appointment.

If your quilt back is seamed, make sure it is stitched together correctly, edges are even and the selvedge is trimmed. Also make sure that the stitching lines "covers" the selvage "printing".

Please make sure your quilt top and especially your borders are as flat as possible. If they are not, the quilter may not be able to avoid pleats and puckers on the finished quilt no matter how skillful she may be.

Feel free to suggest quilting ideas to your quilter, but be flexible enough to hear what the quilter has to say. Through experience, the quilter may have creative ideas to enhance the beauty of your quilt.

Don't keep calling your quilter before the completion date. If the quilter calls you to say the quilt is done early, you will have a pleasant surprise.

If you are unhappy with the way your quilt turned out, please be courteous and talk to your quilter about the problem. Try to determine where the problem is – thread color, pattern choice, quality of workmanship, etc. Contact the quilter and give her the opportunity to work out a reasonable solution with you.

By asking questions and listening carefully to the answers you can make an informed decision on the professional longarm quilter you want to quilt your quilt. If you and the quilter both have the same expectations, you may develop a long-term mutually satisfying relationship.