

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

TO

FABRIC PUCKERING &  
DRAW-UP ISSUES IN

HEAVILY STITCHED WORK

DISCOVER THE CAUSES &  
THE SOLUTIONS

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## THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO FABRIC PUCKERING & DRAW-UP ISSUES

### Troubleshooting Seam Puckering Issues

Seam puckering and fabric draw up seem to be one of the biggest issues people face when drawing with thread, free motion quilting, thread sketching or any other form of dense stitching.

I know how frustrating that can be. There was a time when I started getting my fabric draw up at the outer edges of my stitched drawings and that is definitely frustrating.

So, I went on a hunt for solutions to this seam puckering and fabric draw up issues. After reading many technical documents from the textile and fashion industries, I'm glad to share my findings.

In this pdf, I'll give you several tips to help you avoid seam puckering issues or troubleshoot those problems if you're already having them. So, let's get started.

### 4 Main Reasons Seam Puckering Occurs

1. Displacement of the fabric yarns
2. Shrinkage (of thread, fabric, stabilizer etc.)
3. Thread Tension
4. Uneven Fabric Feed

### How to Avoid Seam Puckering

So now armed with what the underlying causes are, here's what to do to avoid them.

### Tightly Woven Fabrics

Very tightly woven fabrics are more likely to cause seam puckering because it's difficult for the sewing needle to pierce through, thus causing the yarns to draw up.

Here's the solution:

- Needles: Use the smallest size machine needle possible for your sewing machine. Fine point needles will also help.

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- Threads: Use finer threads so the thread can easily go through the fabric without displacing the yards too much.
- Presser Foot: Use presser foot and needle plates with small needle holes
- Increase stitch length and reduce thread density if possible. I find that when the sewing machine speed is faster than your hands can move the fabric around, you get short stitch lengths; so, endeavor to coordinate the two.
- Fabric: Consider using fabrics which are less tightly woven.

### Shrinkage

When the different materials you're using to sew, shrink at different rates, it can cause seam puckering.

When puckering occurs only after you apply steam to your work, the most likely culprit, is that the materials in your work shrink at different rates.

To solve this:

- Preshrink fabric before use by washing and ironing
- Check consistency in the shrinkage of other materials in your project – threads, stabilizers, batting etc. Either check manufacturer's info or try several combinations of materials till you find what works best together.

### Thread Tension

If you've experienced skipped stitches and frequent breaking of your machine needles, you know how frustrating that is. Dialing down your thread tension is one of the first things to try in such a situation.

Also, the looser your thread tension, the better your chances of avoiding both thread breakage and seam puckering. Overly high thread tension causes puckering in your work.

### Uneven Fabric Feed

When the top layer of the fabrics under your sewing machine needle are not being moved at the same rate as the bottom layers, you can develop seam puckering in your work.

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The common solution for this is to use an even feed presser foot (a.k.a. walking foot). However, when you're doing free motion stitching, you cannot use that kind of presser foot. Instead you use a darning foot.

So, to help solve this, lay some material on the bed of your sewing machine to help you easily move the fabric around. Check out what's inside my [thread sketching toolbox](#) to see the tools I use for this purpose. Use the right tools for the right results.

### Conclusion

My hope is that I've equipped you with lots of tools to work with when you're faced with seam puckering and fabric-draw-up issues.

Finally, you might also want to read this [article](#), which has detailed info about dealing with puckering that's specifically caused by uneven feeding of the various fabric layers through your sewing machine.

## Take Action



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