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ready?



Brought to you by Joanne Banko
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Fancy Footwork Tip Sheet

Description of a WALKING FOOT: The walking foot is a foot with a special feeding system built right into the mechanics of the foot. The foot itself has a set of upper feed dogs, most often made of plastic rather than metal. When sewing, these upper feed dogs match up with the lower metal feed dogs on the sewing machine. I prefer to refer to these feed dogs as **teeth**. The set of teeth under the throat plate of the machine advances whatever is under the presser foot, moving it through the machine. With an upper set of teeth coming from the walking foot itself, and a lower set of teeth on the machine, the layers under the foot feed evenly as the teeth link together and walk the layers through the machine. Therefore, it makes perfect sense that this foot is also known as an **EVEN FEED FOOT**. Popular amongst quilters it is often underused by garment, home décor, and crafting enthusiasts who are unaware of the foot's extraordinary EVEN FEED capabilities. As an added bonus this foot is widely available for most machine models in common use today.

With a standard, flat presser foot the feed dogs on the machine tend to push the fabric a bit more on the bottom side than the top side. The amount of **pushing** depends on the fabric, fabric layers, and your own personal manner of controlling layers as you stitch. Put the layer you want pushed or eased in direct contact with the feed dogs and it will naturally be eased somewhat to fit the top layer.

Since the top is the layer in direct contact with the presser foot, the **pushing** effect of the feed dogs can sometimes cause shifting of the fabric layers. Think about a time when you tried to sew two pieces together that needed precise matching such as stripes, plaids, quilt pieces, fabric prints, etc. Have you ever sewn velvet to a lining fabric? You may have had problems with feeding of the layers and quite possibly a mismatch at the end of your seam. Most sewing enthusiasts compensate for the natural pushing effect by using pins and by firmly holding the bottom layer of fabric while sewing. Oftentimes we do this without even thinking about it. The walking foot is a great help when sewing fabrics, trims, and multiple layers that tend to shift. If you struggle with sewing tricky fabrics or fabric layers you can switch to a walking foot and take advantage of its even feeding capabilities. Next time you sew tricky layers give the walking foot a try!

Below are some additional photos with more information about the Walking foot:

Closed Toe Walking Foot on the left – Open Toe Walking Foot on the right

Figure #1

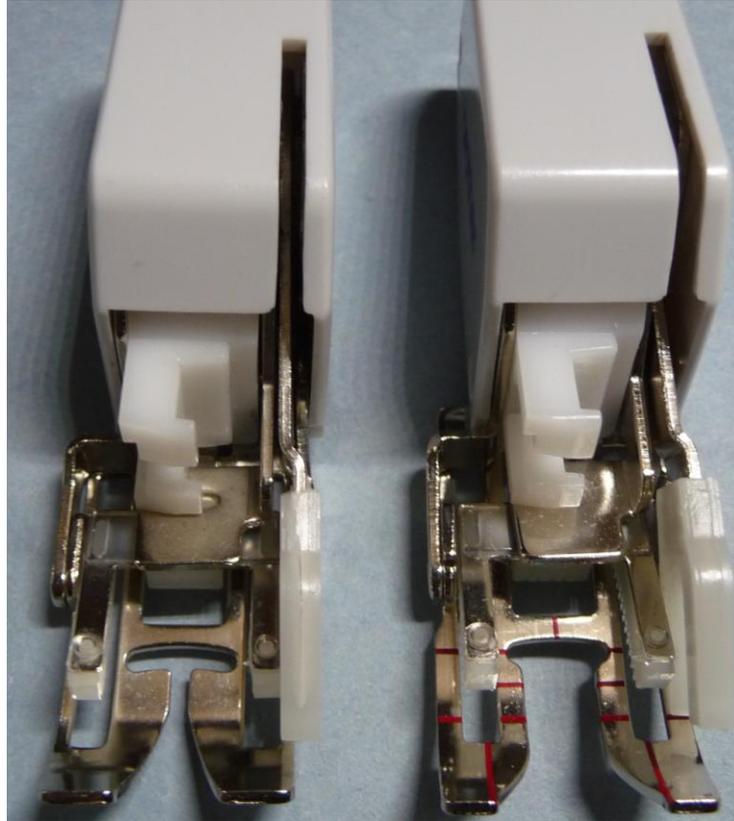


Figure #2



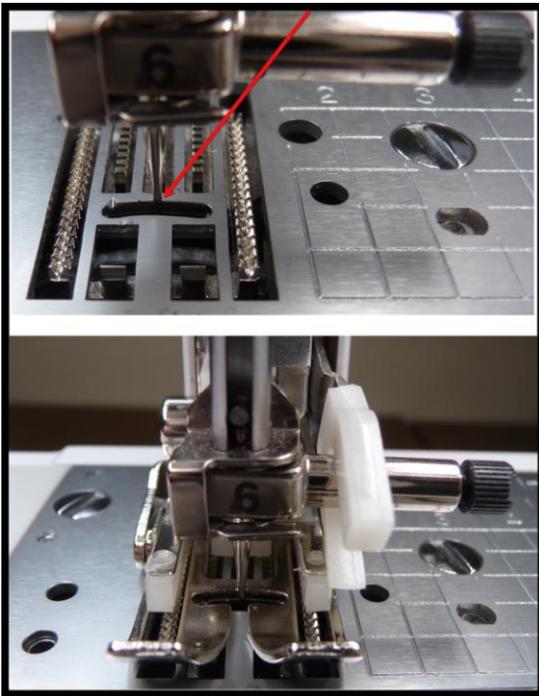
Turn the foot upside down and you can see a view of the teeth built-in to the WALKING FOOT.

Figure #3

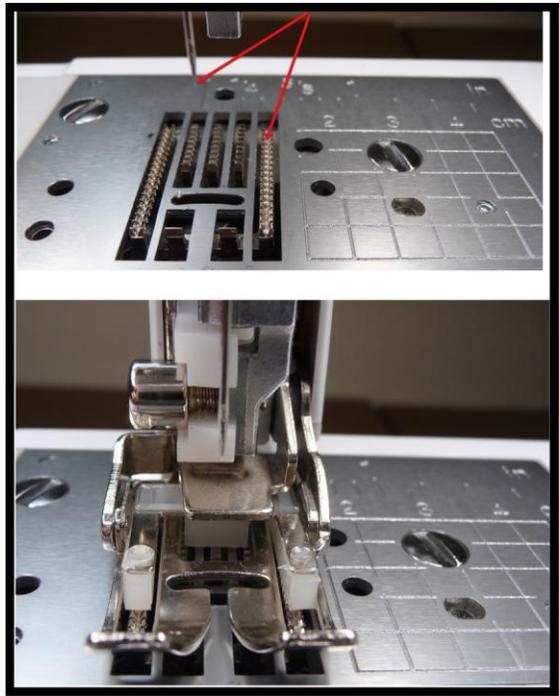


This arm must wrap around the needle bar when you mount the foot on the machine.

Notice that the “teeth” on the walking foot are **up** when the needle and feed dogs are **down**.



Notice that the “teeth” on the walking foot are **down** when the needle and feed dogs are **up**.



A stitch is formed when the needle goes down and the both sets of teeth are not making contact. Then, to advance the fabric forward the feed dogs (teeth) on the machine come up, the teeth on the walking foot come down, and the needle goes into the up position. This process is repeated for each stitch and the fabric is gripped from both the top and bottom side as the stitches form.

Important tips:

- ✂ The timing of the walking foot is coordinated with the movement of the needle bar so it is important for the fork on the foot to wrap around the needle bar. When attaching the foot I find it easier to wrap the arm around the needle bar and then attach the screw on the opposite side to hold the foot in place. Always make sure the screws are snug before sewing. ***See Figure #3** on the previous page.
- ✂ The Closed toe walking foot is generally better for regular sewing projects, especially for thinner or softer layers. The closed toe on the foot makes better contact with the fabric layers so the stitch quality is usually better. The Open toe walking foot is often used for quilting. The “fluffy” nature of the layers, and the need for high visibility makes the open toe helpful.
- ✂ The walking foot is designed for use with stitches that move in a forward motion such as straight and zigzag stitches. It is not recommended for stitches that sew in reverse or use sideways movement.
- ✂ There are a lot of moving parts on this foot so it is best to sew more slowly when using the walking foot.
- ✂ The opening for stitching on the foot should match the opening on your machine’s throat plate. Example: 7mm machines use a 7mm walking foot.
- ✂ The shank on the foot, generally low shank or high shank must also match your machine or you may require an adapter to use this foot. Check with your local sewing machine dealer to find the proper foot for your machine.