

Longarm Comparison Chart

Brands			Component	Component Definition
Hand Guided Machines				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Channel Lock	Channel locks can be either plastic clips that prevent wheels from moving or magnets controlled by electricity that prevent movement in a certain direction. Electronic magnetic channel locks are easier to use and last longer however do come at a cost. Plastic clips tend to break often and can be cumbersome to use if you need to walk around the machine to clip them on the wheels each time you need to move the machine head to a new location.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Laser	Laser Lights may be optional on different machine brands. You need one if you plan on doing pantographs. You may want to use it from the front of your machine too for different block designs. They are a necessary investment, include a laser light in your must have list up front or make sure it's standard equipment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Laser Mount	Laser mounts are on most machines. Often there is only one mount on the side for pantographs. Some machine have 2 mounts, one on the back side for pantographs and on the front for block patterns.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rear Handles	Often times, machines do not include the rear handles with purchase and are considered an option. Some machines have the rear handles included. Some manufacturers also offer an upgraded set specifically for pantographs that sets your body to the side of machine instead of behind the machine. When deciding which machine is right for you, ask what might work best for your needs and what is included.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Programmable Button	Less expensive machines have a simple single stitch and start/stop buttons. Higher end machines provide more options allowing you to grow as a quilter. Consider, when you make your choice of machines, what might work for you as you quilt. Programmable buttons are nice if you are left handed or like to switch quilting functions when you quilt. For example if you would like to switch from ruler work to free motion easily. Your quilting habits may change as you become more confident; consider the future on this option.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Front Handle Bar Light	Many machines offer lighting in some form. Some offer low light with an upgrade, but most offer adequate light. Many times, the light can be upgraded for little cost as the cost of LED's continue to come down.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thread Break Sensor	Thread break sensors are included on most machines and are considered standard. If it's not standard equipment, be sure to research what the cost of a thread break sensor is and compare your choice with another machine that has it standard. They are not optional as far as a must have on your machine and your quilting journey.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	On-Board Bobbin Winder	On-board bobbin winders are a great feature that may be included as a standard feature with some machines. Many brands also offer a stand alone bobbin winder separate from the machine.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Usage Clock	Digital machines normally will have a usage clock, that allows the user to time how long the machine has been running for each of your projects. Most allow you to reset this for every quilt or leave it running over several projects..
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stitch Counter	A stitch counter is a convenient way of keeping track of the "age" of your machine. Many machines will track the lifetime stitch count and also the stitch count in each project. It is an impressive statistic to include the number of stitches in the quilt on your customers work order or to add the information to your projects quilt label.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bobbin Thread Estimator	This bobbin thread estimator measures the amount of thread in the bobbin and keeps track of how much thread is remaining for use in your project. At times, it can be adjustable for various sizes of thread and should be considered an estimate not a guaranteed measurement.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Programable Stitch Modes	Machines may have up to 4 different stitch modes: 1. Constant Mode is the original stitching mode and has been around since the inception of the longarm quilting machine. Constant or unregulated mode is when the motor moves the needle at a set speed determined by the user and the user controls the stitch length by how fast or slow they move the machine. 2. Regulated Mode is when the user sets the stitches-per-in (SPI) and the machine regulates the SPI regardless of the speed the machine head is being moved. 3. Coast or Coast Regulate is a combination of both constant and regulated. There are speed and SPI settings to adjust for each user. As you move the machine head around your quilting area the machine will either be in regulated or constant mode depending on how fast or slow you are moving. 4. Basting Mode comes with most machines. Ensure when looking at this option the machine has options on basting stitch length ranging from 1/4 inch to at least 4inches. All four stitching modes have a purpose when quilting and you should be considering a machine that can manage your growth as a longarm quilter. Not all stitch modes are standard on all machines, be sure you ask what is an additional cost and what is included.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Head Sizes	Machine heads vary in size. Consider what you want to do with your machine, business or personal use; computerized or hand guided. Do you quilt a couple quilts per year? Are you operating a business? Will you only every do pantographs, or will you be a free motion? Your dealer can help you narrow down the right machine to fit your needs. Depending on the manufacturer longarm head sizes range all the way up to 30". Spend time thinking where you want quilting to go. Plan for growth as a quilter!
Entry Level Computerization				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tablet Controlled	There are many different ways to communicate between a mechanical machine and an electronic one. Does it have exposed wires, does it use bluetooth, or is it hard mounted with internal wiring. Are the rest of the electronics separate or mounted inside the quilt machine.? These are important for a number of reasons; servicing is the foremost. Will you be able to fix something small on your own, or need a service appointment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Computerized Features	Computerized modes can be a block, a row, or a quilt. Many manufacturers use these functions as a basis for their programming. Some manufacturers have more options than this, but for entry level systems, this is very common. What does your have for modes? What support does yours have or need?

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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Multi-Directional Row Placement	The standard direction for most longarm machines to quilt out any pattern, row or quilt is from left to right. All entry level computerized longarm machines have the ability to quilt a horizontal row. Other machines are able to vertically placed and quilt out a vertically placed pattern. A well timed machine will even have the ability to go from right to left. Decide what is important to to you today and in the years to come.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Free Upgrades	Whether it's phones, computers or quilt machines, progress is inevitable. Does the system you are looking at come with free upgrades and updates? Will you always have free access the best possible software? Will it cost money to stay up to date? How long do the free upgrades last? Is the most current features important to you?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pattern Transfer	Once you decide on a computerized machine pattern transfer is going to be important. How do you get a new digital pattern onto your machine to quilt out? Can you buy it from any designer or only from one place? This may seem like an easy question, but file transfers are important to being able to use your longarm efficiently. How easy does the software make this process?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Free Patterns	While some machines come with a complementary number of patterns, other machines make you pay for patterns before you can begin quilting. Look for a machine with patterns included. This will help get you started quilting the day your machine is delivered. What will you be doing with your machine and will you be needing different patterns? Is the price you're paying for the machine comparable if you have to buy more patterns just to get started?
Advanced Level Computerization				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Software	The software that runs your machine is a huge factor! Who makes the software? In high end machines the software is designed and manufactured by the same company. Are you able to download and play with the software before purchase? How easy is it to navigate through the various features? Is there additional help and training to improve your skill set as you grow and advance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Computer & Monitor	How do your electronics communicate with you the mechanics of the longarm quilting machine? Do you have a tablet or a commercial grade computer? Is your monitor built in or a separate component? These are factors that can determine the speed of the machine as well as the number of available features.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Channel Locks	This is where channel locks get interesting! Some machines, even though they are computerized, still use the plastic wheel clamps. Others use the motors and wheels to lock in different directions. Most machines still have 2 way channel locks (X, Y axis). Higher end machines will have 360 degree channel locks. Ask your dealer what kind of channel locks are available.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drive Method	The drive method on any computerized longarm is crucial to the longevity of the machine. Some use motors and wheels like a vehicle and some use belts like a motorcycle. The quality of the product and the ease of use are crucial to your happiness with your machine. Is it easy to disconnect your machine in order to freehand? Do you have to disconnect?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pattern Management	How does your software manage the patterns you want to use? How easy is it to find the patterns? Do you have to load them from a file, or pick them from a picture, or a list? Think about how you want to look for patterns? This about how you are going to organize them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nodes View	Do you know how patterns are designed? Designer nodes and the ability to view and alter them are a helpful tool your software should have. Mose digital patterns are designed using a combination of lines and arcs. Does your software allow you to make your own patterns? Not all programs are created equal.. The ability to move nodes and alter patterns can be very useful for almost every quilt top!
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pattern to Boundary	How does software fit digital patterns into blocks or rows to quilt them out on the quilt. Automatically, manually, or both? Can you adjust the pattern after it is in place? Look for software that allows for manual alterations, and gives you complete control over the pattern placement. It makes a difference on custom quilts!
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Features	What features does the software give you? Features include but are not limited to: echo, fill, draw pattern/arc/line/curve/freehand, mirror, circular array, convert to pattern/boundary/trim, and record. Basic features are edge-to-edge, repeat patterns, border corner. What's important to you and will you out grow the software as you grow as a quilter?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Directional Set Up & Stitching	Each computerized brand typically lays out rows to stitch from left to right when setting up the quilt to quilt. Look for brands that are able to set up digital patterns and stitch those patterns from right to left. Look for software that you can combine patterns and you can save time by combining rows and stitching both ways allowing you to save tons of time. Directional stitching is a huge benefit if you are running a business when time saved is money earned.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Back Up Patterns	What happens if you drop your table and it breaks? Computer crashes? Where are your patterns stored when they appear lost? Does your software allow you to keep back ups? Will data back up happen automatically? Questions to ask your dealer. Electronic issues can mean a lot of down time to fix and potentially extra cost to replace lost digital patterns.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Free Upgrades and Updates	Software changes and improves on a regular basis. Features are added and improved upon. When are you allowed to upgrade? Are you limited in the amount of upgrades? Can you load your software anywhere else? How does it update? The industry standard for this is lifetime free upgrades. Not all do this but the higher end machines do. Is that important to you?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Free Patterns	Software changes and improves on a regular basis are a good thing. Features are added and improved upon. When are you allowed to upgrade? Are you limited in the amount of upgrades? Can you load your software anywhere else to practice and use the design features? How does it update? The industry standard for this is free lifetime updates & upgrades. Not all companies do this is that important to you?
Table				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Table Construction & Design	One of the most important factors of any longarm quilting machine is the table construction. Look for a table that can stand the test of time and the weight of a quilt. Table weight, rigidity and stability can be the difference between enjoying your experience with your new quilt machine or eternal frustration.

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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Table Types & Sizes	Does your machine offer multiple table lengths? Will the table make a difference in the price, the size of the head available, or options? Is the table included in the price of your machine or do you need to go looking elsewhere for a table that will work. All good things to know if you are planning on a machine. Length of table makes a difference in the size of the quilt you can quilt. It really depends on space available in your room and your personal preference what table you will need. Table lengths can range from 6' on the small end to 14' on the large side (for stand up long arm machines).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adjustability	How adjustable is the table you are considering? Does it have pivotal access as well as easy to use controls? Does it sacrifice construction for adjustability? Or is it a well thought out design made for the end user? How easy is it to adjust to level? Are you able to adjust the quilting area at the front to accommodate your ruler plate, or extra space for quilting.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track	Does the machine you are trying out move smoothly on the track system? Smooth movement means nice smooth circles and feathers when hand guiding and ease of use when using your computerized controls. Tracks vary from manufacturer to manufacturer; rubber wheels that ride vertically (usually there are 4 wheels) to metal composite wheels riding at 60 degrees. Use each track and decide for yourself what you prefer.
Set Up, Delivery, Education and Training				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Set Up & Delivery	How important is set up and delivery to you? Do you find the assembly of an unknown machine part of the fun? Or would you prefer professional set up and delivery? Does the mailman bring the boxes to your door and leave a puzzle to figure out? Or does a technician bring it into your home and set it up? Do you have the inclination and skillset to assemble your machine and table? Does the dealer offer or require a setup service?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Training	You will need education and support with your new longarm machine purchase. How much time is spent teaching you how to use your machine? Does your technician spend any time with you and do they provide instruction, phone support and videos? Training sets you on the right path to be able to practice, practice, practice and master your new craft! Ask your dealer about their training program and who teaches it.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Education	What education opportunities are provided by the dealer or manufacturer after delivery? Do they have interesting trainers that quilt every day and can help with your questions? Look for companies that offer many opportunities to improve your skills. Ask what training and retreat opportunities are available before you buy so you understand what is available to you and have a path to success.
Warranty				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Warranty	What is the term of the warranty? Be sure to be aware of what is included and not included in the warranty so you don't have surprises later. Many major brands offer 5 year warranty or longer. The industry standard is a Limited Lifetime Warranty. Limited Lifetime Warranty usually means that the manufacturer guarantees the quality of the machine and main components of the machine that it has produced. Wear and tear parts would not be covered nor would components made outside the Limited Lifetime Warranty terms. Are labour charges included in any warranty work that may need done? Where is the warranty work performed? Do you have to mail your head somewhere? Take the head to the dealer, or does the dealer come to you? Does the warranty authorize business use? How long does all the peripheral warranty clauses last? Make sure you read the fine print so you don't have any surprises.