

Needles and Threads: For Today's Quilter

By Nancy Goldsworthy

Almost all of your sewing problems can be traced to one of the following four issues:

Thread – Do we have the correct one for our current project? Do we want it to show up or blend in? Are we using it for construction or decoration? All of these questions will help you pick the right thread.

Needles. The least expensive part of your next project is a new needle. Take the time to find the correct needle for your current application. The right needle will make all the difference in your finished project.

Tension. We all love the look of today's wonderful new threads. Knowing how they are made will help us get a good stitch the first try! Remember that most specialty threads are fragile and work best with very little top tension. An extra bobbin case is a good investment when using multiple kinds of thread in your machine.

Condition of Your Machine. Keep your machine clean and in good condition. A little maintenance will go a long way toward smooth quilting.

Thread

This little thought about sewing notion has never advanced as rapidly as it is right now. The machine quilting industry is pushing thread manufacturers to move fast to keep up with our ever-changing needs. The more we know about the threads we use, the better we will be at picking the ones that will work for us.

Thread construction

Spun thread	Cotton or polyester staple fibers, spun into single yarns and then twisted together.
Core Thread	Spun cotton or polyester staple fibers wrapped around polyester fibers.
Texturized Thread	Polyester or nylon that has been mechanically texturized to make the thread fuzzy and stretchy.
Filament	Round or triangular, shiny thread made of polyester, rayon, or nylon.
Monofilament	Almost like fishing line. Single nylon or polyester filament.
Laminate	Multiple layers of polyester bonded together for a flat shiny thread.

Thread Fibers

Rayon. Soft, high sheen, not always colorfast, not as strong and durable as poly

Polyester Durable, stronger, colorfast, retains shape, spun poly has a more matte finish, trilobal poly's are very shiny.

Nylon Usually mono-filament or fuzzy surger type threads. Low melt, becomes brittle with laundering and light.

Cotton Natural fiber, short staple for twisted threads, soft, strong and durable, lots of weights.

Metallics Multiple parts, nylon core, rice paper construction, shiny outer coating

Laminate Bonded in sheets and then split, bright reflective colors, heat resistant

Needle types for home machine quilting:

Universal: Originally designed for everyday use on your home sewing machine. Will work on loose wovens and most knits. Not suggested for today's tightly woven fabrics. Has a slightly rounded point.

Denim: Very strong shaft, with a fine sharp point. Use only for the very heaviest fabrics and when you have lots of layers. Good for heavier threads

Embroidery: Sharp point, large eye, and a deeper scarf to help loop formation on fine threads. Designed for multiple direction stitching.

Metallic: Sharp point, elongated eye, larger scarf and groove to protect fragile metallic threads.

Quilting: Tapered point for stitching through multiple layers, point designed to minimize damage to today's fabrics. Use size 11 to piece and size 14 to quilt on home machines.

Microtex/Sharp: Sharper than the universal point, slender shaft, made for fine wovens and tightly woven synthetics and batiks.

Topstitch: Deeper groove protects heavier threads from excess wear, large rectangular eye aids movement of heavy threads.

Titanium: It is stronger than a standard chrome needle. The titanium coating will not allow adhesives to stick. Great for fusible applications.

Nancy can be reached at ninepatchquilting@comcast.net or by calling 503-526-0746. Check out her new edition of the book Needles and Threads and Bobbins. Oh My! Everything you need to know to make your machine run like a charm.