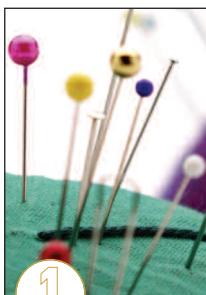


sewNEWS presents

4 FREE SEWING GUIDES

Basic Sewing Tools



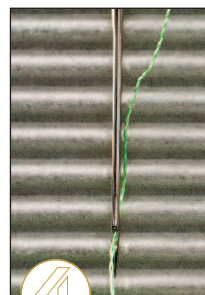
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4

1 Get to the Point
by Deanna Springer

2 Basics: Marking
by Elizabeth Barry

3 All About Thread
by Devin Gentry

4 Basics: Machine Needles
by Sarah J. Doyle



Basic Sewing Tools

The right sewing tools save you time, simplify tricky tasks and help you to effortlessly create professional results. In “Get to the Point,” learn the key to selecting and using the proper pins for every project. “The Basics: Marking” outlines various marking tools and methods to help you find the best match for your fabric. Improve the look and quality of your sewing projects by learning about basic thread types and their uses in “All About Thread.” Finally, the must-have knowledge in “Basics: Sewing Machine Needles” demystifies the process of choosing the right needle for various fabric types. This essential and easy-to-follow guide will provide you with the know-how to stock your sewing room and get the most out of your sewing tools.

Happy sewing!

Beth Bradley
Associate Editor, *Sew News*

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Get to the Point

Pins are a basic—but important—sewing tool.

MANY OF US HAVE A PIN-CUSHION FULL OF MYSTERY PINS—including dull, bent and the free-with-dress-shirt varieties.

Although we don't often give this basic sewing tool much thought, using the right pin for the job can make sewing easier and the results better.

Because a successful project starts with the right tools, choose the appropriate pin as you'd choose the correct sewing machine needle for the particular fabric and thread. The information in this article is based on research on over 75 different pins from a half dozen companies.

Straight Pin Anatomy

Through history, pins have been made of everything from fish bones to ivory to copper. Today, they're commonly made from steel that's plated with nickel or brass. Plated-steel pins are rust- and corrosion-

resistant, and will stick to magnetic pincushions. Nickel-plated brass and solid brass gilt pins are rust- and corrosion-resistant but won't stick to magnetic pincushions, and will bend more easily than steel pins. Stainless steel pins have the maximum rust- and corrosion resistance and are the strongest, but don't stick to magnetic pincushions well.

Salt air or dampness may adversely affect steel or brass pins (although today's plated-steel pins are less likely to rust than those of the past).

Not just for color, the head of a pin is designed for ease of handling and identification. The head may be a metal disk; plastic, glass, pearlized or metal ball; flat and flower-shaped; or T-shaped. Pins with ball heads are less likely to get lost in fabric and are more comfortable to grasp. Straight pins are available with sharp or ball-point tips. Most pins are sharps and may be used with woven

or knit fabrics. Some sharps have a more defined tapered point, designed to slide in and out of fabric with ease. Ball-point needles are designed for knits and lingerie fabrics.

Pins come in different lengths to accommodate the type of project. Choose a pin long enough for the seam allowance width, fabric thickness and the number of layers being pinned, but not so long that you're apt to stick yourself. Short pins are useful when much pinning is necessary and longer pins would get in the way of each other. Straight pin lengths range from ½" to 2½" or longer. Each length is assigned a number or size that may be printed on the packaging; multiply the size by ⅛" for the pin length (i.e., a size 20 pin is 1¼" long).

Choose the correct pin shaft diameter for the weight and density of the fabric. A shaft diameter of .40 mm is very fine, designed for very lightweight or tightly woven fabric. The higher the number the thicker the shaft—.50 mm is fine, .60 mm is medium and .70 mm is heavy duty. Review and compare the information on the packages before you buy.



General Sewing Pins

Appliqué/sequin pins are used to hold and position appliques. Because they're so short ($\frac{1}{2}$ " to $\frac{3}{4}$ "), numerous pins in small areas won't get in the way of each other. They're also used for attaching sequins to craft projects. Available in straight or ball head.

Ball-point pins, similar to ball-point machine needles, push between the yarns of knit fabric rather than piercing them. They're used for general sewing on knits and lingerie. Plastic ball head; $\frac{1}{16}$ " to $\frac{1}{4}$ " long.

Beading pins are used for sewing on lace or open-weave fabrics. This thick, sharp pin with a larger straight head is also used for beading crafts; $\frac{7}{8}$ " long.

Dressmaker or general-purpose pins are for general sewing on many fabrics. Assorted ball-head colors make it easy to find the pins on various fabrics. Available in straight, plastic or metallic ball head; $\frac{1}{16}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ " long.

Extra-fine pins are designed for use on very fine fabrics.

Fork pins, also known as twin or double pins, are extremely sharp and fine. They're used for general sewing on fine fabrics; hard-to-handle fabrics like lining, velour and fur; and when pinning gathers. They can also be used by knitters for blocking; $1\frac{5}{8}$ " long.

Glass-head pins are used for general sewing, delicate fabrics and machine piecing. They're usually very fine and sharp, and the heads are heat-resistant so they won't melt when touched with the iron; $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $1\frac{3}{8}$ " long.

Needle-strength pins are used for general sewing and home dec when a stronger pin is needed. Sharp tapered point; straight head; $\frac{1}{16}$ " long.

Pearl-head pins are used for general sewing, crafting and decorative projects from floral to bead crafts. Pearlized plastic ball head; $1\frac{3}{8}$ " to $1\frac{7}{8}$ " long.

Pleating pins are 1" long—the shorter length is useful for pinning within the seam allowance on delicate fabrics and when pinning pleats. These pins are often used in bobbin lace-making; straight head.

Silk pins are very fine and sharp, good for general sewing on fine or lightweight fabrics including silks and microfibers. These thin pins penetrate fine fabrics easily without leaving pin marks. Straight or glass head; $\frac{1}{16}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ " long.

Home Dec Pins

T-pins have a flat, T-shaped head, which won't easily slip out of fabric. Use them for home dec projects like slipcovers and upholstery; for bulky or loosely woven fabrics, or those with deep pile; or for crafts; $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $1\frac{3}{4}$ " long.

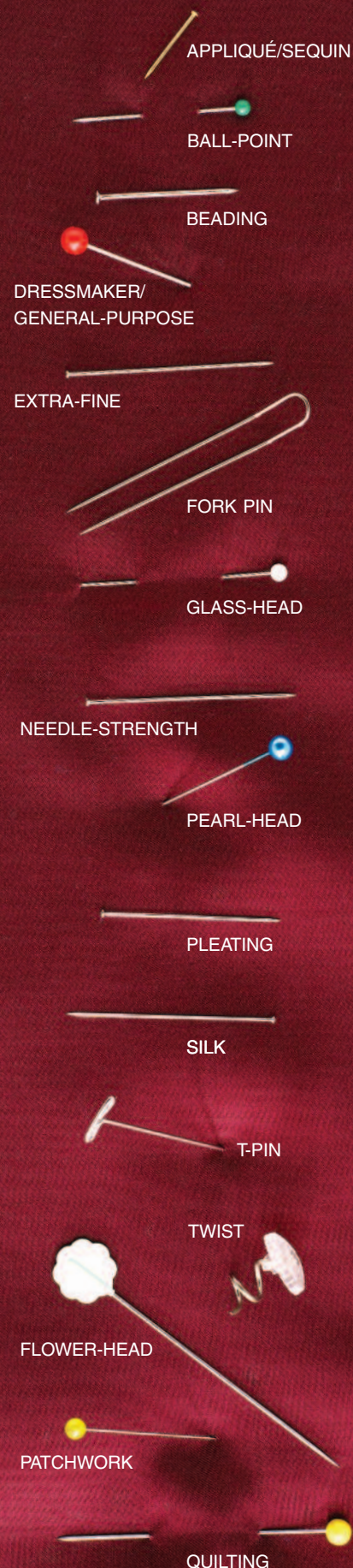
Twist pins twist into furniture to keep slipcovers, mattress covers, etc., securely in place. Straight cap head; $\frac{1}{2}$ " long.

Quilting Pins

Flower-head pins are extra-long, for basting quilts or pinning layers. Because the head is flat, you can pin layers together under rulers when using a rotary cutter, or iron over them without making an impression. The large, shaped head won't slip through openings in laces, sweater knits or loosely woven fabrics. They're also ideal for lofty fabrics and home dec. No-melt flat plastic head; 2" to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " long.

Patchwork pins are designed for machine piecing; the extra-sharp tip helps penetrate multiple fabric layers. Glass ball head; $\frac{1}{2}$ " long.

Quilting pins are used for basting quilt layers or pinning thick fabrics as the extra-long pins won't pull out. Many have yellow or another easy-to-see color glass or plastic ball head. $1\frac{3}{8}$ " to $1\frac{7}{8}$ " long.



Caring for Pins

- Avoid stitching over pins; if the needle hits the pin, it can damage the needle, sewing machine or throatplate, or even injure you.
- Organize different pin varieties in separate pincushions.
- Discard pins when they become burred, bent or blunt, as damaged pins can cause snags and holes in fabric.
- Use a strawberry filled with emery to clean and sharpen.



Stick it to Me

Since the time of Queen Elizabeth I, people have been using stuffed pincushions or “pinpillows.” Pincushions were quite popular in the Victorian era and were displayed decoratively in many rooms of the house.

Today, you can choose from whimsical pincushions, wrist pincushions, decorative pincushions, or ones that are actually pins you can wear.

A newer type is the magnetic pincushion, which is also helpful for picking up spilled pins. Keep magnetic pincushions away from computerized sewing machines, as they could erase the memory.



Safety Pins

Blanket pins are decorative pins for blankets. Size 5 (3”).

Button pins make delicate and non-washable buttons removable and interchangeable. Size 00 ($\frac{3}{4}$ ”).

Curved basting pins are useful for basting quilt layers. The curve of the pin provides an angle for easy penetration of quilt layers. Size 1 is the

choice of most quilters. Available in nickel-plated steel and nickel-plated brass. Size 1 (1”), Size 2 (1½”).

Quilters’ pins are also used for basting quilt layers. Available in nickel-plated steel and solid brass gilt. Size 0 ($\frac{7}{8}$ ”), Size 1, Size 2 and Size 3 (2”).

Skirt pins are decorative pins for holding skirts, kilts and blankets closed. Size 5.

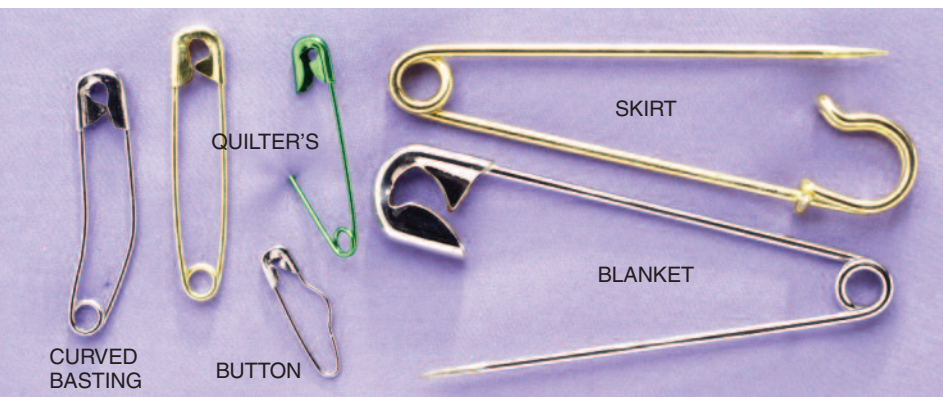
Deanna Springer, a project designer and freelance writer, did custom bridal, dress-making and alterations in the '80s, and has worked for 14 years at a sewing notion business. She writes from Columbus, WI, where she enjoys all four seasons with her husband and daughter.

sources

Clover, Collins, Prym-Dritz, Quilter's Resource, Sullivans and Wrights contributed products for photography and research. Look for these products in sewing and quilt stores nationwide. Companies listed below can provide a list of retailers.

Clover Needlecraft Inc.,
(800) 233-1703, www.clover-usa.com

Wrights, (877) 597-4448,
www.wrights.com ☞



MARKING

ELIZABETH BARRY



Marking the pieces for your sewing project is an important—and actually time-saving—part of ensuring a successful project. Taking the time to do a good job of it will ensure the best possible results. As you become a more experienced sewer, you may choose shortcut techniques, but don't avoid this step altogether.

YOU'LL NOTICE that pattern tissues are printed with a variety of symbols and lines that help you lay out the tissue on grain, know where to place pockets, match seams and more. You must transfer some of this information to the fabric pieces to aid in the garment construction. There are a variety of tools and techniques used in transferring pattern markings onto fabric.

Choose a marking method according to the fabric you're using. For example, a mark that must be removed by water (water-soluble or dissolving pen) isn't appropriate for dry-clean-only fabric. Tools that make

holes, such as a serrated tracing wheel, aren't advisable for fabrics like leather, vinyl or plastic-coated fabrics because the holes will be permanent and show on the finished project. In most cases a combination of marking techniques works best.

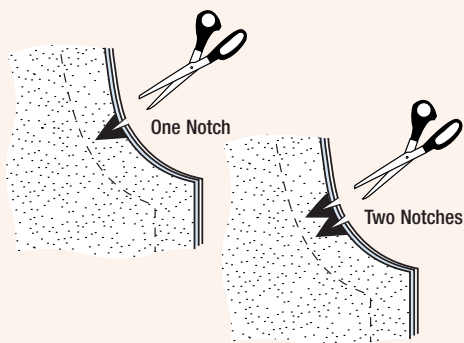
Always test your marking tool on a scrap of the actual project fabric. If the mark comes off easily with no damage to the fabric, it's fine to use on that fabric. Choose another option if the mark doesn't come off completely without marring the fabric.

Mark fabric pieces after you cut them out, but *before* moving them from the cutting table.

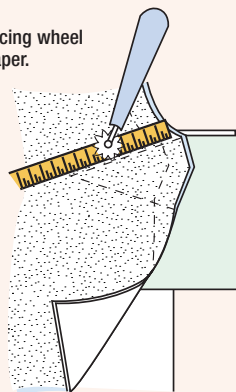
Mark most pattern details on the fabric wrong side. The few exceptions to this rule are placement markings for surface details such as pockets or tabs. Mark both fabric layers unless the marking is for a single detail, such as a single pocket on a shirt. For buttonholes, one side of the garment gets marked for buttonholes, the other for button placement.

If it's difficult to tell the fabric right side from the wrong side, place a small piece of low-tack tape on the wrong side of *each* project piece so it's easy to discern after the pattern tissue is removed.

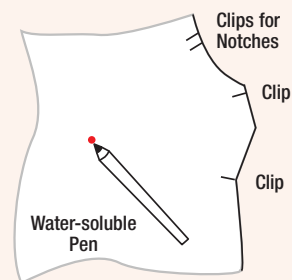
1 Mark notches with $\frac{1}{8}$ " - $\frac{1}{4}$ " clips.



2 Mark using tracing wheel and colored paper.



3 Use a combination of methods.



snips & clips

Scissors can be a timesaving marking tool. Though any pair with sharp tips will suffice, consider buying scissors with blades and tips designed for close work such as embroidery.

For patterns with $\frac{5}{8}$ " seam allowances, indicate notches and darts by cutting $\frac{1}{8}$ " to $\frac{1}{4}$ " into the fabric directly through the notch point. *Don't* cut all the way to the stitching line; this will weaken the seam.

For single notches use one snip, for double notches use two, and so on (1). Notching (snipping V-shaped triangles out of the seam allowances) can be used to indicate centerlines, hemlines and foldlines as well as notches.

Check the seam allowance width. If the pattern has $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowances, snipping isn't an option; choose another marking method.

tracing wheel & paper

Tracing paper has a colored surface that transfers to fabric when you roll over it with a tracing wheel. It comes in a variety of colors and is either water-soluble or waxed. Water-soluble marks are easily removed with a damp cloth.

Avoid waxed tracing paper as the marks can be difficult to remove. If you must use them, mark *only* on the fabric wrong side. Choose the lightest color paper possible that's visible on the fabric in case the markings don't come out. The serrated or sawtooth

wheel is most commonly used, but a smooth wheel is preferable on delicate fabrics.

Work on a self-healing cutting mat

or a piece of cardboard to avoid damaging the table.

Practice before using a tracing wheel

for the first time; learn how much pressure to apply by tracing lines on fabric scraps. Mark both fabric pieces at the same time whenever possible by placing folded tracing paper between the layers. Mark heavyweight fabrics individually.

Place the tracing paper colored side

against the *fabric wrong side*, underneath the pattern tissue. Applying slight pressure, roll the tracing wheel along the lines using a ruler as a guide (2). Move the tracing paper after each mark to ensure coverage, and trace all of the necessary lines.

If you want to trace stitching lines for a multisize pattern (cutting lines, not stitching lines, are marked on multisize patterns), first mark the stitching lines on the tissue, then use that as your guide.

Tracing paper is not the best solution

for marking on the fabric right side. However, if that is the only tool available for buttonhole and pocket placements, transfer the markings to the fabric *wrong side*, then baste through the markings with silk thread to show through on the right side.

fabric marking pens

Air-soluble and wash-away marking pens revolutionized marking transfer.

The pens are easy to use, and the pointed tips allow for accurate marks. Use fabric marking pens in combination with clipping and notching. For example, clip the dart legs at the seam allowance but draw the dart point with a marking pen (3). *Non-permanent* marking pens are also handy for marking embroidery or embellishment placement.

Air-soluble inks disappear with time. Water-soluble inks need to be washed away with water. Test markers beforehand; some are permanently set by heat. When purchasing markers, read the packaging carefully to ensure they're temporary.

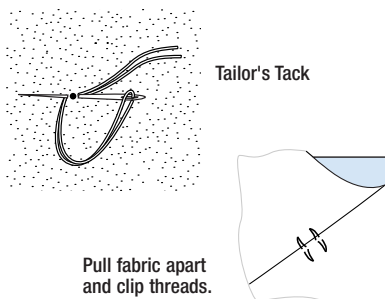
tailor's chalk

Tailor's chalk is a classic marking product and works on just about any fabric because it's easily removed and doesn't leave a residue. Being easily removable may be a problem for projects that are heavily handled during construction. Tailor's chalk comes in a variety of colors and may have a chalky or waxy consistency. It's available in a flat flake, a powder with an applicator or in pencil form. The chalk type works best on flat surfaces while the wax version performs better on textured fabrics such as boucle or corduroy.

bar soap

Household bar soap is a marking tool nearly every sewer has. Save white soap slivers for sewing projects that will be laundered when finished. Use a knife to trim the ends to maintain a

- 4 Take two stitches leaving a large loop and long ends.



sharp edge. Avoid soaps with oils added; check the ingredients.

straight pins

Use straight pins to mark details that will be immediately sewn or basted. They aren't a good long-term marking method since pins may slip out of the fabric with handling.

Use pins to indicate the ends of an opening, placement for a collar or to indicate where to start and stop stitching.

Pins placed perpendicular to each other can indicate a corner. Also use pins at the ends of buttonholes and the lower stop of a zipper.

Pin marking isn't recommended for fine fabrics or fabrics that retain pin holes. Use ball-point pins on knits.

pressure-sensitive stickers

Use stickers when ink, chalk or pins might damage the fabric. Some folks find stickers easier than marking, so they use them on all projects. Stickers are usually placed in the interior of a pattern piece to indicate pocket guidelines, snaps or buttons. Experiment with stickers found in office supply stores and draw the placement markings on them.

stitched markings

Silk thread is ideal for basting because it glides through most fabrics and doesn't leave a mark when pressed. Purchase a high-contrast color such as hot pink or chartreuse. You may never

pattern symbology

COMMONLY FOUND SYMBOLS, what they mean and how to mark them.

Buttons and buttonholes. The pattern will indicate placement for buttons and buttonholes but final locations are best determined after the pattern is altered and fitted to you. Use tailor's tacks, chalk, non-permanent ink pens or stickers.

Darts look like triangles with one jagged edge where they cross a seamline. The dart's legs can be notched or snipped in the seam allowance but the exact location of the dart point should be marked with a pin, tailor's tack or non-permanent ink pen.

Dots, squares and triangles are used for matching purposes and should be transferred. They indicate positioning for pockets and closures. They're usually on a seamline. Tailor's tacks, stickers, chalk or non-permanent markers are the best tools for marking.

Center back/front lines often indicate a fold or are matched to neckline or hemline markings. Depending on the project, you may want to baste a line that indicates center front and center back.

Grainline. The grainline marking *isn't* transferred to the fabric.

Notches. Single, double and triple notches are used for matching. Always match the same size of notch. These are most often marked with snips or notches in the seam allowance.

Stitching lines indicate where pieces are stitched together. Beginners may prefer to mark these with a tracing wheel and paper. As you gain more experience you can use the machine's guide to help you sew consistent seams without marking seamlines.

sew a garment in these colors, but they'll show up against most fabrics.

Make long basting stitches to identify centerlines, pocket or tab placements, hemlines and topstitching guides. This may take longer than using pen or chalk pencil, but it's safer for fine or delicate fabrics that stain easily or should be dry-cleaned. Considering what you've invested, a few extra minutes for basting is better than damaging valuable fabric.

Use tailor's tacks to transfer marks to two fabric layers. This stitching technique requires large basted loops. Use silk thread or several strands of contrast cotton thread.

To make tailor's tacks, thread a needle and bring the ends together to create a double thread thickness. Leaving a 2" tail, make a 1/8"-long basting stitch at the mark. Backstitch in the previous holes leaving a thread loop; be careful to not catch the thread in the first stitch. Pull the fabric layers apart and snip through the tacks, so you have thread in both fabrics at the mark (4).

Mark What?

Transfer markings for the following pattern details to ensure project success:

- Center front and center back
- Notches
- Dots and squares to be matched
- Darts
- Pleats
- Beginning and ending of gathered or eased areas
- Hemlines
- Placement lines for pockets, tabs, buttons, buttonholes, etc.
- Position lines for embroidery or decorative stitching
- Stitching lines when available

Elizabeth Barry is an 18-year sewing veteran with hundreds of articles for sewing, quilting and craft publications to her credit. She lives in northern New Jersey with her husband and son. ✂



All About THREAD

DEVIN GENTRY

For thread color
conversion charts visit
www.sulky.com or
www.threadart.com.

When it comes to thread, there's more to it than meets the eye.

THREAD IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SUPPLIES IN YOUR SEWING BOX. Without it, how would you embroider your favorite scarf, sew gifts or repair a ripped couch cushion?

Good thread is a great tool. Look for thread that's strong, smooth and consistent in thickness. Look at how the thread is wrapped around the spool. If it's wound crosswise, the thread design travels up and down around the spool, which reduces the stress on the thread and creates constant tension.

basic sewing thread

Basic, or all-purpose, sewing thread comes in several varieties, but all of them are strong and durable and easily adjust for shrinkage.

- Mercerized cotton thread is made of natural fiber that's treated with a solution that causes the fibers to swell. This increases the thread's strength and allows the dye to better penetrate the fibers. Mercerized cotton thread is best used on natural-fiber woven fabrics.
- Polyester thread is synthetically produced by pressing resins that solidify as filaments through small holes in the thread. Polyester thread is ideal for knits because it's heavy-duty, retains its shape, recovers stretch and is colorfast.

- Silk thread is made from long continuous natural fibers that result in added durability. Silk thread is more expensive, but it's a good choice for tailoring because it stretches and doesn't leave impressions.

machine-embroidery thread

Machine-embroidery thread is available in various colors, textures and sizes and is designed to fill in smoothly without breaking.

- Rayon embroidery thread is very strong and colorfast. It can be used for quilting, decorative stitching or embellishment. Rayon embroidery thread works best with high-density woven fabrics.
- Quality metallic thread is made by applying an outer coating over thin strips of rice paper. The coated rice paper is then stacked over a nylon core. Metallic thread is for decorative stitching and should be used with a larger-eyed needle specified for the purpose. It's strong enough for use on soft furnishings, decorative seams and quilting.
- Trilobal polyester thread comes in single color or multi-color variations. Trilobal refers to the three lobes of polyester fiber that make the thread reflect light. This thread is usually very shiny and has a high anti-raveling property. It washes well at high temperatures and can be used universally although embroidery is its main use.

BASIC SEWING	<p> Mercerized Cotton </p> 	<p> Polyester </p> 	<p> Silk </p> 
	<p> Rayon </p> 	<p> Metallic </p> 	<p> Trilobal Polyester </p> 

serger thread

Serger thread is made of the same fibers as conventional thread; but is specially designed for high-speed sewing. It's finer in size than all-purpose thread because more strands are used to the form the stitch. The finer size allows for less seam bulk. Use all-purpose thread in the needle and serger thread in the loopers for a professional look. Try one of these serger threads on your next project.

- Woolly Nylon
- Nylon
- 100% Cotton
- Lint-Free Polyester
- Metallic
- Rayon



resources

"All About Sewing Threads: Numbers, Types, Costs and Quality" published by Wildly Wonderful Wearables: www.wildlywonderful.com/savvy/thread.htm.

"Is There a Difference in Threads? You Be the Judge" published by About.com: <http://sewing.about.com/library/weekly/aa102100a.htm>.

"Learning to Love Specialty Threads" by Robert Purcell of Superior Threads, published by About.com: <http://sewing.about.com/library/weekly/blsuperior.htm>.

"Specialized Serger Threads" published by Fabricland West: www.fabriclandwest.com/notion_basics/monthlynotionfeatures/tying_it_all_together.htm.

sources

American & Efird, www.amefird.com, (800) 453-5128 or (704) 827-4311, provided the lavender mercerized cotton and pink-stripe trilobal polyester thread.

Horn of America, www.hornofamerica.com, (800) 882-8845, provided the thread tray image.

June Tailor, www.junetailor.com, (800) 844-5400 or (262) 644-5288, provided the spool rack image.

Madeira, www.madeirausa.com, (800) 225-3001 or (603) 528-2944, provided the pink and green metallic, neon blue and pink polyester, and royal blue and forest green rayon thread.

Sulky of America, www.sulky.com, (800) 874-4115, provided the green-stripe mercerized cotton and neon-green polyester thread.

Superior Threads, www.superiorthreads.com, (800) 499-1777 or (435) 652-1867, provided the gold metallic, light blue and rainbow trilobal polyester, and lint-free magenta thread.

Thread Art, www.threadart.com, (800) 504-6867 or (281) 373-5058, provided the red rayon and the beige and green silk thread.


YLI, www.ylicorp.com, (803) 985-3100, provided the multicolor mercerized cotton, pink silk thread and the black/silver Woolly Nylon thread. ✂

ORGANIZE YOUR THREAD

Keep your thread organized so you can find it easily when you need it. Store thread away from direct sunlight so it won't fade.

- A spool rack keeps spools in place and easily visible.
- Thread trays allow for thread and other supplies to be conveniently stored next to each other.





SEWING- MACHINE NEEDLES

SARAH J. DOYLE

SEWING-MACHINE NEEDLES ARE SELECTED according to the fabric weight and type as well as the thread type used. Most needles sold today are made in a standard length that fits the majority of modern sewing machines.

Insertion of a machine needle may differ depending on the make and model of your sewing machine; however, all needles have a grooved side and a flat side **(1)**. The thick upper portion is rounded on one side and flat on the reverse side, with the needle size usually etched into the rounded side. The lower part of the needle is thinner and has a groove extending along the shaft from the rounded part to the eye.

When inserting a needle into the sewing machine, position the flat side to the back and the rounded side to the direction from which the needle is threaded **(2)**. For example, if the needle is threaded from the front to the back, the rounded side should face the front. This positions the needle groove toward the thread, guiding the thread as it feeds through the needle.

Many sewers get caught up trying to complete a project and move on to the next one, usually because they have limited time. It's very easy to jump from one project to the next without giving any thought to whether or not you have the right needle in the sewing machine.

Using the same needle for everything you sew until the needle breaks can be a costly mistake. The needle size you use for a project depends upon the size of the fiber yarns in the fabric. The finer the yarns, the finer the needle needs to be. In general, a needle should be fine enough to penetrate the fabric without marring it, yet have a large enough eye

that the thread doesn't fray or break during sewing.

Needle Types

Needle types related to fabric structure are sharp-point (regular) for woven fabrics, ball-point for knits, and wedge-point for leather and vinyl (3).

The regular sharp-point needle is ideal for all types of woven fabrics because it helps produce even stitches and causes a minimal amount of fabric puckering. This needle isn't recommended for knits, as it has a tendency to cut yarns and cause skipped stitches. The needle comes in a wide range of sizes from the finest size 9 to a heavy size 18.

The regular sharp-point needle is also available in a twin or triple needle. Use twin and triple needles for fancy topstitching or for topstitching flat-felled seams that are typically used in jeans or for denim jackets or skirts.

The ball-point needle is designed for knit and elastic or spandex fabrics and has a rounded point rather than a sharp point. This needle pushes between the fabric yarns rather than cutting through them. It comes in sizes 9 to 16; the larger the needle size, the more rounded the needle point.

The wedge-point needle, designed for leather and vinyl, easily pierces these fabrics to make a hole that closes back on itself. This eliminates unattractive holes in the fabric and reduces the risk of the stitches tearing the fabric. Wedge-point needles come in sizes 11 to 18. Size 11 is designed for soft pliable leathers and thin suedes; size 18 is

designed for heavy or multiple layers of leather or vinyl.

Needle Sizes

In addition to choosing the right type of needle, it's also important to know the proper needle size. As a general rule, utilize the following fabric category/needle size information when choosing the needle for your project.

Delicate fabrics, such as silk, chiffon, voile, fine lace and organdy, need a fine size 9 needle. Larger needles make larger holes and would damage the delicate fabric yarns. Additionally, larger needles cause delicate fabric to pucker.

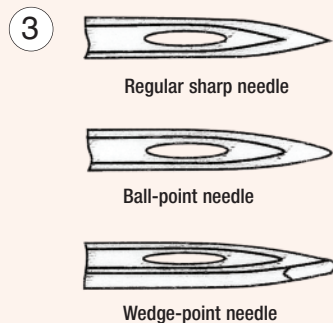
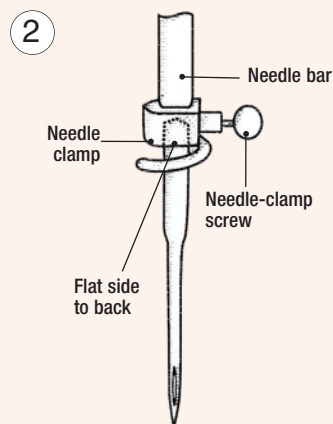
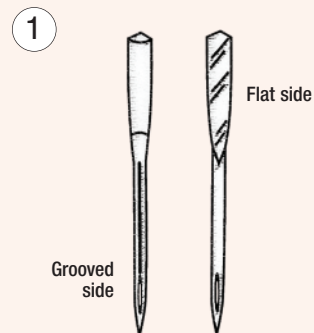
Lightweight fabrics, such as synthetic sheers, batiste, taffeta, velvet, stretch fabric, spandex and tricot, take a size 11 needle.

Mediumweight fabrics, such as gingham, poplin, linen, muslin, chambray, wool crepe, flannel, knit, jersey, wool, chintz, satin, raw silk, wool suiting and drapery fabrics, take a size 14 needle.

Medium heavy fabrics, such as sail cloth, gabardine, heavy suiting, tweed and heavy drapery fabrics, take a size 16 needle.

Heavy fabrics, such as denim, overcoatings, ticking, upholstery and canvas, take a size 18 needle.

Such a variety of needle types and sizes can seem overwhelming when all you want to do is sew. Most sewers do basically the same type of sewing—clothing for themselves and their children, craft projects, quilting, etc., so they don't need every needle type and size available. Think about the projects



*Inserting a needle into the machine will vary as to whether the needle eye faces the front or side. **Check the instruction manual to determine the needle position for your machine.***

you've sewn in the past year. How many different fabric types did you use? Does your sewing span the entire range from delicate fabrics to heavy denims or does it just include one or two basic fabric types?

Always replace dull, bent or nicked needles. If you hit a pin, immediately change the needle. A bent needle, even if only slightly bent or nicked, can cause skipped stitches and can easily damage fabric.

Keeping Track

When you replace the needle between sewing projects, what do you do with the needle you removed from the machine? Throw it into an empty breath mint container along with the others? This defeats the purpose of changing needles. You could use a small plastic container that has a number of divided sections, and then mark the sections with the needle type and size being stored. But a better option is to make a small book from non-tear pattern paper (such as Pattern Ease) to store the needles.

Cut several 3"x6" rectangles from the pattern paper. Stack the paper, and stitch a line down the center. Write the type and size at the top of each page for the needles you use most.

When replacing the needle between projects, place the needle being removed back into the book where it belongs, and take out the needle you need for the current project (4).

This type of needle holder won't tear as you use and replace the needles, and it keeps all of your needles in a compact book that's readily available.

Bobbins

As important as needles are to the sewing machine, your projects won't have a professional appearance if you don't wind the bobbin correctly.

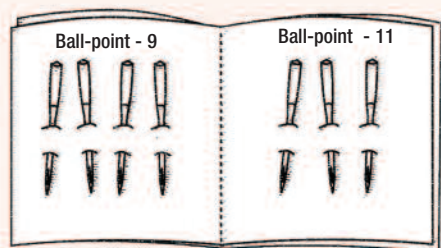
Always start with an empty bobbin; never wind one color over another color. Don't wind the bobbin so full that it's tight and difficult to insert into the bobbin case. Wind the bobbin evenly across and in level layers (5).

Keep lint out of the bobbin area. Lint and broken or frayed pieces of thread accumulate in the bobbin area and can cause problems when sewing.

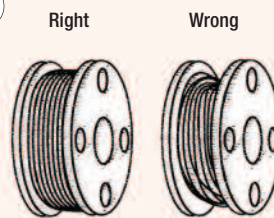
Use the correct bobbin for your machine. If you bought extra bobbins for your machine or received some from another person, double check to make sure the bobbins are the correct type. ✂

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4



5



hand-sewing needles

Most projects include some hand sewing as well as machine sewing. Choosing the proper hand-sewing needle affects the overall workmanship of your project.

Many hand-sewing needles exist, each with a specific purpose. Hand-sewing needles vary according to eye shape (long or round), length (in proportion to the eye) and point (sharp, blunt, ball-point or wedge). Some needles, such as crewel, are named for their principal purposes.

The following are the most common hand-sewing needles and their general purposes. Each needle type includes a size range; the larger the number, the shorter and finer the needle.

- **Sharps** (sizes 1-12) are the most commonly used hand-sewing needles. They're medium length, have a round eye and are suitable for almost all fabric weights (**A**).
- **Between**s (sizes 1-12) are also known as quilting needles. Their shorter length enables you to make fine stitches in heavy fabric (**B**).
- **Milliners** (sizes 3/0-12) are longer needles and work well for basting and any type of needlework that needs a running stitch (**C**).
- **Cotton Darners** (sizes 1-9) are designed for darning with fine cotton or wool. They vary in length and diameter to accommodate most darning or mending jobs (**D**).
- **Calyx-Eyes** (sizes 4-8) are similar to sharps except the thread is pulled into a slot rather than threaded through an eye (**E**).
- **Tapestry Needles** (sizes 13-26) are heavy and have blunt points. They're used mainly for needlepoint and tapestry work. You can also use a tapestry needle in place of a bodkin (**F**).

For heavy-duty sewing jobs that include leather, vinyl, plastic or canvas, you have two choices: **Glovers** (sizes 3/0-8), which are short, round-eye needles with triangular points that easily pierce leathers or plastics without tearing them, or **Sailmakers** (sizes 14-17). Sailmakers are similar to gloves except they're longer and the triangular point extends partway up the shaft. Sailmakers are used on canvas and heavy leather.

There are many other types of hand-sewing needles (long thin beading needles; curved upholstery needles; large-eyed yarn darners; medium-length, long-eyed crewels for embroidery; etc.). The types listed are the most commonly used.

Select a needle based on the work being done, fabric structure (knit or woven), weight and thread thickness. Generally, a needle should be fine enough to slip easily through the fabric, yet heavy enough not to bend or break. Whatever the type of hand-sewing needle you choose, always work with a clean, well-pointed needle.

A Sharps



B Between



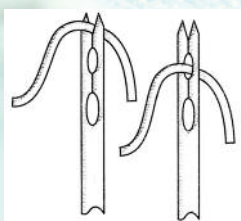
C Milliner



D Cotton darners



E Calyx eye



F Tapestry

