

THE STITCHERY

Choosing Threads

When purchasing thread, it is important to choose quality thread. A poor quality thread causes sewing machine problems such as lint buildup, poor stitch formation and frequent breakage. It also causes tangles and knotting during hand stitching.

Thread type is chosen for its compatibility with the fabric's structure and fiber content. It is often recommended that you choose thread that is the same fiber as the fabric you are sewing (cotton thread for cotton fabric and polyester thread for polyester fabric, etc) although polyester thread is the most commonly used.

The label on the spool should contain information about the fiber content and size (the higher the number the thinner the thread; 50 is average). Your thread should be approximately the same size as the threads weaving the fabric. If the thread is too thin, it will break easily under stress. If the thread is too thick, it sits on top of the fabric instead of becoming part of the fabric and can wear and cut the fabric at the seams.

When buying thread, if you are not able to find an exact color match, it is recommended that you select thread one shade darker than the fabric in order for it to blend harmoniously. If the fabric is multi-colored than select the color that is most dominant.

General Purpose Threads



Cotton: A medium thickness available in a wide range of colors. It is used for sewing on light and medium weight cottons, rayons and linens. Cotton thread is usually mercerized, a finishing process that make it smooth and lustrous, also helping to prevent it from linting, which cotton thread is prone to do. Cotton thread will absorb dye. If you are planning to dye your finished garment and would like the thread to match the fabric, use cotton thread. The lack of give and elasticity in cotton thread makes it an unwise choice for knits or other stretch fabrics, as the stitches will tend to pop.



Silk: A fine strong thread for sewing on silk, wool and thin, delicate or sheer fabrics. Because of its elasticity, silk is also suitable for sewing any type of knit. Its fineness does not leave holes on delicate fabrics from stitching or imprints after pressing. It may be more expensive, mainly because of the way it's produced.



Polyester/Sew-All Thread: An all-purpose thread suitable for sewing on most fabrics. Polyester has some elasticity, making it a good choice for stretchy fabrics and knits. Most polyester threads have a wax finish to help them slip through the fabric with minimum friction. Polyester thread will not absorb dye.

Other General Purpose Threads

Nylon: A fine strong thread for sewing light to medium weight synthetics. This is especially suited to nylon tricot.

Cotton-wrapped polyester: An all-purpose weight for sewing on knits or wovens of synthetic or natural fibers or blends. The polyester core gives this type of thread strength and elasticity. The cotton wrapping gives it a tough, heat resistant surface.

Specialty Threads

Rayon: It's shiny and the shine really makes the colors vibrant. For this reason it's a good choice for machine embroidery. However, it may not be colorfast, so be careful how you care for items containing rayon thread and keep them out of strong light. Also, rayon fabric is not very strong. Don't use it for regular sewing, either by hand or machine. It is quite fragile, so consider it carefully in a garment that will receive rough or heavy use.

Lightweight / Extra fine: Thinner than most other threads, it is great for light, thin and sheer fabrics. Comes in cotton, silk or polyester.

Metallic: There are two different kinds of metallic thread. One is actually a combination of metal and plastic. It's very shiny and the colors are intense. The other kind is made from aluminum wrapped around a core thread. It's easier to use than the first type, but both have a tendency to build up static electricity. If you'd like to use metallic thread for machine sewing, check the label carefully to make sure to make sure it's suitable for use in a machine. These specialty threads can add sparkle to your garments but are quite fragile. Consider them carefully in garments that will receive rough or heavy use.

Embroidery: Usually made from Rayon, this thread is suitable only for machine embroidery; it's not strong enough for regular sewing.

Monofilament / Transparent nylon: Colorless and very strong, this thread is a good choice when you need invisibility on any fabric.