



Sew Ready: Machine Basics

with
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What You'll Need

Needles & Thread

SEWING MACHINE NEEDLES

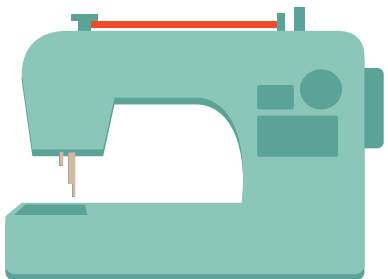
Choosing the correct needle for your project will make a big difference in the quality of your work. Read your machine manual to find out what the correct needle system is for your sewing machine, and read the needle case before purchasing needles to make sure you've chosen the correct ones.

There are many different types of needles. Sharps, ballpoint, universal, leather and topstitching needles are just a few. To read more about needles and decide what one would be right to use with your fabric, thread and project, visit this link: schmetzneedles.com/learning/pdf/schmetz-needle-chart.pdf

Needles are fairly inexpensive and should be changed regularly. Some seamstresses change their needles for every project. For the best stitch results, your sewing machine needle should be used for no more than 6 to 8 hours. Many stitch issues can be fixed by simply giving your machine a fresh sharp needle.

BOBBINS

Each sewing machine brand requires a specific bobbin size. Check your owner's manual for information about the correct bobbin for your sewing machine. If you are unsure if your bobbin is the correct one for your machine, look at your stitches. Machines with the wrong bobbin will typically sew for a short while, and then skip stitches or create looped stitches, and then sew correctly again, continually messing up the seam line. Do not use a bobbin that is bent, broken, or has a jagged edge, as your thread may catch and break on the bobbin rim.



PRESSER FEET

The presser feet available for your machine will depend on the age and brand of machine you have. Local sewing machine dealers should be able to order feet for your machine, and online retailers are an alternative for hard-to-find feet, particularly for vintage machines.

- **Standard or zigzag foot:** The most commonly used presser foot, it has a wide mouth to allow for straight, zigzag and decorative stitching
- **Appliqué foot:** The clear plastic or open mouth of this foot allows you to see where you are stitching
- **Zipper foot:** Used to put in zippers and to make piping, this foot is easiest to use when it is very narrow, allowing you to stitch closely to raised edges
- **Buttonhole foot:** Helps to give buttonholes even tension and to make them consistent lengths. May be automatic or have a step-by-step feature
- **Blindstitch foot:** Pick this foot when making a blind hem on the edge of a skirt or pants to more easily sew next to your folded fabric
- **Button sew-on foot:** A wide zigzag stitch with a shortened stitch length can be used with this foot if your machine does not have a dedicated button sew-on stitch
- **Quarter-inch foot:** A favorite with quilters, this foot is used to make precise 1/4" (6 mm) seams when piecing quilt tops
- **Walking foot:** Quilts, thick fabrics and knits are easily fed through your machine with the help of the second set of feed dogs found on this foot
- **Darning foot:** Fix your mending or quilt a blanket with ease once you have a darning foot. Don't forget to lower your feed dogs when using it so that you can easily move your project around

Tip: Be sure to check out your brand and model of machine online to see what additional presser feet may be available to you. The right foot can make your projects much easier to complete.

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NEEDLE GUIDE

You should try out your presser feet and stitches on whatever fabric you are most likely to sew, but these are a few suggestions to help you when picking out fabrics and threads to try. Choose several different types of fabric and thread because comparing the effects and textures is quite fun!

Be sure to check that the needle system you are using matches the one required for your machine. Choose a gauge of needle based on the thickness of your fabric and thread. Check that your thread isn't too thick (or too thin) for the groove on the front of your needle.

Resources

APPROPRIATE NEEDLE SIZES BASED ON FABRIC THICKNESS

Fabric type	Needle size
Fine	70/10-75/11
Mediumweight	80/12-90/14
Heavyweight	100/16-110/18

Suggested fabric	Recommended needle	Optional thread choices	Stitches to try
Quilting cotton (mediumweight)	Universal, Microtex or metallic	Cotton, polyester, rayon, metallic, silk	Straight, buttonhole, decorative
Mid-weight denim (med-heavyweight)	Universal, topstitching	Cotton, topstitching	Straight, buttonhole, decorative
Cotton jersey (fine-medium)	Stretch, ballpoint	Stretch, polyester, rayon	Zigzag, stretch
Wool or fleece (med-heavyweight)	Universal	Polyester, rayon	Straight, decorative, zigzag
Polyester chiffon (fine)	Universal, Microtex	Polyester, rayon, silk	Straight

SOCIAL MEDIA

My blog: www.reallyhandmade.com

My Twitter: twitter.com/amyalan

My Pinterest: pinterest.com/amyalan/

BOOKS

The Sewing Machine Attachment Handbook, by Charlene Phillips (Krause Publications, 2009)

The Sewing Bible, by Ruth Singer (Potter Craft, 2009)

NEEDLE INFORMATION

Great handout to print off for information about needle tips and their uses: www.schmetzneedles.com/learning/pdf/schmetz-needle-chart.pdf



FOR THE LOVE OF SEWING

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Stitch Types

Your machine likely has many different stitches to choose from. These are some of the most common stitch choices, with an explanation about what each one is used for.

UTILITY STITCHES

These are the main stitches that you'll likely use every time you sew. They can be used for seaming, edge finishing, and to sew in zippers or make buttonholes.

Stitch Image	Stitch Name	Stitch Function
	Straight	The most widely used stitch, it's most often used for basic stitching, basting, sewing gathers and inserting zippers
	Zigzag	Can be used to seam when a stretch seam is needed, finish edges, sew on appliqué and elastic
	Overcast (also called Mock Overlock)	Stitched on the edge of fabric to keep it from unraveling, gives a similar appearance to a serger stitch
	Blind hem	Sews several straight stitches on the hem allowance, then reaches over to hold on to a few threads of the fabric fold
	Buttonhole	Creates buttonholes. May be automatic or require several steps to complete





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Stitch Types




STRETCH STITCHES

When seaming knits or attaching elastic or stretch trim, you'll need a stitch that will stretch and move with the fabric you're sewing. These stitches would be your best option as a non-stretch stitch may break when stretched or pulled.

Stitch Image	Stitch Name	Stitch Function
	Basic Stretch	This stitch stretches with knit fabric and can be used decoratively
	3-point Zigzag	Can be used to finish the edges of knit fabric, attach elastic and darn
	Stretch Overcasting	Finishes the edge of stretch fabrics
	Triple Stretch Stitch	A strong stitch for seaming knits, sewing inseams, and attaching sleeves

DECORATIVE STITCHES

To add unique details to your projects, consider using a decorative stitch in place of topstitching or along a hemline.

Stitch Image	Stitch Name	Stitch Function
	Scallop	Used decoratively
	Leaf	Used decoratively
	Appliqué	Gives the appearance of hand-embroidered blanket stitching around appliquéd pieces

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Swatch Notes

Stitch name

Thread

Stitch length

Foot used

Needle

Stitch width

Tension setting

Notes

Swatch