



## Delightful Quilting & Sewing

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### Help for New Sewing Machine Owners

Now that you have a new sewing machine, don't be afraid to use it. It has been designed to be used for most types of sewing; however, there are some things that you should do to help your machine perform in the best way possible. It will require care on a regular basis, and by making the right choices of thread and needle for your particular sewing project, you should experience many years of faithful service.

#### Sewing Machine Maintenance

- Clean the dust and lint out of your machine often. With a small brush, clean the feed dogs, in the bobbin area, and around the top of the needle bar. Dust and lint buildup will affect stitch quality. These areas should be cleaned before beginning any new project, or at least every 6-8 hours of sewing, and more often if sewing on lint producing fabric like flannel.
- Regularly remove the throat plate to clean lint and dust out of the area around the feed dogs and bobbin area and other moving parts. Lint in this area of the machine can cause it to work harder and can affect stitch quality.
- Change the needle as you start each new project. Needles take a lot of abuse, can become bent very slightly, or develop a burr or rough area. Even very minor damage to a needle can cause the needle to not meet the hook below the throat plate correctly and affect stitch quality. If you begin having trouble with stitch quality during a sewing project, the first thing you should do is replace the needle with a new one, even if it does not look bent or damaged. The second thing you need to do is rethread both the machine and the bobbin.
- Oiling the machine. Many of the newer machines have sealed bearings and the mechanics of the machine are often not exposed for servicing by the consumer. Check your manual to see if there are areas you should service and follow those recommendations. I service my machines using light sewing machine oil and put one drop of oil in areas of the machine I can reach where there are moving parts. Always sew on scrap fabric for a minute or so after oiling in case any oil drips down onto the machine bed.
- Have your machine serviced regularly by a dealer every 1-3 years depending on use. The dealer will take the covers off, clean out lint buildup inside those areas, and check or adjust the timing so that your machine keeps running perfectly.

## Choice of Thread and Needle:

- Thread

- Buy top quality thread, not bargain thread at discount stores, Wal-Mart, or where you find multiple spools for a low price. These spools are second run, often only available in white or black. The black is usually over dyed to cover other colors and this process weakens the thread. Cheap cotton thread is short staple and produces a lot of lint. Use these tips when buying thread:
  - Cotton – look for extra long staple Egyptian thread, especially if you will be using it for quilting.
  - Polyester thread comes in many different types. Polyester thread does not produce lint like cotton because it is usually made of continuous filaments that are wound together. Polyester thread is strong and durable and can be used to sew on every type of fabric, even cotton. If you are looking for high color and sheen for embroidery or decorative work, choose Trilobal polyester.
  - Rayon thread is not suitable for ordinary sewing as it is weak, especially when wet, and it frays easily. It is often used in embroidery work; however the colors do fade and the thread can not take strong cleaning.
  - Nylon thread, sometimes called polyamide, is available for some purposes and can be found in a clear or clear smoke. It used to be used for quilting; however it is not a good choice. With time the thread yellows and becomes brittle. It also has a low melting point, even with the touch of a flat iron it will melt. If you need a clear thread, there is clear polyester made by Superior Threads.
  - Silk thread is available. It is quite expensive because it is a natural fiber. The colors are lovely. Usually silk thread is used for hand sewing or appliqué. With time, silk thread will deteriorate.

- Needle

- Although the needle is small, it is very important. The manufacturing process involves about 100 steps to make a finished needle. The parts of the needle are the shaft, groove, scarf, and eye. Each of these parts is manufactured differently for the brand of machine, weight of the fabric, and type of thread to be used.
- Do not use Singer needles in other machines. They are designed only for Singer. Schmetz makes good needles that can be used in Janome and many other brands of machines. Check your owner's manual or ask your dealer what needles can be used in your machine.
- Needle choice should be coordinated first with the thread to be used, second with the fabric.
- Needle sizes:

- 80/12 - fine shaft, small eye - use with fine thread on thin or fine fabric
- 90/14 - mid weight shaft, mid size eye - this is the size used for most sewing and most sewing thread
- 100/16 - thicker shaft, larger eye - used with heavier fabric, like jeans fabric, thicker projects, like quilting a quilt, or with top stitching thread which is thicker.
- Needle types:
  - Sharp - for woven fabric
  - Ballpoint - for knit fabric
  - Universal - a combination type needle that will work on either type of fabric
  - Top Stitching - has a larger eye and deeper groove for thicker top stitching threads or use with metallic threads and for sewing on heavier fabrics like jeans
  - Embroidery - larger eye
  - Metallic - bigger eye and groove

### Play with your machine

- If your machine has utility and decorative stitches, now is a good time to see how the settings, adjustments, and feet work and how the stitch looks sewn out.
- Make a stitch sample book to keep at your machine. It is a great reference to help decide which utility or decorative stitch to use on a project.
  - Choose a heavier weight fabric, like twill or a light canvas. It is a good fabric to practice these stitches on as you will not need to use a stabilizer. Use a 90/14 needle and thread in a color that contrasts with the fabric.
  - Cut pieces of the fabric about 6" wide by 12-15" long.
  - Starting with your number one stitch, stitch across the 6" width of the fabric. Using a pigma pen or fine ballpoint pen, write the stitch number next to your sample stitching.
  - Move down a little on your fabric sample, set the machine for the number two stitch and sew across the fabric parallel to the first row. Again, mark the sample stitching with the number.
  - Do this for all of the stitches on your machine, making sure that you change adjustments and feet as necessary and label each stitch. If you alter the settings from the default settings, make sure you also write that on your sample.
  - After your fabric pages are finished, assemble like a book and stitch the pages together along one end.

Happy Sewing!!  
Joyce Blowers