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EC69-460 As you Sew with Suitable Thread

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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
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SUITABLE THREAD

By Gerda Petersen
Extension Clothing Specialist

Thread is a small but an important item since it converts a flat piece of fabric into a wearable garment.

Selection of Thread

Selection of thread depends on (1) fiber content, (2) color and (3) weight of fabric.

1. Threads made of a plant fiber, such as cotton, are best suited for cotton and linen fabrics.

Silk thread is recommended for use in sewing both silk and fine wool. Both are animal fibers and react similarly to cleaning, weather conditions and dyes. Silk thread is also elastic and strong. It is fine for basting any garment that will be pressed with an iron because it is soft and free of lint and will not leave hard to remove marks and fuzz on the fabric.

Synthetic thread is best suited to fabrics made of synthetic fibers since they have comparable characteristics.

2. A thread that is slightly darker in color than the fabric usually blends best when stitched.

3. Heavier fabrics require heavier thread while light weight fabrics require finer thread. Thread size ranges from 1 to 150 and is determined by the diameter of the thread, which is dependent on the size of strands. The smaller the size number, the coarser the thread. The larger the number, the finer the thread. Thread strength depends on the size, twist and finish of the yarn.

Finishes Applied to Thread

Mercerization, one of the earliest finishes applied to thread is a chemical process applied to cotton. It makes the cotton stronger, smoother, more lustrous, more absorbent and less likely to shrink.

Glazing is a finish applied to cotton to obtain a hard, smooth, polished surface which allows thread to work smoothly through several thicknesses when quilting.

Waxing is a process which increases strength and smoothness and lessens the tendency to snag or fray.

Silicone is a chemical finish that makes the thread smooth and easier to work with.

Types of Thread

*Mercerized cotton is a general purpose thread suitable for light and medium weight fabrics.

*Heavy duty mercerized cotton is a strong smooth thread suitable for heavy weight fabrics.

*Cord is a strong cotton thread available in both mercerized and unmercerized form. Size 8 is the coarsest and is suitable for very heavy fabrics. Size 100 is for fine light weight fabrics. Six-cord thread (top cord) is made up of six strands of thread twisted together. Cord thread is sold in black and white.

*Cotton covered polyester is a fine strong thread, particularly suited to sewing with stretch, knits, bonded, synthetic and permanent press. No special iron setting is needed because polyester, which provides strength and elasticity, is covered by a cotton sheath. Examples are Dual Duty and Polyspun.

*Elastic, in nylon covered and cotton covered threads, is used for shirring, ruffling, and smocking. This is used only on the sewing machine bobbin and is generally wound on the bobbin by hand.

*Metallic threads are used for decoration.

*Nylon is a strong thread made for sewing synthetics, blends and stretch or bonded threads.

*Silk thread is suited for silk and wool fabrics.

*Silk button hole twist can be used for sewing on buttons, making buttonholes by hand and decorative stitching on wool.

Needles and Stitches Per Inch

The right size needle and the appropriate number of stitches per inch are just as important as selecting the right thread. Following is a chart correlating fabric, thread, needle, and stitches.



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WEIGHT	FABRICS	THREADS	HAND SEWING NEEDLE	MACHINE NEEDLE	STITCHES PER INCH
Sheer	Chiffon, net, voile, organdy, batiste, sheer crepe	Mercerized, Nylon, Silk, Cotton-covered Polyester, Cord (Size 70)	9-10	very fine	16-20
Medium Light	Sheer wool, crepe, surah, gingham, taffeta, satin, challis	Mercerized, Nylon, Cord (Size 60), Silk, Cotton-covered Polyester	8-9	fine	12-14
Medium	Broadcloth, linen, flannel, jersey, corduroy, faille, chintz, velveteen	Mercerized, Nylon, Silk, Cord (Size 50), Cotton-covered Polyester	7-8	medium	12
Medium Heavy	Coatings, suitings, terry cloth, drapery fabric, felt	Heavy-duty Mercerized, Nylon, Silk, Cord (Size 50), Cotton-covered Polyester	6	medium coarse	10-12
Heavy	Denim, ticking, upholstery, sailcloth	Heavy-duty Mercerized, Nylon, Silk, Cord (Size 40)	4-5	coarse	8-10
Very Heavy	Canvas, duck	Cord (Size 8)	1, 2, 3	very coarse	6-8

AVAILABLE THREADS

COMPANY	THREADS	THREAD NOTIONS
AMERICAN THREAD	Star Mercerized Star Cord Hercules (Heavy-duty Mercerized) Star Nylon Aunt Lydia's Carpet and Button Star Quilting	
BELDING CORTICELLI	"Nymo" Nylon Bel-Waxed Mercerized Cotton Bel-Waxed Mercerized Heavy-duty Cotton Deluxe Silk Silk Button Hole Twist Quilting Button and Carpet	
COATS & CLARK	Mercerized Heavy-duty Mercerized Mercerized Best Cord (in 10 sizes) "Dual-Duty" (cotton-covered Dacron) Silk Twist Button and Carpet Quilting	
DRITZ	Metallic Thread (gold, silver)	Thread Locks Beeswax

COMPANY	THREADS	THREAD NOTIONS
E-Z BUCKLE	"Magic Thread" (light and dark transparent nylon)	Dressmaker Beeswax
LILY MILLS	Mercerized "Super Service" Mercerized Nylon Quilting Six-Cord	
PENN PRODUCTS	Mercerized Nylon (transparent smoke) Lycra Elastic Sewing	Thread Locks Needle Threader
TALON	Mercerized Heavy-duty Mercerized Button and Carpet Top Cord Quilting Silk Buttonhole Twist Pure Silk Polyspun (cotton-covered Fortrel polyester)	
TRAUM	Lastex Cotton-covered Sewing Lastex Nylon-covered Sewing Lastex Metallic Yarn Metallic Thread	Beeswax Needle Threader