

Sewing Machine Needles (TO10-1)

Here are a few tips regarding sewing machine needles. There are different types to suit different fabrics. Make sure you use an appropriate needle for the job you are doing.

Needle Basics

All needles have a number and this dictates their size and thickness. They are different and the numbers may not seem to correlate but they do – the higher the number the thicker the diameter of the shaft above the eye.

In Europe, the sizes range from 60 to 100. In America it is generally 7 to 16. In practice this means that a 7/60 needle will be the thinnest and smallest, ideal for sewing sheer and delicate fabrics. In contrast the 16/100 will be perfect for sewing heavyweight fabrics like denims.

1. Use a New Needle for Every New Project.

Sewing machine needles are one of the cheapest sewing accessories and one that can make the biggest difference to your finished project.

2. Always Buy the Correct Brand of Needle for Your Machine

Not all needles fit all sewing machines and your instruction book should tell you what to buy.

3. If Your Thread Keeps Breaking – Check for Burrs

If you have fitted a new needle but your thread is still shredding or breaking, check the eye for metal burrs. Many new needles are defective and the cheaper the brand the more likely they are to be unusable. All you can do is discard them and try again.

4. Use ‘Universal’ Needles for Most of your General Sewing Needs

Needles are available in a wide range of sizes from 7/60 to 16/100, with the smaller size being suitable for very light and sheer fabrics and the largest being suitable for thick fabrics such as coating, suiting, furnishings and canvas.

5. Use a ‘Ballpoint’ Needle for Knit Fabrics such as T-Shirts

The rounded point will separate and stitch in between the loosely-woven fibres rather than slicing through them and causing them to unravel.

6. Use a ‘Stretch’ Type Needle for Synthetic Knits and Silky Polyesters

They are particularly good for avoiding static build-up on silky fabrics.

7. Use a ‘Jeans’ Needle for Denim

Jeans needles have a very sharp point that will slice through the heavy fabric with ease. They are available in sizes 14 and 16. Choose depending on the thickness of your jeans.

8. Use a ‘Leather’ Needle for Leather, Suede and other Heavy Non-Woven Fabrics

The wedge-shaped point will penetrate these fabrics without causing splits and tearing.

9. Use ‘Handicap’ Needles for Easier Threading

These have a fine slit in the side of the needle eye and are threaded by sliding the thread down the side of the shank until it pops into the eye.

10. Use a Double or Triple Needle for Multi-Coloured Edging

If you want to create some subtle patterning on your project but your machine doesn't have any stitches you fancy, use a double or triple needle for parallel rows of stitching in different colours. You will need a machine that is capable of zigzag so the throat plate has a hole that is wide enough for the needles. You can only do straight stitch with this type of needle.

