

Preventing Thread Breaks



It's enough to make even the most patient crafter crazy: You're stitching a design that's otherwise behaving just fine when the thread starts breaking over ... and over ... and over. Don't hurl your embroidery machine out the window just yet! Here's a step-by-step checklist for troubleshooting this common issue.

Change Your Needle

Step one, put a new needle into your machine. If a needle gets damaged or has a burr on it, it can break threads frequently -- even if you can't see anything wrong. It's a good idea to have a substantial stash of extra needles on hand so you'll never run out!

Make sure your needle is appropriate to your fabric and thread -- we recommend a 75/11 sharp sewing needle for most projects, but a metallic thread may do better with a needle that's specially designed for that purpose, with a slightly larger eye.



Re-Thread Everything

Take your top and bobbin thread out of the machine and re-thread everything. Make sure the thread is coming off the spool correctly -- there will be a "right" and "wrong" way, and your machine's manual should be able to tell you which is which. Tug on the thread ends to make sure the thread is caught in the tension discs. Re-threading is a good general strategy for exorcising sewing machine gremlins.

Slow It Down

Most embroidery machines will allow you to adjust the machine's stitching speed. If you're still seeing thread breaks, try slowing the machine down to make the whole process a bit gentler.





Check Your Thread

Some threads will break more easily than others. Thread that's old can get dried out and break more easily. (We run a humidifier in our sewing room for just this reason!)

Thread quality can vary, and some embroiderers find that certain brands run more smoothly than others. Experiment and see what works for you.

Unwind

Here's a trick some embroiderers swear by, especially for metallic thread: place your spool of thread in a coffee cup, set it next to your machine (or on the floor nearby, for even more distance), and thread the machine as usual. This gives the thread more space to unwind, preventing kinks that could cause the thread to break. Make sure the thread can't get caught anywhere between the cup and the machine.



Check Your Tension

If you're seeing nests of thread underneath the embroidery along with your thread breaks, check the machine's top and bobbin thread tension.

A good test: stitch a design that has areas of satin stitch. When the tension is in balance, the bobbin thread should take up 1/3 to 1/2 of the back of a satin stitch column.

Keep It Stable

Making sure your embroidery is sufficiently stabilized can help prevent the subtle shifts that can lead to general embroidery misbehavior. Check out the tutorials on [choosing stabilizer](#) and [hooping fabric/stabilizer for best results!](#)



When is it time to call in a professional? If you've checked out all these things and you're still seeing thread breaks frequently, it might be a good idea to take your machine in for service. If there's a tiny burr elsewhere in the thread path, that could cause thread breaks, and your friendly local sewing machine technician is the best person to help sort that out. They can help spot any other issues that might be getting in the way, too.

Most thread break issues, though, should be resolved by the steps above. Check them out, one by one, and

you'll have that embroidery design running smoothly in no time!
