

Fact Sheet 27

Metallic Machine Threads

Metallic threads add a gorgeous sparkle to machine embroidery, whether you have an embroidery machine or you are into free motion work. They can however, create problems with breaking threads, puckering and odd stitching giving you the urge to throw the thread or the machine out of the window! Do not despair, we are here to help with a few tips and tricks to make your life easier.

Choosing a needle

Use a good quality specialist metallic or top stitch needle. These have an extra groove cut in the needle so that the thread lies flat and is less inclined to shred. A larger eye than normal may also help.

Thread

A good quality thread is essential. Cheap versions may look ok but it is likely that they are too brittle and will break frequently. A good metallic thread will have a bit of 'give' when gently pulled and is more likely to put up with the strain that being pulled through the tension of your machine puts on it. Avoid threads in which the metal is wound around a central core - these don't like going through any needle and are better used in hand work.

Tension

Try loosening the top tension on your machine a little if breaking thread is a problem. Check that it is feeding through the machine properly, without twisting. Sometimes raising the level of the thread will allow any kinks in the thread to even out before it goes through the machine; a tall thread stand/holder helps with this.

Machine Speed

If you are using an embroidery machine, lower the speed as much as possible. It will take longer to stitch out your design, but the results will be worth it.

For free machining, don't rush it either; allow the thread time to feed through the machine.

Some like it Hot

But metallic thread doesn't! If you are working in warm weather, or on a machine that has an incandescent rather than an LED light, you may find that after a sewing perfectly for a while, the thread suddenly starts misbehaving. Heat makes the thread stretch too much and can lead to breakage and shredding. Let everything cool down for a while and then try again.