

Sewing with Twin and Triple Needles

Needle Size/Type

When purchasing a twin needle there are two numbers to consider that are shown on the packet, the first is the distance between the two needle points. This distance is measured in millimetres and will determine the distance between the rows of stitching.

The second number, indicated in metric and imperial measurements, is the actual size of the needle. The lower the number is the smaller the needle. It is important to match the needle size to the fabric as best as possible and also the type of needle. For example, if you are wanting to twin needle a hem on a merino knit top you will need to use a stretch twin needle to prevent skipped stitches. If you were topstitching jeans than the heavier 6mm would best.

The following is a list of needles, and their uses, that we generally stock here at the shop:

TWIN NEEDLES

1.6mm size 70 Sharp	Pin tucking, decorative stitching
2.0mm size 80 Sharp	Pin tucking, decorative stitching
2.5mm size 80 Sharp	Pin tucking, decorative stitching
3.0mm size 80 Sharp	Pin tucking, decorative stitching
4.0mm size 80 Sharp	Decorative stitching, top stitching, hemming on wovens
6.0mm size 100 Sharp	Top stitching jeans or similar, size 100 large enough to use extra strong thread

STRETCH TWIN

4.0mm size 75 Ballpoint	Hemming or stitching on knits
2.5mm size 75 Ballpoint	Hemming or stitching on knits

METALLIC TWIN

2.5mm size 80 Sharp	Larger eyes in needles to accommodate metallic threads
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TWIN WING

Size 100 Sharp	Wing needle on outside needle used for heirloom sewing - double hemstitch
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DRILLING (triple needle)

3.0mm size 80 Sharp	Decorative stitching, exciting braid like finishes
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Stitch Width

When using a twin needle for zigzag or decorative stitching the amount of space allowed in the machine throat plate and the presser foot must be taken into account. Many of the middle to upper end range of machines will have a twin needle guard button that you can press to let the machine know that you are using a twin needle. This means that the stitch width on some of the stitches will automatically be reduced or some stitches will not be able to be accessed because they are not suitable for use with a twin needle. Remember that the above only applies to twin needle widths up to 4mm. For the 6mm you will need to use your own discretion with the settings and stitch selection. If in doubt a handy safeguard can be to hand wheel to turn your needles over to ensure they are not going to crash into the presser foot.

PLEASE NOTE: If your machine has an automatic thread cutter please do not use this when sewing with twin needles as it could cause damage.

Sewing with Twin and Triple Needles continued

Threading

Threading the machine correctly when you are sewing with a twin needle, will prevent the threads from becoming tangled and breaking during stitching. Each machine will be a little different in relation to the spool position so persevere until you have it right for your machine.

- 1 Place the first spool of thread on the right spool pin. Feed the thread off the spool in a clockwise direction, threading through the normal channels until you reach the top of the needle, thread through the thread guide above the needle on the right hand side and through the eye of the right needle.
- 2 Place the left spool of thread on the left spool pin. Feed the thread off the spool in an anti-clockwise direction this time. Proceed to thread as normal threading making sure the two threads are untangled from the take-up lever down. Thread through the left hand thread guide above the needle and through the eye of the left needle.

Threading when using triple (drilling) needles

Repeat as above.

For the third thread wind onto a bobbin. Place the wound bobbin either on top (or under as I had to in order to have enough room) of the right spool of thread placing the bobbin so that the thread comes off in an anti-clockwise direction. Separate the bobbin and thread spool with spool holders to prevent the two tangling together. Continue to thread the machine in the normal way following the channel on the right hand side and then through the eye of the centre needle.

As you begin to sew watch the three threads to ensure they are not going to tangle if they do simply rearrange the threading with the top thread guides. You could also tape a safety pin onto your machine to create a new separate thread guide.

Tension

Because of the nature of twin needling with the bobbin thread creating a 'ladder' look appearance underneath it may be necessary to alter the tension especially when using the wider 4-6mm needles and when using softer fabrics. Simply reduce the top tension down one or two numbers until the fabric sits flat and there is not a raised piece in between the two lines of stitching on the right side.

Alternatively to create a true zig-zag look underneath requires loosening off the bobbin tension. This could easily be done with another bobbin case that is kept separate from your normal case to use for techniques such as twin needling.