

Serger Tips and Tricks

Which needle do I use for my project?

There always seems to be some confusion when it comes to Serger needles. Today we will attempt to simplify and clear up some of the questions concerning this important issue.

When using your Serger you will still use the same “rule of thumb” you use when you are sewing with your Sewing Machine. Most sergers use conventional sewing machine needles but if you have an older model you may be required to use a special needle. Your owner’s manual will tell you which needle is used.

It’s very important to know the type of fabric you are using.

To make it simple:

- Any fabric that was made by Nature (cotton & silk) you will use a sharp or universal needle.
- Any fabric made by “man” (polyester, fleece or spandex) will require a ballpoint or stretch needle.
- A good all round professional needle is the Elx705 made by several manufacturers such as Schmetz and Inspira (a Viking brand). I have had wonderful results with this needle. The Elx705 is a universal needle.
- Speaking of the Universal Needle, this is a good needle for most fabrics. It’s not a full on sharp or a ballpoint, so it’s what I call a “split the difference” needle and will work on most fabrics.

Keep in mind the thickness of the fabric when choosing your needle. The heavier the fabric the higher number of the size of the needle you will need.

In choosing your needle remember when you look at the size there will be 2 different numbers. Example: 80/12. The higher number (80) is the European size and the lower number (12) is the American size. The numbers are different, but the needle is the same.

You may be using a heavy thread from time to time. This may require a larger eye in the needle. The largest eye is found on the Topstitch Needle. The Topstitch needle is one I use frequently when using “jeans” thread or heavy decorative threads.

Now, getting away from the technical use of needles and looking at the physical needle in you Serger, you will notice that the LEFT needle looks like it is up higher than the Right needle. It is supposed to be like that. The loopers fly back and forth to create the loops on the top and bottom of the seam and the needles secure the loops. The left and right needle go in at the same time, but because the left needle is shorter it acts like a “timing” process and actually enters the fabric a micro second later securing the upper looper thread. WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT!!! Isn’t that an amazing machine?

Note: Skip stitches usually means you are trying to use a sharp needle on stretchy fabric. Change the needle to a ballpoint or stretch needle and that will solve that problem. Also skipped stitches could mean a dull needle and it’s time to change them.

Note: If you break a needle and do not know (or cannot read the needle size on the shank) change BOTH needles. Always make sure you are using the same size needle in both the left and the right side. When in doubt... again...change them both!

It never hurts to jot down the needle size and type on a sticky note when completing a project. That way you will know what to expect on your next project.

I hope this information was useful and helped clear up some of your questions about needles for your Serger. Have FUN, PLAY and ENJOY your Serger.

Your HAPPY Serger Lady,
Sandy Langs

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