

EDUCATION: TWO-PLY vs. THREE-PLY THREADS

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There has been some discussion on which is better -- a 2-ply thread or a 3-ply thread. The answer is . . . it depends.

2-ply threads

High-sheen threads are usually 2-ply because a 3-ply thread results in less sheen. Most embroidery thread is 2-ply because embroiderers usually prefer a high sheen thread such as rayon or [trilobal \(high-sheen\) polyester](#). (To read why we do not recommend rayon thread, [click here](#).)

Common for bobbin thread. Less expensive than comparable 3-ply threads. Not as strong as comparable 3-ply threads. Preferred as a fine blending thread (applique, binding) because a fine thread blends better.

3-ply threads

Stronger than comparable 2-ply threads. Less sheen. More expensive than comparable 2-ply threads.

There are places for both types. To best illustrate the differences, consider our [MasterPiece](#) thread. Originally, MasterPiece was a #50/2-ply thread. Even though the fibers are the absolute highest quality extra-long staple Egyptian-grown cotton, #50 is a fine thread and when two strands are twisted together, the result is still a fine thread. It is not intended to be a high-strength thread, but a fine, delicate, blending thread. Because sewing machines are being factory set with increasingly tighter tension, unless one overrides the auto-tension feature and manually loosens the top tension, many machines may break a #50/2-ply cotton. On most home machines, we recommended setting the top tension to 2.0 when using a #50/2-ply cotton such as MasterPiece. Getting that word out has been difficult. We realized it would be easier to strengthen the thread than to educate the world, so a year ago we started the process of changing MasterPiece from a 2-ply to a 3-ply cotton. The newer 3-ply MasterPiece is marked as #50/3 on the label and is a stronger thread but not much heavier than the original 2-ply type because we put a nice, even, tight twist on it. The new 3-ply type does not require much tension adjusting.

There is another part of this story. Many who use MasterPiece for hand applique and many who use the [MasterPiece prewound bobbins](#) prefer the original 2-ply type. So how do we please both groups? We decided to continue to use the original 2-ply MasterPiece for all prewound bobbins. Those who hand applique love the [Frosted Donut sets](#) of prewound bobbins and therefore they will continue to have access to the 2-ply type. With 70 colors of MasterPiece prewound bobbins, 66 are still the 2-ply type and four have switched to the new 3-ply thread. These four colors will revert back to the 2-ply thread as soon as we complete a new batch of 2-ply MasterPiece. Most of the MasterPiece on [600 yd. spools](#) and [2,500 yd. cones](#) are the new 3-ply type.

Alex Anderson has helped develop our MasterPiece thread. She recently made a 2-minute video explaining the difference between the 2-ply and 3-ply MasterPiece and why both are good. [To view the short video, please click here](#).

If you have not yet tried our new [3-ply MasterPiece](#) for piecing, with a Superior Guarantee, I promise you will love it. It is virtually lint free, stronger than the 2-ply, and designed to make the perfect seam. Most of the 75 colors are available in 3-ply and they are designated on the website as #50/3-ply.

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