

If Thread Could Talk?

Text and Photos by Cindy Scraba

I believe thread has a voice and speaks a language not universally understood. It sometimes needs a translator. When I provide Thread Talks or teach workshops, many attendees are unfamiliar with the pitfalls a thread faces as it unwinds itself to begin its journey. If you've been frustrated by thread breakages, this column will convey a few more thread tips (beyond tension and needles) to help you resolve this common issue.

Let's first establish whether your particular thread is wound on a spool or a cone. The smaller size is commonly referred to as a spool, while a cone is the larger, more economical size. Here are some general questions to ask:

How is the thread wound?

How a thread is wound affects how it needs to unwind itself. If you overlook this simple fact, it may not cooperate when positioned incorrectly. If thread could talk, it would probably say, "Hey, I need a little help here!"

As thread releases itself from a cone, for example, a thread stand acts as a silent



partner. Basically it lifts and carries thread from the cone through the loop on the extension arm. Connect the thread to your machine tension discs and through the thread guides. As you stitch along, thread unravels freely without resistance as shown in the photo. Ultimately, no extra tension is being created as the thread unwinds off the top as it sits upright, which is how the cone was wound at the factory. If you tried to release thread from the side of a cone, it would pull and create excessive stress, ending in breakage. Does this conversation sound familiar? Your thread was trying to tell you something!

Does your machine have features to position both cross-wound and straight-wound spools?

It is not only cones that are cross-wound. The popular, finger-size embroidery spools are wound similarly and will release from the top peg (while mounted sideways) on various machine models. Thread overlaps in a criss-crossed manner—it also needs to unwind off the top. The challenge is that not all machines have this upright feature.

Some sewing machines do not have an upright peg to accommodate a straight-wound spool. This is the reason for a multi-purpose thread holder accessory, which accommodates spools, cones, and even bobbin amounts of thread.

The majority of spools on the market are straight- or stack-wound, which seems self-explanatory; however, sewers unknowingly lay these spools on their sides too, which is incorrect! The thread continues to spiral out

of control as it creates more twists, while it unravels like a ribbon roll. Again, this scenario creates tension and thread breakage in the process. Position these spools standing straight up or use a thread holder accessory as shown. The three spools should be positioned on your machine peg, just as they appear in the image.

In a previous Cinderella Column, I discussed how some metallic threads are wound on finger-size spools; however, these may be either cross-wound or straight-wound! The latter type is to be propped upright as photographed. These are special.

If you use cones, or your machine options don't include an upright peg, consider treating yourself to a thread holder or thread stand accessory—you deserve it!

For those attending *Quilt Canada* in Lethbridge, Alberta, June 2015—I invite you to visit my booths in the Merchant Mall. I'd love to meet you—bring your queries! Or feel free to contact me anytime through the Thread Candy Shoppe online. ♦

Happy Stitching & Chatting!



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