

# Tips & Tricks for Avoiding Shredding and Threadaches

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Recently there was a great discussion on [Embroidery Library's Facebook page](#) about one of the most annoying and painful "threadaches" that stitchers can get: shredding and stripping of thread.

More than 50 comments with ideas, tips, and solutions came pouring in. As you probably know, Facebook feeds are fleeting and disappear quickly, and can be difficult to find again. I decided to preserve those tips here so that they'll be readily available, and easy to find, if you ever get one of these "threadaches."

## Steps To Complete

First, let's take a look at how thread shredding will appear. It's demonstrated in the photo to the right. The fibers on the outside of the thread weaken, and you'll see the thread start to fray.



This might be accompanied by numerous thread breaks, but sometimes it just looks like fuzzy stitching.

I'm fortunate in that I don't see a lot of thread shredding. When I do see it, it's in the wintertime, when the air in Minnesota becomes drier than dry. During the winter months, a humidifier runs in my sewing room nearly non-stop to keep everything stitching smoothly.

If I have any thread shredding outside of the winter months, it's usually resolved by switching to a new needle.

**HERE ARE THE TIPS THAT OTHER EMBROIDERERS SHARED ON THE FACEBOOK PAGE  
(SOME HAVE BEEN SLIGHTLY EDITED FROM THE ORIGINAL FORM):**

Char suggested: Too much spray adhesive.

Christina wrote: Most of the time I've found that thread shredding issues are related to the needle. Swap out the old one for a new one, and it quite often resolves the

issue. Sometimes, however, it may be due to the thread itself (lower-quality brand, a glitch in the manufacture of the particular spool being used, etc.). Some people insist that their machines only "like" specific brands, as apparently they have zero issues when using one brand of thread, but have nothing but trouble with a different brand of thread.

Darlene wrote: I usually find it is my bobbin thread. If I get shredding, I do it all: change my needle, change my bobbin, thread and rethread the machine. I don't know which works, but all is well after that is done.

Ruth said: There may be a burr on the needle, throat plate, or bobbin casing. Rub a cotton ball over the areas to see if it hangs. If you get past that OK, then check the tension on top and on bottom. Totally remove the thread, check the tension disks to see if fuzz is stuck there, and then rethread. Then consider the thread itself. Maybe it has a strange twist from winding, so try it with another spool that is near the color. If it is still happening, then maybe the stabilizer isn't adequately hooped. If it is still happening after that, try a different design. That will basically tell you if your machine is the problem or one of the steps is.

Diane shared: I had that problem and started putting something on my thread (think it is silicone). Then I started buying Floriani thread. It is already lubricated and my issues stopped.

Melissa wrote: When I bought my machine I went hog-wild and bought a ton of embroidery thread at a too-good-to-be-true good price. Some colors would break constantly. Other brands of thread were fine. Instead of taking a loss on the thread, I was told to stick it in the freezer or give it a shot of silicon lubricant spray. That was likely because the thread was too dry, and that advice worked.

Madolyn shared: Polyester bobbins get hot and that could be affecting the thread. Switching to cotton might help.

Iva said: Change the needle, or lower the tension.

Christine wrote: I had the same problem. I noticed a nick in the embroidery foot on my Pfaff Creative Vision and put on a new foot. So far, so good! I seem to remember breaking a needle some time ago and it hit the foot. Don't ask me how I did that, it just happened. I think it was when I was trying to embroider on a leather biker vest. Won't do that again. Needles wear out too.

Debra said: Rayons break much more and more easily than polyester threads, in my case.

Tari said: Make sure there is no extra thread or fuzz stuck in the tension area.

Nancy wrote: Try re-threading and putting thread on the other side of the tension disc. My machines all respond differently to different threads. Always use a new proper size needle for the task. Larger-eyed needles work best for embroidery. Also, I want to say that some machine brands have had some issues with thread shredding. Check with your dealer to see if there is a retro fit part that can be installed.

Judy said: Sometimes it's just a bad package of needles. Try one from a new package.

Becky wrote: Heavier thread needs a larger needle. Use a 90/14 needle for 30 weight thread. Also, some sticky-back stabilizers can catch the thread and cause problems.

Peg said: Sounds like tension is wrong for the needle, or it could be a sticky gummed-up with sticky stabilizer needle.

Sandy shared: When this happens to me, I use a liquid called "All Purpose Sewer's Aid" for Smooth Hand and Machine Sewing. It comes in a small clear bottle, like Fray Check. You put some liquid on your thread, then rub it onto your spool, then continue as before and most of the time, it corrects my problem.

Keri wrote: All of the above are my "go-to" issues, plus this one: If using a sticky stabilizer, or if the back of the fabric is rubberized in any way, that can cause an issue. When I first started embroidering I purchased some sticky stabilizer on sale and soon realized it had probably gotten hot and was no longer any good. Too sticky! It caused my thread to stick and shred.

Carolyn wrote: I was having trouble with shredding because I was using the wrong foot. I was using a quilting foot, not an embroidery foot.

Linda suggested: If the bobbin shuttle doesn't have a burr on it, I suggest taking the machine in for a deep clean at the dealer or tech. A build up of dust and lint can cause that, rotten thread, and even the tension.

Carol said: Try using Sewer's Aide. Works a lot when having trouble, but just use it a little at a time.

Cindy said: Sounds like the upper tension is out of whack, or too tight.

Kate wrote: I have been having this problem lately, too! I just changed the type of spray adhesive, and that is when it started. Going back to my old 404.

Karen said: I slow the speed down on my machine, along with using a needle with a bigger eye.

Patty wrote: These are the kind of issues that seem to be hit and miss for me. Last time it happened, the thread tension was too tight and loosening it helped.

Sometimes it just seems the thread has weak spots in an area where the stitching is pretty fast, so I just use another "better" brand.

Gigi said: Unthread and rethread the machine, use a new needle, and check your bobbin thread.

Patt wrote: Sometimes it's just a bad thread or section of thread also. I usually just start over with new thread, bobbin, and needle. It's easier than getting irritated over it. If you embroider, it will happen occasionally.

Kay wrote: I use Madeira and Floriani, but being slightly frugal, I found embroidery thread that was super reasonable (read: cheap). I ordered a few spools to try. Not all colors shredded really bad, but some were awful. Others just so-so. I got rid of the cheap stuff, and have no trouble.

Donna said: The thread might be dry as a result of long-term exposure to light and air. A tsp of water in a plastic bag, dump in the spool of thread, seal the bag, and put it in the fridge for a week. It will add needed moisture to dried out thread. Might help.

Sarah wrote: If you've been stitching too long the needle can become too hot and it can shred the thread. Change the needle!

Maggie shared: I have found with the bigger hoops the fabric in the hoop tends to move up and down with the needle, especially with a dense design (this is called flagging). This causes all sorts of problems - shredding, thread nests, etc. Viking has a special foot called the Sensor Q Foot which is great, but otherwise I find a top-stitching needle better than an embroidery needle. Apparently the newer embroidery needles have a rounded tip and this is the problem.

Ann Marie said: When it was happening to me, I discovered that there was dust and thread pieces in where the thread gets threaded.

Lois wrote: I strip off about 3 yards of it and throw it away. I clean my tension discs and I always use a top-stitching needle.

Annette wrote: I have that problem with rayon thread.

Joyce said: After flipping the thread every way I can think of because it may be wound funny on the spool, I use All Purpose Sewer's Aid. It helps make sewing easier.

Irene said: Too much adhesive, or tension is wrong, I would say.

Paula wrote: There is a product called Sewer's Aid here in the states that helps cut down on shredding. However, checking to make sure the machine is threaded correctly, and there is a new needle on the machine and that the bobbin is wound correctly and the bobbin case clean and without lint helps, as well.

Charlene suggested: Slow the motor down. It helps immensely!

Sharon said: Usually the needle needs replacing. I have also heard if the humidity is not right in your house (too much static), this will happen.

Karen wrote: Put in an embroidery needle with a larger eye, or a larger needle.

Kim said: Any time I have had problems with thread shredding, all I've had to do is move the spool further away from the machine. I put it in a coffee cup or a thread stand. The extra distance gives the thread more time to "unkink" after it comes off the spool. I find this especially important when using specialty threads like metallic or glow-in-the-dark thread.

JoAnne said: Some of the cheap threads (e.g. eBay finds) make embroidering agony. When in doubt, throw them out!

Mary wrote: New spool, or change of tension, or longer path to needle. I have a thing that rigs the thread. A stand on the side, with a high loop, for just one spool.

Julie suggested: Sometimes it is the throat plate. This is worse on embroidery machines. If there is a nick in it, sometimes you can take fine sandpaper and smooth it enough to stop it.

Lynda said: Change to a titanium embroidery needle. If that doesn't help, then it might be cheap thread. Use a good-quality thread. It's not worth saving a few cents to buy cheap thread. You get what you pay for.

Tammy wrote: I first check out the needle, then the bobbin (may have to redo or refill), then check out the bobbin for any bumps or plastic snags. Check stabilizer and hooping. If using cheap thread, throw it out. Not all machines will like it. If all else fails, walk away from it and grab a bottle of wine and head to the tub for a relaxation and de-stressing time out. When you return, it will be so much easier!

Anne suggested: I use Madeira thread bought in the US, and the thread is wound on bobbins that are not like the ones in Europe (they are not symmetrical like the ones in Europe), and I do have this shredding problem when the thread gets stuck in my thread dispenser, as it creates extra tension. I also found I was not changing my needles often enough, so the other solution is using a brand new needle.

Vicky wrote: I also live in the UK and also have some threads that delight in shredding. I run floss (normally used for teeth) through my Janome at the start of a project -- as if you were threading it. Seems to clean out all the lint. Also, change needles regularly and slow the speed down on your machine.



Kerry wrote: I also had this problem, particularly with the "inexpensive" thread.

However, not long back my machine man recommended I try Schmetz System SP needles, and I've hardly had a problem since with any type of thread.

Doreen said: Maybe a burr in the embroidery foot, and/or the foot is not centered and the needle is too close to the foot. These things could cause the thread to fray.

As you've seen, the tips and suggestions above hold quite a variety of ideas! What works for one embroiderer may not work for another; further, one machine might love a brand of thread, and another machine might not. Try different suggestions and tips until you find the one that works for you.