

Invisible Thread

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Now you see it, now you don't! The point of using invisible thread is that you see the results of using it, as opposed to the prominence of a contrasting thread or a weak attempt at a thread match.

In years past, invisible thread, also called monofilament, had a bad reputation among sewers and quilters and it was often referred to as fishing line. The threads were stiff and wiry, and reeked havoc with sewing machine tensions. Plus, they were the bane of anyone with sensitive skin when thread ends poked. Today's invisible thread is softer, lighter and some is about the thickness of a human hair, though thicknesses vary by brand.

Thread Facts

Available on large cones and industrial size spools, as well as smaller size tubes and spools for the home sewer, invisible thread is available in two fibers—nylon and polyester. Polyester thread holds up well to UV light and higher temperatures than nylon, and some believe it to be more pliable. It also does not become brittle or discolor with age.

Invisible threads are available in clear and smoke colorations. Clear blends with most light colors and smoke with darker ones. Check several brands of thread before selecting one for your project, as clear colorations vary; some show more on light-color fabrics than others. Some brands of monofilament thread have a more matte finish, while others have a shinier, reflective finish.

Stitching

Invisible thread may be used both through the needle and in bobbin, or it may be paired with conventional thread in the bobbin, a more common application.

Depending on your machine, you may find success with either the vertical or horizontal spool pin, or somewhere



between. If the thread tends to reel off the spool and cause feeding problems, try using a spool cap to hold the spool firmly in place, or cover it with a thread net with the exiting strand feeding from the spool top.

Some tension adjustments may be needed to stitch with invisible thread. It's best to test-stitch on the project fabric to check for stitch quality. If the bobbin thread pulls to the top and allows the invisible thread to "float," stitches may pull out readily. In that instance, loosen the upper tension. If the invisible is pulled to the bottom of the work, causing the bobbin thread to float, simply tighten the top tension to adjust. Ideally, each thread should show only on the side it's stitching.

If you want to use invisible thread in the bobbin, some machines sew best with much tighter bobbin tension. To ease apprehension for adjusting this tension, purchase a separate bobbin case. Mark it specifically for use with invisible thread and tighten the tension as needed.

Because of invisible thread's sometimes unruly nature, it's important to lock the stitching both at the beginning and at the end of a seamline with some backstitches.

Invisible thread can be used in the serger loopers as well as on a conventional sewing machine. Coupling it with decorative threads can result in a "floating edge"

where only the decorator thread shows, but it's held in place with the invisible strands.

Tip: If you have trouble threading the needle with invisible thread, color the strand end with a permanent felt-tip marker.

Uses

Fashion sewers, quilters and those who sew home décor items all welcome invisible thread into their box of sewing tricks. It can be used for free-motion stitching or quilting, as well as for applications using a presser foot, such as straight or patterned stitching.

Invisible thread works well for attaching multi-color bindings and bias tapes, where selecting a conventional thread color can be challenging.

Attaching patches, appliqués, laces and trims are also good uses for this no-see-'um thread, as is pairing it with bobbinwork techniques for specialty applications.

Quilters use invisible thread for many applications. Outline quilting around motifs offers texture and depth. Because of its invisible nature, the thread is perfect for use on any color fabric base (clear for lights and/or smoke for darks), and spans multi-color prints. Stitching in the ditch between blocks disappears except for the benefit of the quilted look, and even if you slip a bit, the stitches don't show.

Using invisible thread for allover quilting allows you to cross several colors within a pieced top or within a whole-cloth quilt top without changing threads.

Care

Nylon thread will melt at a lower temperature than polyester thread, so if you must press, use a pressing cloth to prevent melting. Lowering your iron temperature will work as well.

Both nylon and polyester invisible threads withstand washing well, though hot dryer temperatures should be avoided. 🖨️