



How to thread a needle

Introduction

As quilting and sewing is a hobby that we do in our spare time, it is most important to make most of the time available. Threading a needle takes some practice to get it right. It can be difficult and frustrating at first, but we do not want to spoil the enjoyment of the project, so follow the instructions below to get it right. Spending a little time on practising, can save a lot of time.

How are you going to do that?

I am going to show you how to thread needles, from big to small, with string, wool and sewing cotton. You are then going to sew a few stitches with that through gauze to make a cute mug mat.



What do you need?

A place to work

For today's project you will need a space where you can work without interruption for at least one hour.



- Table.
- Chair, high enough for you to sit on and work comfortably at the table.
- Enough light to see what you are doing.
- A waste paper bin for offcuts.

Tools

You will need the following tools:

- Your toolbox (treasure chest) with sewing tools that you made last time
- Needles in different sizes

Materials

You will need the following materials:

- A piece of gauze: 10cm x 10cm. If it is difficult to find gauze, you can also use a piece of anti-skid mat, or any other textile with regular holes,
- A small piece of felt 5cm x 5cm
- Offcut pieces of wool, ribbon, thread, embroidery thread and crochet yarn

Do something fun

Each needle is a metal shaft with an eye at one end and a point at the other end. Some have big eyes and a thick shaft, while other needles are smaller and thinner with sharp points.

Let us start with pairing the sewing needles with the thread.

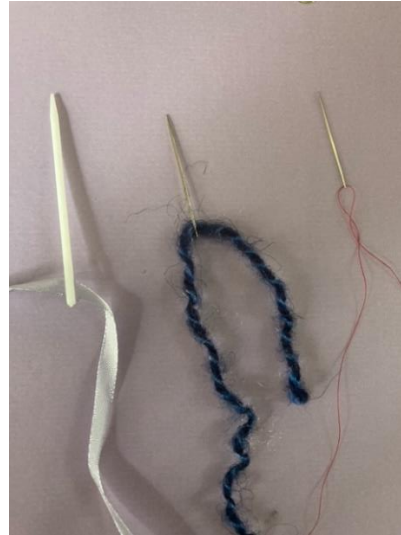
A thick thread goes with the big needle and the thin thread with a thin needle. Match them up. There might be more than one thread for one needle. Can you see how easy a piece of ribbon can be threaded through the thick plastic needle? Wool threads easily through the Chenille or tapestry needle and cotton thread works best in an embroidery needle.

Dictionary

*Time to learn new words. You are going to use **embroidery** stitches – embroidery is the art of working raised and ornamental designs in threads upon any woven fabric, leather, or paper with a needle.*

*You will make **diagonal** stitches – stitches lying at an angle, from the bottom left corner to the top right corner of a block, and also **Parallel** stitches – ones lying next to each other, usually straight, in an upward or sideways direction, like the tracks of a train.*





Now to learn how to get the thread through the eye of the needle

If you look at a piece of string, the string is nicely twisted, but at the end of the string, it untangles to make fuzzy strands (a mop?). The same happens with most threads. Before threading a needle, we need the end of the thread to be tidy, or else you are going to thread only half the thread!

Have you seen someone lick the thread before? Eew! Not only is this unhygienic, but because your spit is water based, it often swells the fibres and unravels the thread even more. A cool trick is to rub your forefinger and thumb over the bridge of your nose – no not IN your nose – you get some of the delicate facial wax and oil on your fingers and if you use that on the thread to form a point with the thread, it makes a sharp point that you can easily thread through the eye of a needle.

There is also another method, and that is the one I prefer personally.

I fold the thread over the needle, and holding the thread double, carefully place the eye of the needle over the double folded thread. You will have the thread in your left and the needle in your right or dominant hand. Make sure to put the eye of the needle over the thread and push it through the eye.





Start with the thicker thread and needle and see how you fare. You may want to practice until you can do this well. It is an awesome skill to have.

Another trick is to rest your hands on the table to stabilise them. It is not easy to find the eye of a needle with a piece of thread with hands waving in the air 😊

Once your needle is threaded, try to stitch through your 5 x 5 cm piece of felt. Which needle goes through easiest? Which of the yarns shows up best? Can you pull the needle and thread through the felt without pulling the thread out? If you keep the tip of your middle finger on the eye of the needle while you are pulling, you will keep the thread in. Cool! Try it again. Does it work for you?

If you are working with thinner needles and thinner thread you may want to knot the thread to the needle.



Be safe. Needles are sharp. Needles that drop on the floor or hook on a carpet can hurt you, your pets, or your family members. Needles can break off in your foot and can land you in hospital. If you put needles in your mouth you can swallow or inhale it by accident. Be careful. Be clever. Put your needles back into the needle book or pincushion.

How to keep your thread in the needle

Fold the thread over the needle, grab the points and press them down between your left-hand fingers (Non dominant hand) to make a little loop.





Carefully place the needle eye over the loop to thread the needle. If you find this difficult, make a smaller flatter loop or use a needle with a longer eye. Pull the thread to make a bigger loop.



Pull the needle point through to make the knot. Fold the needle back into and through the loop.





Pull taut. The knot snuggles into the eye of the needle. It is so small that it does not catch on the fabric when you push the needle through the fabric.



You now have needle with thread that will not slip out. You can, as a result, fully concentrate to make beautiful stitches. Practice this a couple of times. WOW!

The Gauze Project

In this project you will use the piece of gauze, a tapestry needle, and wool offcuts. The plastic 'gauze' from a potato or onion bag could also work very well.

- Thread your needle with a length of wool. Remember that your thread, or wool in this case should never be longer than from the tip of your fingers to your elbow.
- For the first stitch, bring the needle up from the bottom of the gauze through the hole. Start sewing leaving an extra hole from bottom and sides.



- Do not pull the wool too hard and all the way. Leave a little tail.
- Sew in one hole, skip one and up again from the bottom up. Carry on with this straight stitch for the whole row. Well done!
- Thread a new length of wool for the next row. You are going to make a row of V's.
- Stitch from the bottom up and skip two holes diagonally, then put the needle through to the back. Bring the needle up skipping two holes across and two up. Complete the row.
- You will have to do the same in the other direction to form the V's, like in the picture.



- For the third row, you are going to make crosses.
- Thread your needle with another length of wool.
- From the bottom up, make a stitch diagonally skipping two holes and then straight down at the back. Your stitches will make a row of slanted parallel stitches in front and straight parallel in the back. You need to work a second time on the same row, in the opposite direction, to complete your crosses.



- Start again from the bottom up. Diagonally down this time to complete the cross and continue to the end.
- Well done!

Clean up

Well done on finishing your project. Remember to pin all your needles into a piece of felt and put all your quilting tools back into the treasure box. Be sure to drop pieces of wool and other



offcuts directly into the waste bin. Leave your workspace as neat as you found it. Clever of you!

Show and tell

Oh wow! This will make a decent present for Dad on Fathers' day. He can put his coffee mug on it at his place of work! Post one or more pictures of your mug mat to the WhatsApp group, #SAQGQC4Y.



What's next?

How to start with a quilters' knot and end with a French knot.

Did I miss something?

Keep a look out on the WhatsApp group for more cool stuff.

- What do I need to quilt?

