

**Sew
Simple**
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**NO MORE
TENSION
HEADACHES**

**Fix your sewing machine tension
problems quickly and easily**



Tension

Knowing how to adjust your tension can reduce your tension. It can also make the difference between nice strong seams – and loose threads and looping, puckering, weak seams and headaches make you want to toss the entire machine out the window. Trust me on this one!

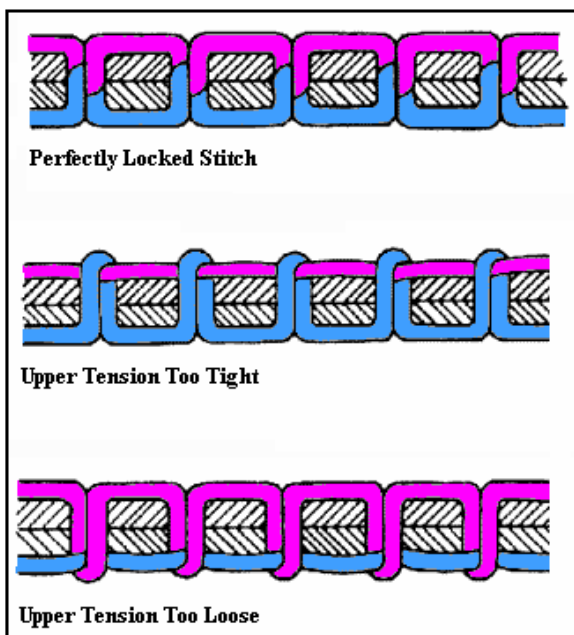
UPPER TENSION

The most important control on your sewing machine is the upper tension. If you're not sure which dial or knob sets your upper tension, check your machine manual. A perfect stitch should have the threads locked with no loops showing on the top or bottom of the fabric.

Here's a little tip. Keep a notebook near your sewing supplies. When you have perfect tension, write down the fabric & needle you're using and the tension setting. Like this...

- ❖ Broadcloth, size 11 needle, tension setting 4
- ❖ Crepe de chine, size 9 needle, tension setting 4.5
- ❖ etc

The Tension “Color Test”



QUICK TRICK TO TEST TENSION!

Purchase two spools of thread – same brand & weight – but different colors. Thread one in the top, the other in the bobbin. Then, sew a seam on a scrap of double thickness fabric.

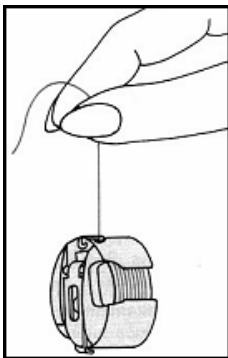
If you see the bobbin thread peeking out the top, your tension is too tight and needs to be decreased a bit.

If you see the top thread pulling through to the bottom, your upper tension is too loose and needs to be tightened a bit.

LOWER (BOBBIN) TENSION

Most sewing machine manuals will tell you that the bobbin tension is set at the factory, and not to adjust it. For the most part, you probably won't have to touch the bobbin tension.

But, if the sewing machine is twenty years old, passed down from your mother or grandmother and the factory it came from is no longer in business— the settings probably aren't what they used to be, either.

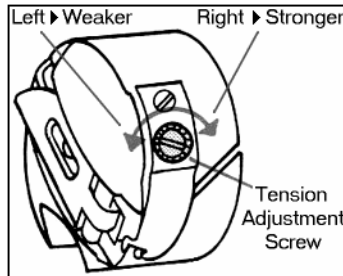
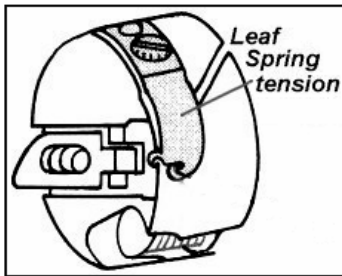


Here's the way to check your bobbin tension.

Put the bobbin into its casing the way you would to put it in your sewing machine.

Pick up the bobbin by the thread and give a quick and swift tug upwards. The bobbin case should move downwards just a bit. If it doesn't budge, then the tension is too tight. If it falls a lot, the tension is too loose.

See the little leaf spring that the thread goes through? (illustration left, below)



Tightening/loosening the leaf spring controls the bobbin tension.

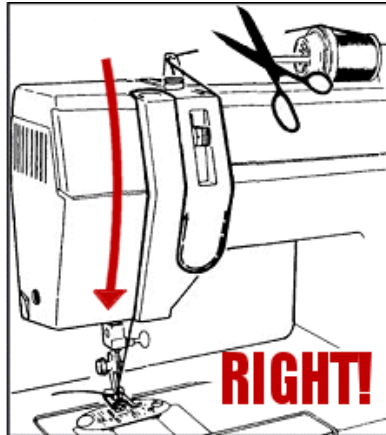
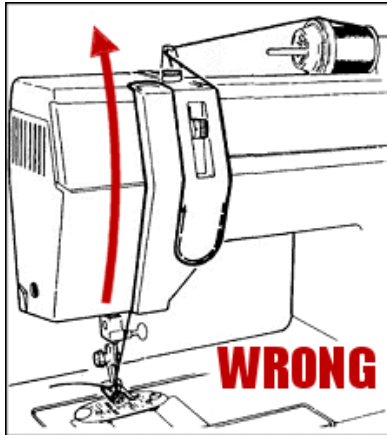
NOTE: Make very, very small changes – about 1/16th of a turn at a time.

After making a change to the bobbin tension, give it the “hanging” test (top of this page). When the bobbin tension seems good, you may need to play with the top tension again. Just use the “color” test from the previous page.

If you have the newer style bobbin, where it just drops into the machine, it's still the same. Have a look... you'll see the little spring arm that the thread goes through and a little screw. Remember – make small, small, SMALL changes. One sixteenth of a turn or less.



TENSION TROUBLESHOOTING:



A COMMON PROBLEM...

When you are changing thread in your machine, don't pull the thread back up through the tension assembly. (figure one, above) That can cause teeny little fibers to get caught in the tension assembly, which can throw your tension off. Instead, cut the thread next to the spool and pull it downwards and out through the needle.

Speaking of Dust Bunnies and Other Fuzzy Tension Busters...



When dust-bunnies and fuzzy bits of thread or fibers get into your tension assembly, it can throw off your tension.

Here's a few tips to prevent that from happening...

- 1) Keep your sewing machine covered when not in use.
- 2) Get a narrow paintbrush from a hardware store. Use it to clean the bobbin area and the feed dog area before you start to sew. (the feed dog area often catches a lot of fluff!)
- 3) Purchase un-waxed dental floss and keep it with your sewing supplies. Periodically, you should "floss" the upper tension. Just thread a long piece of the dental floss through the upper tension the same way you would thread your machine. Draw it all the way through, and it will collect any bits of fluff or thread that may cause uneven upper thread tension