

In the last newsletter, I talked a little bit about the various tools you'll need before you start sewing. Now you're ready to tackle your first project.

The most important sewing tool you are going to use is your sewing machine. It is very important that your machine be cleaned, oiled, and in good working order. Nothing is more discouraging than sitting down to a new project with a machine that's in bad shape. *(If you want to upgrade, Sew Pro's has many new and reconditioned machines to choose from.)* I find it easiest to clean and oil my machine after I use it. So, the next time I have a chance to sew, my machine will be all ready to go. I won't be wasting my precious sewing time cleaning my machine.

You should know how to maintain your own machine and have the basics on hand to do it yourself: a **lint brush**, **Micro Vacuum Attachment Kit**, a can of **Blow Off**, and **sewing machine oil** if your machine requires it. Many of the new machines today are self-lubricating. It is also important to have your machine serviced regularly by a trained sewing machine technician, such as ones on staff at **Sew Pro's**. You should have your machine serviced at least once every year or two depending upon how much you sew.

You should clean and oil your machine after every eight hours of sewing or once a month – whichever comes first. It only takes a few minutes to clean your machine, and believe me, it's worth it. First, remove the thread and bobbin and throw the old needle away. Yes, throw it away! Use your lint brush, and, starting at the top of your machine, brush away any large clumps of lint. Work your way from the top down to the bed of the machine. Clean in the bobbin case area and under the feed teeth. Be sure you use a quality sewing machine lint brush because they have an electrostatic feature to attract the lint. Sometimes you'll need a little bit of rubbing alcohol on a cotton swab to remove dirty, oil residue.

Then you can use your can of **Blow Off** (*Coupon Page 15*) compressed air to spray away the light fine dust and hidden lint that your machine accumulates. The nozzles on these cans are great for getting in those tight little places like between the tension discs and guides on a machine that is sealed. Some people prefer to vacuum up the lint with the **Micro Vacuum Attachment Kit** (*Coupon Page 18*). These are great little miniature vacuum tools that attach to your vacuum hose and can be used to clean sewing machines, sergers, computers/office equipment, and audio/video equipment around your home and office, too.

Be sure you oil your machine after cleaning it. **USE ONLY A PURE SEWING MACHINE OIL** (*Coupon Page 19*) **DO NOT USE ANYTHING ELSE!** Refer to your manual for the oiling locations. You will usually need only one drop in each oiling spot. If you can't locate your manual, then turn the flywheel slowly and put one drop of oil wherever you see metal rubbing metal. Do not get oil on the light fixture, the motor belt, or the bobbin winder tire. Run the machine for a minute or two and then wipe off any excess oil.

I don't put a new needle in until I am ready to sew again. That way I don't have to wonder what kind of needle is in it or if it is a new one. Always use the correct needle for the your fabric and always start your project with a new needle. Be sure you change your needles often, and throw away used needles! *(See the article of needles in the Feb-Mar-Apr 2005 Sew Pro's Journal.)* We recommend **Schmetz** needles (*Coupon Page 19*). They are a very high quality and reasonably priced.

Before you start sewing, make certain you are familiar with how to wind a **bobbin** (*Coupon Page 12*) and to thread your own machine. If you do it a few times over and over, you'll probably never forget how to thread it. Be sure you have the correct bobbin for your machine. Don't use old rusty bobbins and check to see that they aren't bent or dinged up. Once in awhile the clear bobbins will get a nick in them, and that will cause your bobbin thread to hang up or catch or break. Before winding a bobbin, run your finger around the edge and toss any that don't feel smooth. You can store your bobbins in a **Bobbin Saver**. It's a holder shaped like a doughnut and won't let your bobbins unwind or fall out. It holds just about any kind of bobbin.