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How Do I Prevent Common Sewing Machine Issues?

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Simple Fixes & Maintenance Tips For Sewing Machines

Sewing machines are reliable tools, but even the best ones can start acting up without a little care. If your stitches skip, your thread tangles, or your machine sounds off, it might just need some basic maintenance. **Most common sewing machine issues** can be avoided by building a few easy habits into your sewing routine.

Let me walk you through how I keep my machine in great shape. These simple steps have helped me avoid costly repairs and frustrating sewing hiccups—hopefully they'll do the same for you.

Why I Stay On Top Of Machine Maintenance

Even though our sewing machines seem smart (and many are!), they still rely on good old-fashioned moving parts. Needles, bobbins, and gears all need a little TLC from time to time. In my experience, most of the **sewing machine problems** I run into come from small things—lint that's built up over time, a needle that's past its prime, or thread that just isn't up to par.

Luckily, all of these are easy fixes that can be avoided with a few regular maintenance habits and small adjustments.



Regular Care For Your Sewing Machine

(1) Schedule a Professional Service Once a Year

Just like a car, I've learned that my sewing machine runs better and lasts longer when it gets a yearly check-up. There are a lot of internal parts I can't access without removing the casing, and opening it up myself can sometimes void the warranty. That's why I always recommend having a certified technician service it once a year.

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Here's why that's so important:

- Lint and dust build up inside the machine over time and can mess with your stitch quality.
- Timing and tension can shift slightly with use, and a tech can fine-tune them.
- A professional will check for any wear on moving parts and oil the areas that need it most.

Regular service keeps everything running smoothly and prevents little issues from turning into big repairs. If you're not sure where to start, Quality Sewing offers full-service maintenance and repairs — [bring your machine](#) in and we'll take care of the rest.

(2) Regularly Clean Out Your Bobbin Area

One of the easiest ways to **prevent sewing machine issues** is to keep your bobbin area lint-free. Every machine comes with a small brush (or you can purchase one separately), which is perfect for sweeping out built-up lint and dust.

How to Clean the Bobbin Area:

1. Remove the bobbin case and brush out any lint or dust.
2. If your machine allows, remove the needle plate for deeper cleaning.
3. For top-loading bobbins, remove the bobbin case and brush underneath.
4. Use a small vacuum nozzle to pull dust and lint out of your machine (never use compressed air)—We recommend something like the [Sonic Power Mini Vacuum](#).

Pro Tip: Clean your bobbin area every 8–10 hours of sewing to keep it running smoothly



(3) Use High-Quality Thread

I can't stress this enough—thread quality matters. Cheaper thread tends to leave behind extra fuzz and fibers, which leads to lint buildup inside your machine. That extra lint can cause everything from tension issues to skipped stitches and even thread breaks mid-project.

If you've ever struggled with inconsistent stitching, your thread could be the culprit. **I always recommend using trusted, high-quality brands like these:**

Product	Best Uses for Each Thread
Madeira Threads	High-quality, low-lint threads perfect for embroidery, quilting, and general sewing.
Superior Threads	Strong, smooth thread designed to prevent breakage and shredding, ideal for specialty sewing.
Mettler Spool Thread	Versatile all-purpose thread with excellent tension control for precise and even stitches.

(4) Change Your Needle Regularly

A dull needle is one of the most common reasons for **skipped stitches** and uneven sewing. Over time, the needle wears down, leading to poor stitch formation.

When I change my needle:

- Every 8 hours of sewing
- At the beginning of a new project
- Any time I hear a popping sound while sewing
- When I notice skipped stitches or fabric puckering

Don't forget—different projects call for different types of needles. It only takes a few seconds to swap out a needle, and it can save you a lot of frustration down the road.

Product	Best Uses for Each Needle
<u>Ballpoint Needles</u>	Designed for knits and stretch fabrics, these needles glide through fabric without causing snags.
<u>Microtex Needles</u>	Ultra-sharp needles perfect for fine fabrics, delicate stitching, and high-precision sewing.
<u>Denim Needles</u>	Stronger needles with reinforced shafts, ideal for sewing heavy fabrics like denim and canvas.
<u>Universal Needles (90/14)</u>	A must-have needle for general sewing, suitable for woven fabrics and medium-weight materials.



(5) Always Rethread Before Troubleshooting

Whenever my [sewing machine](#) starts acting up—messy stitches, weird tension, or strange sounds—the very first thing I do is rethread it from top to bottom. It's amazing how often that simple step fixes everything.

How rethreading helps:

- It clears up tangles and prevents those dreaded thread nests under the fabric
- It makes sure the thread is properly seated in the tension discs
- It gives your machine a clean reset before you start adjusting anything else

Pro Tip: If your stitches suddenly look unbalanced or messy, turn off the machine, remove the thread completely, and rethread from scratch.



(6) Position Your Thread Spool

It might not seem like a big deal, but the way your thread unwinds from the spool can actually impact your stitching in a big way. If you're seeing thread shredding, fraying, or breakage, the spool setup could be the culprit.

Here are a few things I like to check:

- Try using the secondary spool pin—changing the thread angle can make a big difference
- Placing the thread on a vertical spool stand
- Ensuring the thread feeds over the top or from underneath, depending on machine preference

If you're working with trickier threads like metallic or monofilament, a separate [thread stand](#) can be a game changer. It helps keep tension consistent and reduces unnecessary friction before the thread even reaches the tension discs.

(7) Do You Need to Oil Your Machine?

Most modern [sewing machines](#) do not require oiling, but there are exceptions.

Check your owner's manual to see if your machine needs oil. Some Bernina models, for example, require

occasional oiling. If your machine does require oil, it will typically include a special oil pen and clear instructions.

Do NOT oil your machine unless your manual specifies it. Many machines have sealed bearings, and adding oil can cause more harm than good.

Final Thoughts: Keep Your Sewing Machine Happy!

Sewing machine problems can be frustrating, but most of the time, they're totally preventable. Just a few simple habits—like cleaning your bobbin area, swapping out your needle, and using better thread—can make a huge difference in how smoothly your machine runs.

Here's a quick checklist to keep in mind:

- Rethread your machine if something suddenly looks or sounds off
- Change your needle every 8 hours of sewing or at the start of a new project
- Keep your bobbin area free of lint
- Stick with high-quality thread to avoid buildup and skipped stitches
- Pay attention to how your thread feeds—adjusting the spool setup can help
- Bring your machine in for professional service once a year

Taking just a little time for routine maintenance will keep your machine humming along for years. And if you ever need help choosing the right tools, thread, or needles, we're always happy to help at [Quality Sewing & Vacuum](#).  [Contact us toll-free at 1-800-687-5175](#).

Happy Sewing! - Carmen

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