

THREAD FOR SADDLE WORK

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Linen Thread Size	Nylon Equivalent	Suggested Machine Needle size (metric)	Recommended thread uses
	33	80, 90	Fancy stitching on boots Lightweight garments
	46	80, 90	Boot tops Garments
	69	90, 100, 110	Sewing nylon products Lightweight chaps, show chaps Garments, jackets Sewing calfskin wallets, coin purses, etc.
	92	100, 110	Same as above for #69 thread
2 cord	138	130, 150	Sewing dress belts Fine handbags Heavy chap zippers and chaps Ultra fine D & S show bridles
3 cord	207	160, 180	Fine bridle work English bridle work
4 cord	277	200	Fine western saddle work Standard bridle work, work bridles Tack items, saddlebags, breast collars Show harness work
5 cord	346	230	Standard western saddle, work saddles Buggy harness work Heavy halters, work items
6 cord	415	250	Heavy harness work Boot soling and welting
7 cord		Needle/awl Machine	Heavy Harness work Draft work Harness
8 cord		Needle/awl machine	Extra heavy harness work Draft harness
10 Cord		hand make	Lacing applications for English saddle work
12 cord		hand make	Lacing applications for English saddle work

Remember: Even though the thread sizes are shown in equivalent sizes, the uses for certain threads are NOT interchangeable. Do not, for instance, try to use a 2-cord linen thread when a 138 nylon thread would be more suitable and stronger. Do not try to use a 415 nylon thread as a substitute for a 6-cord linen thread when the softness and mouldability of the linen is more appropriate. Linen should always be purchased in the unwaxed form, as a pre-waxed thread is difficult to work up properly for hand sewing. Beeswax is the standard wax for hand sewing thread such as linen. Linen is the preferred thread for hand sewing, as nylon tends to tie itself into knots and can cut leather. Polyester thread also runs in the same sizes as nylon thread. The word “nylon” has evolved as a generic term for all synthetic threads, but only nylon should be called nylon if that is the actual thread being used. Nylon and polyester are not necessarily interchangeable, as nylon is stronger than polyester, but polyester has a softer lay to it. Choose the size and type of thread depending on the looks and use of the finished project. For leather stitching machines, always use LEFT TWIST thread, or the thread will not feed into a machine very well, unraveling being the result. Even with linen thread, always buy left twist thread if it is to be used in a machine. That way, it can be used either in a machine or by hand. Buy thread in the color to match the work, or in the case of linen, buy black, brown, or natural, the only three colors available. Synthetic threads come in all colors in most sizes. In many cases, black or white thread may not be the best color to use. Thread is most commonly sold in one-pound cones. Hence a pound will last for quite some time. Choose color and size wisely.

For a starter run of synthetic thread sizes in a general saddle shop, get 69, 138, 207, and 277. If you do more work type gear, you might want to get 346 thread as well.