

IS YOUR OLD SPOOL OF THREAD STILL GOOD FOR USE? By Beth Galvin, Courtesy of Craftsy

Time is not always kind to fabric — but what does it do to thread? And how do you know if the thread you have in your stash still good to use?

thread is one of those items that you might find at estate sales, pick up at charity shops or even receive when a friend clears out an attic and brings you bagful's of stuff that "you can probably use since you sew."

Some older spools of thread are really lovely, and the array of colors on those wooden spools have such a great visual appeal. But can you use that thread?



THREAD, LIKE FABRIC, IS ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY MANY OF THE SAME CONDITIONS INCLUDING LIGHT AND HUMIDITY.

LIGHT

Light can cause your thread to fade and lose its beautiful color. It can also weaken the fibers so that it's not as strong as you want for sewing. If your thread is visibly faded, it's probably best to discard or use for less critical tasks.

Many threads are made of cotton, so think of how sunlight or other strong light acts on a cotton fabric: Light makes it weaker and more prone to disintegration. The same process happens to thread left in strong light.

HUMIDITY

Humidity is also a factor in the life of your thread. In a very dry atmosphere, your thread can become quite brittle. In a humid one, it can even develop mold or just be a bit sticky.

DUST

Dust can also affect the quality of thread. Dust can settle on spools. Then, once that spool is threaded on your sewing machine, that dust is just being pulled right down into the tension discs.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF THE THREAD IS NOT IN TIP-TOP SHAPE?

Use your muscles! Unspool a length of thread and give it a good tug. If it breaks easily, then perhaps it has become dry or brittle. If you are not sure whether it is breaking too easily, try this same procedure with a brand new spool of thread for comparison. It will become evident which spools are breaking too easily and which are still good to use.



WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH ALL THAT THREAD THAT ISN'T IN GOOD SHAPE ANYMORE?

Use it for other tasks that tend to "waste" good thread. Tailor's tacks, temporary basting and thread tracing are great uses for thread that is not quite good enough for the sewing machine but still seems to have some life in it.

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I found these yellow and green threads at a garage sale. While they don’t seem ideal for machine sewing, they are perfect for making very visible tailor’s tacks in a variety of garments.

One category of thread that seems to age better than some others is silk thread. These spools above are quite old and yet very vibrant. They work perfectly to make hand-worked buttonholes or do silk basting.



MAKE YOUR THREAD LAST LONGER!

The key to thread survival is proper storage! Make sure your thread stays wound neatly on the spool to prevent tangling. Keep it out of the light and away from dust, and your rainbow of threads will be ready for your next colorful project.

