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[illegible]

Start sewing on an actual project. You will want an ergonomic correct set-up, especially if you plan to begin stitching at a time. You can spend about 5000 words on that, but just for a quick try: Your elbows should be at a 90 degree angle when your hands are on the bed of the sewing machine (not the top of the desk/table it's resting on). Also, your knees should be at a 90 degree angle relative to the floor. What this usually look like is sitting up high to get your hands on the top of the bed and not having a stack of books or small stool to keep your knees at 90 degrees and your feet flat. Or a special table that lowers the sewing machine into it making the bed level with the table top. Not the simplest to do if you have limited resources and space in your sewing area. I like stacks of books under feet and big old pillows under my butt. I think we deserve to sit in comfort, don't you?/Make sure you have the proper style of bobbin for your machine, this is VERY IMPORTANT!Bobbin - small metal wheel looking thingy that is placed in the bed of the machine. The bobbin is wound/loaded with thread (once thread is on the bobbin, it is called bobbin thread) to match your upper thread. The purpose of the bobbin is to put the bobbin thread in the right place for the upper thread to catch it, creating strong sewing machine stitches. The two threads twist one full time in the thickness of the fabric and by twisting, they are securing themselves in the fabric and with each other.All spools of thread will fit onto all spool pins but not all bobbins will fit in all machines/bobbin cases. Some have a thicker width, some have a wider diameter. This is a place where having the brand and model number of your machine is important.Featherweight - Left, Bernina - Right. Not pictured - Janome. It's plastic, nothing special... You can't just buy the generic/universal bobbins at the local box store and expect them to work in all machines. They are usually meant to fit Singer sewing machines since that is what the big box stores usually sell and because it is a very popular brand.*TIP* Start with an empty bobbin when winding. When I was younger, I was taught that you can add thread onto a bobbin that already has a little thread on it. Yes, you can technically do this, but it is one of those things that you probably shouldn't do. So I will let you decide when it comes time. I've never had an issue doing it that way but there's always a first time for everything and now I usually choose caution in a situation like this over convenience.Thread - Use only good quality threads, even for testing it out. New, high quality thread is another important factor of good results for your sewing projects. Thread gets weak over time, especially if it is exposed to the sun and air.*TIP* I like to keep my thread in a plastic box to keep it out of the air and I put it in the bottom of my dark cabinet so it doesn't get any sunlight.If your thread is constantly breaking, it will not matter how well or how many times you rethread the machine. If your sweet Auntie gives you thread from her stash, politely thank her for it. But check if the thread is still good, just try and break it by hand. If it breaks easily you will not want to use it, so you'll either chuck it or craft with the spools. Don't keep it and let it get sucked into your good thread stash.Practice Fabric - It is best to start with a tightly woven quilters cotton or similar. Knit fabrics, like what t-shirts and sweatshirts are made out of, should not be used when first starting sewing. They stretch a lot, require quite the finesse when sewing, and not good for the beginner. NOT a good place to start to grow your confidence on a sewing machine. You will become frustrated before you even get done practicing some sewing and want to chuck the machine out the window.Thread/Fabric Combination - You need to use the right thread for the right fabric. When testing out if you have your machine threaded properly, it is not as important, however, if you use a super fine thread in a super heavy duty fabric (and vice versa), you will not get a good feel for the quality of your stitches.Using a basic 40 weight thread (which is the most popular and what most people have on hand or find easily at the store) on a decent quality quilter's cotton should be fine. In the future, you'll want to use the same kind of thread you will be using on the kind of fabric you will be using for a project to check out stitch quality. Best to use the actual thread and a fabric scrap to test out stitching, but again, that's another post for another day.To get started, let's talk about how to put the needle in the machine. I will not go into different types of needles, that is a rather long discussion that will have to wait for another post. Home sewing machine needles usually have a flat side on the needle shank (99% of machines I've ever seen).Brand and size imprint!Other side has flat section!The place on the sewing machine where the needle goes will have a matching flat side so that there is only one way to insert the needle. Push the end of the needle opposite the sharp point up in the 'D' shaped hole until it does not go any further up, then secure with the needle clamp screw on the right, next to the needle. Turn to the right to tighten, righty tighty, lefty loosey applies here.The needle is that last part of threading the machine.Make sure that IF the spool has a small cut in the edge it is away from the end that is being pulled to be threaded into the machine, see below. (The cut is there to hold the thread when not in use so it doesn't ravel.) Otherwise it will catch the thread and either keep the thread from going anywhere or mess with your tension. For a horizontal pin, put the little cut down, away from the end of the pin. For a vertical pin, place the spool with the cut facing down.For example, my Bernina and Janome machines have horizontal spool pins that require a spool stopper. The Featherweight has a vertical pin and gravity keeps the spool on the pin.Here are the different places and styles for three different machines, yours will likely look like one of these:From Left: Bernina, Janome, Featherweight.Let's get started: Directions are in Bright Pink (it's technically Coral...)Place a full/fullish spool of thread onto the spool pin. Secure with spool pin if necessary. To keep the thread from raveling while threading the machine, you can either hold the spool or just pinch the upper thread.Pull the thread end from the spool and follow the directions below to properly thread and tension your sewing machine.Thread Guides - Places on the sewing machine that are used to direct the thread from the spool down to the needle. Many are not obviously marked, but all should be used for proper thread tension. Usually small metal hooks or loops.Continue holding the thread taut as you pull it down from the first thread guide towards the tension discs. Pull the thread down between the tension discs.Tension Discs - Two metal discs, that when pressed together determines the speed of the thread going from the spool down to the needle. The tighter the discs are held together, the slower the thread will be going down to the needle.Then pull the thread from the tension discs down. There are usually arrows printed on the machine to show this motion. Go down around the metal protruding from the machine and up again on the left side of it, towards the Take Up Lever:Take Up Lever- A moving part that goes up and down at the same time and speed as the needle. It is what moves to actively pull the upper thread off the spool. It should be raised to the highest point for threading.To get the take up lever to the highest point, either turn the hand wheel towards you and stop when it is at the highest point, or use the up/down needle button and stop when the needle is up.*NOTE* This is where the upper thread I use magically changes from Purple to a BRIGHT Neon Yellowish Greenish color in the post. I changed the thread color for better visibility. It might change back, just know that it should be the same color the whole time, or else you have real issues @ (or variegated thread).Now, take the thread up and to the right of the take up lever.Then bring the upper thread behind the take up lever and down again on the left side of the take up lever. The thread should automatically 'click' into a notch. Older machines have a hole that you need to put the thread through, without the notch. Pay close attention to which style you have.Once the thread is secure in the notch, continue the thread path down the left side of the take up lever. Then you will encounter a few nameless thread guides.You will be 'catching' the thread on the ends of the thread guides and by continuing to pull down, the thread will get itself situated where it wants and needs to be.See how the thread jumped to where it needs to be?Make sure the thread is in the thread guides, other wise it might get caught somewhere it shouldn't be.Close up of the next thread guide which is the last one on this particular machine. This one happens to be approached from the left instead of the right.The last thread guide puts the thread in an ideal place to go through the needle.Thread the needle. On this machine, the thread goes through from the front to the back of the needle.Pull the thread out of the needle about 3-4 inches. We do not want it to get sucked back up the way it came. That happens easily when the hand wheel is turned or when the machine starts sewing. The upper thread is done.The upper thread path of the Bernina and Janome are near identical. I'm going to add some photos with very little text so you can see the similarities and differences.Here she is in all her glory. She needed a little sprucing up... hence the canned air, stiff bristled brush and cotton swabs.Start with the spool. Don't forget that little plastic ring thingy - spool stopper right? I keep forgetting the proper name for it...Then bring the thread over to the left side of the machine to the first thread guide. It is round and black in this situation. Don't get confused with the round one in the back, that's for winding the bobbin.Down through the tension discs that are not as easily seen on this particular machine. The set up is exactly like the Bernina, all the way down to a piece of the machine that juts out and is a color different from the machine. That is where we will bring the thread down and around to go back up to the take up lever. There are little arrows to follow.Bring the thread back up and going from the right to the left, hook the thread into the notch at the top of the take up lever.After hooking the thread on the take up lever, go down yet again towards the needle. There is a groove down the front of the machine where the thread wants to be. Bring it down and look for a thread guide. There is only one thread guide before the needle.And finally... thread the needle from front to back. DONE with the upper thread!Older machines will have more rudimentary looking contraptions that do the same things we've seen on the Bernina and Janome above. Take a look at the thread path to see how it is nearly identical, with a slight variation when it comes to the needle.Vertical spool pin, gravity holds it in place. No plastic spool holder ring things to break or lose... I want to go back in time, things were so much simpler...Just like the Bernina, we move the end of the thread from the spool to the first thread guide, to the left. This guide is a simple hook.From the thread guide, we go down to the tension discs, making sure the thread is between the two circular discs. The mechanics are very open compared to the new sewing machines which have most things covered in plastic. We are taking the thread between the tension discs, around the bottom and up the other side of the tension dial in a clockwise direction.Once you have reached the top of the dial, bring the thread a little farther clockwise so it tucks behind the long, horizontal thread guide.Coming up from the horizontal thread guide, next the thread goes through the take up lever. Notice that this one has a hole to insert the thread through from right to left.Now the thread travels back down to another thread guide. This one looks like a loop, you can either thread it through the hole, or you can drag the thread from the back to the front. It will catch in the loop.Yes, another thread guide! This machine is so easy to thread! This time we are approaching from the left. Catch the thread on the left side of the guide. It will eventually rest towards the front of the machine.One more thread guide before we reach the needle. This last one is also threaded from the left side. It is right above the needle clamp. This needle clamp is the same idea as the other machines, only the needle goes in a different way.So this is really the only big difference between the thread path on each machine. Done with the upper thread path!Most machines, even rather old ones, come with a way to quickly load a bobbin with thread. Some have their own little motors to wind the bobbin thread and some rely on the same motor that makes the needle go up and down. Here are photos to show how my three machines wind bobbins:Place the empty bobbin on the bobbin winding spindle, place spool of upper thread on spool pin and secure with the spool stopper. Run upper thread from spool, towards the left - around the bobbin wind thread guide CLOCKWISE (the round shaped thread guide, on the left side), following the direction of the arrow printed on the machine and then bring upper thread over to the empty bobbin. This particular machine says to wind the thread CLOCKWISE around this first bobbin thread guide. The guide shows how to wind a few rounds of thread (once the upper thread is touching the bobbin, it becomes bobbin thread) onto the bobbin. You do not need to put the thread through any holes on the side of the bobbin (other machines have you do this as you will see soon).Wrap it a few times and keep the wraps taut.Once you have the thread around the bobbin a few times, keep hold of the end and slide the little handle (located to the right of the bobbin winding spindle) towards the bobbin. That movement starts the winding. It will stop automatically when full, or you can stop whenever you want by moving that handle back to its original position to the right. Use the handy thread trimmer when the bobbin is wound.Bobbin in motion.My particular machine has a handy dandy diagram of how to wind a bobbin printed on the lid! But if your machine doesn't have a diagram, the general flow is the same. (That's the whole point of this post!!)Place spool of upper thread on spool pin and secure with the spool stopper. Run upper thread from spool towards the left - going under a little square metal 'loop' then around the bobbin wind thread guide (that round shaped thread guide), CLOCKWISE following the guide printed on lid of the machine and then bring thread back over towards the bobbin winding spindle on the right.Grab an empty bobbin. Take the end of the thread and put it through one of the holes on the side of the bobbin, going from the inside of the spool towards the top. Push the bobbin down onto the bobbin winder spindle then push the spindle to the right to engage the motor for winding the bobbin.Not such a fancy bobbin... Hold the thread above the bobbin and gently press down on the foot control. After the bobbin has turned a few times, stop the spinning by picking up your foot and then trim the excess thread close to the hole on the bobbin. Press down on the foot pedal again and when the bobbin is fully wound, the machine will stop automatically (or you can wind it to your desired amount and let go of the pedal - I do this when I don't have a ton of thread and I need to split it evenly between the spool and bobbin). Cut the thread. Done.Magic, there's thread on it!The manual for the Featherweight is really nicely done, and it has a very formal language about it. Some older things are just better, even the manual is better!On the hand wheel you will see a smaller screw in the center, technically called a knurled screw . Gently turn that screw COUNTERCLOCKWISE until you feel it loosen slightly, all while holding the hand wheel still. That lets the machine know you want to wind a bobbin.Place the spool on the spool pin at the top of the machine. Bring the thread to the first bobbin winding thread guide that looks like a hook on the top left of the machine. Bring the thread around the hook COUNTERCLOCKWISE. Then, bring the thread down to the bottom right of the machine and hook it onto the round thread guide going COUNTERCLOCKWISE again.Place an empty bobbin on the bobbin winding spindle. It is on the upper right of the machine, on a little hinge that has a small silver wheel on it, technically called the bobbin wheel pulley. Gently push this silver wheel and bobbin part down so it touches that larger rubber belt that is around the hand wheel. You need good contact. The friction of the metal on the rubber is what is going to mechanically wind the bobbin! So cool.Bring the thread up towards your bobbin and from the inside of the bobbin, insert the thread through one of the holes on the left side of the bobbin. You want it to go from the inside/middle of the bobbin to the left, outside the bobbin.Hold the thread firm and slowly press down on the foot pedal to wind the bobbin. Keep hold of the thread until it breaks off all discs that are not as easily seen on this particular machine. The set up is exactly like the Bernina, all the way down to a piece of the machine that juts out and is a color different from the machine. That is where we will bring the thread down and around to go back up to the take up lever. There are little arrows to follow.Bring the thread back up and on its own. This is an older machine. It doesn't have an automatic stop for the bobbin winder so you will have to stop it yourself. Wind the bobbin until the thread is almost even with the edges of the bobbin or less... you do not want it to go past the edges.Cut thread from spool. In order to get the machine to sew, you will need to move the bobbin wheel pulley up and off the rubber belt and retighten the knurled screw in the middle of the hand wheel. Just follow what you did before but in reverse to put the machine back to its sewing configuration. Done. Phew, that was long... Each machine has its own kind of bobbin case or place where the bobbin goes so it can be ready to sew. The older style set-up is the use of a bobbin case that holds the bobbin then is inserted into the machine (still very popular, just started earlier - also found in commercial embroidery machines). A more recently used bobbin configuration is to place the bobbin into the machine on the top of the bed, without a true bobbin case, you'll see below with the Janome. The bobbin for the Bernina goes into a separate bobbin case. Start by inserting the bobbin into the bobbin case. Pay attention to the way the bobbin goes into the bobbin case. This is one of those times where having the manual is really useful.The Bernina's bobbin is placed in the bobbin case with the thread coming off the bobbin in the shape of a 9 or 6. It's helpful to remember this, you'll have to load the bobbin more often than the thread spool, so knowing how it goes in without having to look it up will save you a little bit of time and frustration.Note** The bobbin case for this sewing machine happens to have that little arm that sticks up out of the case. Not all bobbin cases have that, so don't worry if yours doesn't look exactly the same, we are going for general comparisons here.Place the center hole of the bobbin onto the center post inside the bobbin case.See the '9' shape? I'll show you again...Hold the bobbin still with one hand, gently bring the thread up to the top of the bobbin and you will feel the thread 'click' into the notch shown at #1 below. Then, gently pull up and to the left so that the thread slides under the tension plate.The thread will eventually land in the bigger notch as shown below. Pull out about 2-3 inches of thread from the bobbin. Make sure the bobbin stays in the bobbin holder. If you need help with how to wind a bobbin, refer to this tutorial. Raise your presser foot. Your thread will not glide through your machine if the presser foot is down. Turn on your sewing machine. Press the needle up/down button to raise the needle so that the take-up lever is in the highest position. If you do not have an up/down button, turn the handwheel towards you (counter-clockwise) to raise the needle. Turn off your sewing machine or press the lockout button. Your sewing machine may have a vertical or horizontal spool pin. For a vertical spool pin, place the spool of thread onto the spool pin with the thread coming off the front of the spool. For a horizontal spool pin, lift up the spool pin and place the spool of thread onto the pin with the thread coming off towards the back of the machine. Slide a spool cap on top of the spool to hold the spool in place. The spool cap should be slightly larger than the spool of the thread as it helps to not only hold the spool in place, but to keep the thread from getting snagged on the top of the spool. Pull out a few inches of thread from the spool. Hold the thread with both hands and pass the thread into the guide slot. With a back and forth motion, make sure your thread engages with the tension discs located inside the thread guide. While still holding the thread with both hands, draw the thread around the corner of the guide. Firmly pull the thread toward you along the channel.Draw the thread along the right channel and around the bottom of the thread guide plate. Then pull the thread up along the left channel. Hold onto the spool of thread bar with your right hand, firmly draw the thread up and to the back of the take-up lever with your left hand. Draw the thread forward to slip it into the eye of the take-up lever. Then pull the thread down along the left channel and through the lower thread guide. (Your machine may or may not have a lower thread guide.)Slide the thread behind the needle bar thread guide on the left. Thread the needle. If your machine has a needle threader, use it to thread the needle. You will need to turn your machine back on before using the automatic needle threader. If not, thread the end of the thread through the eye of the needle. The thread should pass through the front (towards you) and out through the back (away from you) of the needle. Pull the thread end towards the rear of the sewing machine. To draw up the bobbin thread, If you haven't already, insert your bobbin into the bobbin holder, leaving a 4" tail of bobbin thread. Raise the presser foot. Hold the needle thread lightly with your left hand.If your machine is equipped with an up/down button, press the button twice to lower and raise the needle. Then pull the needle thread to bring up the loop of bobbin thread. If your machine is NOT equipped with an up/down button, turn the handwheel counter-clockwise to lower and raise the needle. Pull the thread to bring up the loop of bobbin thread. Pull both threads under and behind the presser foot (towards the back of the sewing machine). You'll find an entire series of tutorials right here on Hooked on Sewing designed to help you Learn to Sew, like: If you haven't already, I highly recommend you check out those tutorials, you may also find the following tutorials helpful: Be sure to pin this sewing tutorial to your favorite Pinterest board so you can save it for later or share it with family and friends who may also want to learn how to thread a sewing machine!