

Show#2004-3 Tips for Sewing Silkies

Presented by: Joanne Banko
www.letsqosew.com

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- Sewing with silky fabrics like crepe de chine, charmeuse, crepe backed satin, linings, sheers, etc. can present some challenges. There are silkies made from synthetic fibers and silkies from natural fibers like silk and rayon. Whatever the fiber content, these slinky, slippery fabrics seem to have a mind of their own! All silky fabrics benefit from some special handling and special sewing techniques. These instructions include some of my favorite tips for cutting, sewing, and finishing fabrics labeled as "silkies." **Note:** I use the optional SAQTXP1 Wide Extension Table for support during sewing and quilting.

- Layer your cutting table with tissue paper and place the silky fabric on top. When you layout your pattern, pin and cut through all layers. The tissue paper will help keep the fabric from moving and sliding around the table.



Now, I know what you are thinking . . . Oh no! Cut through paper with my fabric scissors!?! I'm here to tell you that occasionally cutting through some tissue paper isn't going to kill your fabric scissors. Cutting in general, and cutting synthetic fibers in particular, will eventually cause scissors to need sharpening. That is just a fact of sewing life :-)

- Selecting needles and threads: Fine sharp needles such as Microtex are ideal for silks. I use size 10 or 12 for most projects. Synthetic sewing thread is fine for polyester and most other fibers and blends. However, I prefer cotton sewing thread when sewing real silk.

- Select interfacings that are soft and pliable and will not change the character of your fabric. When working with fusibles, *it's always best to test*. Cut 6-inch squares of fabric and interfacing, fuse together following manufacturer's instructions, and then launder to see if you like the results. For most silkies, I prefer soft knitted interfacing such as [Pellon SK135 Sheer-Knit™](#), [Pellon 180 Knit-N-Stable™](#), or a soft woven interfacing known as [HTC Touch O'Gold](#). Check your local sewing shops for product availability. When fusing fabric pieces, fuse interfacing to an oversized section of fabric before cutting out your pattern pieces. If you want to opt for sew-in interfacing, consider using a poly-cotton blend batiste in a neutral color to blend with your fabric.
- Use fine sharp pins such as [glass head silk pins](#) or [super fine flat head pins](#). I prefer [Clover](#) brand.
- For best results, use a straight stitch foot for sewing straight seams. If you have the option of combining this with a straight stitch throat plate, you'll have *even better* results! No straight stitch plate? Choose the far left needle position as the next best option.
- If your work surface is slippery, place a piece of craft felt on the table and it will help keep fabrics from sliding as you are handling them.

Seams and seam finishes: Begin stitching on a small piece of stabilizer to keep fabric from being pushed into a zig zag throat plate. Finishing the raw edges of some silky fabrics with a serger or sewing machine overcast stitch may leave a ridge on the right side when you press. Test to be sure you are happy with the results. Here are some alternative seams and seam finishes:

- A French seam is ideal when you want a neat, enclosed seam on the inside.
- Finishing the seam with a very light seam binding such as [Dritz Seams Great](#) provides a nice flat finish.
- A "hairline" seam is great when you want a nearly invisible finish. To create a hairline seam, first sew the seam with the full seam allowance. Next, trim seam leaving a little more than 1/8-inch. Finish by stitching over raw edge with a narrow zig zag stitch.

From left to right, below you'll see a sample of various interfacings, seam bound with Seams Great, and a hairline seam.



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let's go sew!
with Joanne Banko

Additional Resources:

- I invite you to visit me at my Sewing and Embroidery website www.letsgosew.com. You'll find online lessons, videos, free downloads, plus lots of sewing and embroidery information and inspiration!
- Sign-up for letsgosew.com news [HERE](#).
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Happy Sewing!

Joanne