

Sewing Pins: Lots of Choices, Lots of Uses

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Pins are an indispensable sewing tool. They'll eventually poke you, but you'll have to forgive and move on because they keep your pattern pieces in place, hold your seams together as you sew, anchor trims, and more.

There are an almost overwhelming choice of pins on the market. Other than upholstery, for most home decor sewing you can get by with just a few basics. There are five parts to a pin to consider:

1. The Head of a Pin

The head is the most distinguishing part of the pin, and it can be made from various materials, such as glass, metal, and plastic.

Glass Head Pins



These are the most commonly used pin. The glass ball is easy to grip and won't melt if touched by a hot iron. Some pins that look very much like this have plastic heads that *will* melt. Stay away from plastic-headed pins unless the package states that they do not melt.

Flat Big-Head Pins



You'll find these big flat-headed pins in many shapes – flowers are as popular as the button shape. These particular plastic

pins have no-melt heads. Look for that. They're very easy to grip and handy when working with loosely woven fabrics, lace or eyelet. The flat head is also helpful when using a rotary cutter, because a ruler will lay flat over the top of them.

Headless Pins



Sometimes called a "satin" pin, it's good for satin and medium weight fabrics. Headless pins are also useful for hand stitching because your thread is less likely to be caught on the tiny head. The downside is that headless pins are difficult to see on patterned fabrics.

2. Content of the Metal

When buying pins, look at the type(s) of metal they contain. This is important if you have allergies to certain metals (most often, nickel), or you live in a humid environment. You can find:

- Stainless steel
- Nickel-plated steel (most common)
- Nickel-plated brass
- Chrome-plated steel (the strongest)

Since metal can rust, stainless steel is the safest. However, if you don't have a metal allergy and your environment is not excessively humid, easy-to-find nickel-plated steel is just fine for most projects. To be on the cautious side, don't leave pins in fabric for long periods of time.

3. Weight of the Shaft

Pin weight or thickness is measured in millimeters. Use the thinnest pin that will do the job. Common sizes include:

- **.4mm:** Good for very sheer fabrics
- **.5mm:** Good for fine or lightweight fabrics, silks and satin. Also called *super-fine* or *extra-fine*.
- **.6mm:** Good for medium-weight fabrics. This is your basic multi-purpose pin.
- **.7mm:** Good for heavier fabrics like a dense wool. These can leave a noticeable hole in mid-weight or finer fabrics. Use with caution.

4. Overall Pin Length

Pins used to be listed only by a size number, for example Size 20 (which is 1-1/4-inches). It's common now to see the the size listed by actual length. The size you want is dependent on what you are doing.

- For most project an all-purpose pin about 1-1/2-inch in length (Size 24) is perfect.
- You'll want a longer pin for quilting, because you are pinning though several layers of fabric plus batting. Quilting pins range in length from 1-1/2 inches (Size 24) to 2-inches (Size 32).
- If you are applying trim, a shorter length 3/4-inch (Size 12) is better so pins don't overlap each other.

5. Getting to the Point

The point of your pin should slide easily and cleanly into your fabric. If it causes holes or snags you should switch to another type of pin. There are three types of points to look for:

- **Sharp:** These are good for most medium- to heavy-weight woven fabrics.
- **Extra-sharp:** The points are longer, more tapered and good for delicate fabrics.
- **Ball point:** Ball points are used for knits. The point is actually rounded rather than sharp, so it glides between the yarns of the fabric without piercing or pulling.

Pins are cheap. If they become damaged (bent, dull, rusty), toss them. They can snag or stain your fabric.

Buying Guide

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