

Adjusting the Tension on your Sewing Machine

by VonZetta Gant

"Help! I've messed up the tension on my machine and can't find the book to figure out how to adjust it. It appears that there are both upper and lower dials to adjust. Right now, the top thread sits on top of the fabric, while the underneath is covered with loops of bottom thread."

Sound Familiar? Here's how to fix it.

When the top and bottom threads do not each go half way into the fabric, the tension needs adjusting. This is sometimes because it has become loose, and it is sometimes because it requires different adjustments for different kinds of fabrics. The method described below will work for whatever the problem is. It takes account of the fact that it is sometimes hard to remember which tension (top or bottom) to adjust, and which direction to adjust it.

- First take a few deep breaths and relax.
- Remember to take baby steps to resolve this problem.
- Start with the top tension adjuster. It is easier to get to and easier to adjust.
- Begin by moving the top tension a little at a time (maybe a 1/4 turn or 1/2 number or less at a time)
- If the problem gets a little better, you are moving the top tension the correct direction. If the problem gets a little worse, you are moving the top tension the wrong direction.
- Keep adjusting the top tension until the top and bottom threads are even and both go into the fabric.
- You may get to a point when you cannot adjust the top any farther. If that should happen:
- Remember to breathe and relax.
- Turn the top back a little so there will be room for top adjustment after you adjust the bottom.

- Adjust the bottom a little at a time. If the problem gets a little better, you are moving the bottom tension the correct direction. If the problem gets a little worse, you are moving the bottom tension the wrong direction.
- As you adjust the bottom you may have to adjust the top to make the threads meet in the middle of the fabric so that there is equal tension on the top and the bottom.
- If the thread is too tight on the top, the thread will lay on the top in a straight line with the loop coming up through the bottom over the straight line.
- If you loosen the tension on the on the top, it will allow this thread to go into the fabric when the bottom tension is in balance with the top.
- If the thread is too tight on the bottom, the thread will lay on the bottom in a straight line with the loop coming over the bottom thread that is in a straight line.
- If you loosen the tension on the on the bottom, it will then allow this bottom thread to go into the fabric if the bottom tension is in balance with the top.

And remember, the main thing is to keep calm. The problem is much easier to solve when you are breathing regularly and relaxed.