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Sewing Machine Tension

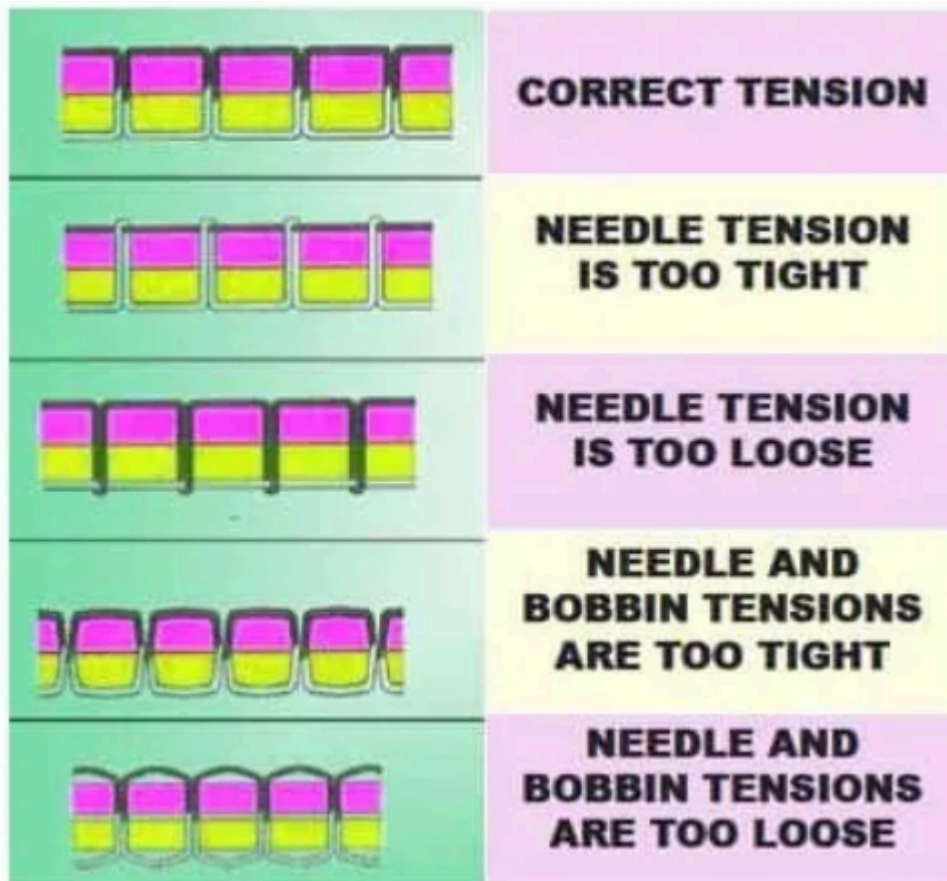
What is tension?

Tension refers to the amount of thread that can pass through the machine to create the stitch. The more thread in the stitch, then the looser the stitch. The less thread, then the tighter the stitch.

For a machine to create a stitch that looks the same top and bottom, an identical amount of thread needs to feed through the needle and bobbin simultaneously. The sewing machine loops the bottom and top threads around each other to create a stitch. Tension makes sure this happens.

What tension looks like (good & bad)

Correct tension can be felt and seen. If you sew a line of stitching and feel little bumps at each stitch point on the top and bottom of the fabric, you are feeling that the tension is not working properly BUT: do not start adjusting the tension dial! These types of stitch problems can be caused by something else but are manifesting as tension issues.



The bottom two examples will be rare and will need a service engineer to resolve as the bobbin tension will need assessing.



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What controls tension?

Tension is controlled by discs hidden within the machine. When you thread your machine you follow the threading guide (a series of arrows on your machine, check the manual for older machines), by default the thread is automatically placed between the tension plates where it needs to go.

The pressure foot is also instrumental to tension. The foot needs to be up before you thread the machine in order for the tension plates to be open/apart and the thread to be threaded properly.

The bobbin also has a tension control - but this is buried in the machine and only to be adjusted by a service engineer. Bobbin tension is far less likely to go wrong and far more sensitive to change than the main tension plates.