

Cross wound spool stand and thread guide for featherweights (and other vintage sewing machines)

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Thread comes wound on spools in two different ways. The first and most traditional way is “stacked wound.” When the thread is stack wound it is parallel to itself and perpendicular to the spool pin on the sewing machine. It is designed to come off the spool in a direction perpendicular to the vertical spool pin on the sewing machine. This will make the spool slowly spin as thread is removed and is why most vintage sewing machines have a spool felt to rest the spool on so the machine will not be scratched as the spool spins. When thread is “cross wound” it forms an **X** on the spool. This is a more modern way to wind thread on a spool. Cross wound thread is designed to leave the spool parallel to the spool pin. This is why many newer machines have their spool pins horizontal rather than vertical. You can find cross wound some spools and especially on practically all thread cones both large and small.

To use cross wound spools or thread cones on a vintage machine you must have some way to pull the thread off vertically (parallel to the spool pin. This can be done using a separate thread stand. In fact using a separate thread stand is probably best when using large commercial cones. However, when using smaller cones (about 2 inches in diameter) or spools, it would be convenient to be able to remove the thread vertical from the spool pin on the machine simply and easily. This is why I designed the following spool stand and thread guide.

It is easy to make this type thread stand from an old wire clothes hanger. I have tried to make a number of these spool stands making them taller or shorter and wider or narrower. Within limits they all worked reasonable well as long as the general shape was retained. My final design is a result of these various attempts and seems to work with a very wide variety of spools and smaller cones as well as a number of vintage sewing machines. I bent a clothes hanger into the desired shape. Around my house we seemed to have wire coat hangers of two different diameters. I used the larger diameter wire. The enclosed diagram is actual size (about 4 inches wide and 7 inches tall, although as I said the exact size ins not important. Smallest division on graph paper is about 1/8 inch.

Before trying to mount the spool stand on your machine make sure your machine has a good spool felt to keep the holder from scratching the paint of your machine (two spool felts would be even better!). Hold the vertical end of the wire next to the spool pin and slide a small to medium plastic straw over both the vertical piece on the thread stand and the machine’s spool pin as shown in first picture. The second picture shows how the holder is threaded (over the top and under the kink at the bottom and then on to the machine’s thread guides.)

The plastic straw is not needed if the spool has and small diameter hole. If your machine had a spool pin larger than a Singer Featherweight you can try a larger straw. If you have a spool cone that sits rather wonky on the stand try putting a quarter in fender washer about 2 inches in diameter over the plastic straw.

