



Mimi's Handbook for Dollmakers

Needle Modeling Techniques

by Gloria J. "Mimi" Winer

Three Big Secrets

Needle modeling is quite easy when you know how to do it:

- The first big secret is that it doesn't matter what you do to the back of the head—the hair will cover your stitches.
- The second big secret is not to pull the stitches too tight—only tight enough to hold.
- The third big secret is that you push the face (or body) where you want it with the tips of your fingers, then you use stitches to hold it in place. You do not pull the thread to model the face or body.

Thread

For a quick and easy doll, you can use Coats & Clark Dual Duty Extra Strong Hand Quilting thread. For collector dolls, I use a single strand of ordinary sewing thread. Since the sculpting is done subtly, the thread will be strong enough. You may have to practice a while to get your touch light enough. Pulling too hard will break the thread or cause deep dimples.

Starting the Thread

To start the thread, either take two or three stitches over the end of the thread and then clip it off; or, leave a long tail and wrap it around the needle after the first stitch (like a French knot), take a second stitch, and then clip off the tail. This is called a quilter's knot.

Secure Over Seam

When appropriate, secure sculpting threads over a seam. It gives added strength and will prevent the stitches breaking through the fabric.

Broken Thread

If you break the sculpting thread near the needle, put the end back into the needle and continue. If you break the thread close to the work, put the end back into the needle, wrap the thread around the needle two or three times (like a French knot) and bury the thread end in the doll. Use a new piece of thread to continue.

Avoiding Knots

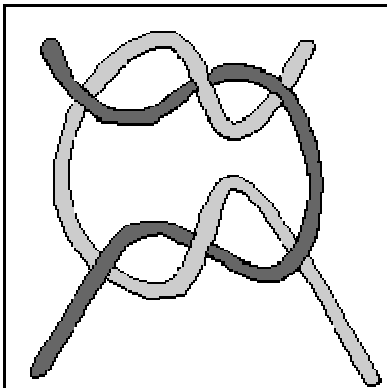
Do not use wax on sculpting thread. It will pull stuffing through with the thread and cause unsightly stitches. If you need lubrication to help prevent knots, use a drop or two of Sewer's Aid silicon on the spool of thread.

Ending the Thread

To end the thread, wrap the thread around the needle two or three times (like a French knot) and push the needle through the doll. Clip the end of the thread where it comes back out of the doll.

Tying a Square Knot

When sculpting some areas, the thread is doubled and started with a knot after leaving a five inch tail. When you end back at the beginning point, the thread and tail are tied together in a square knot.



To tie a square knot, twist the left thread over the right, and then the right over the left.