

FAQ on working with kimono silk

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There are some questions that are common to many quilters working with kimono silk for the first time. I thought I'd run through some of them now, along with the answers that come from my own experience. If your experience is other than this, let me know and I'll include your answers too.

Should I prewash? I have never pre-washed kimono silk. But I also don't pre-wash cottons. If you don't pre-wash, then make sure you look on my website, under education, for my advice about washing silk quilts. If you do prewash, do it as you would any cotton... with something to set the dye if it bleeds (retayne, vinegar, whatever you like to use).

Do I need to interface the silk? Kimono silk is tight woven and does not fray so I don't interface to prevent fraying. In general I only interface where I'm doing bias cuts... such as a circle or a wave pattern cut. The interfacing I prefer is **Presto Sheer by Stylemaker** because it is cotton, woven, fusible, extremely light and does not affect the hand of the silk. Before a customer told me about Presto Sheer I used Sheerweight Pellon, but it is polyester and affects both the breatheability and the hand of the silk.

Is it hard to work with? I find kimono silk to be just as easy as a quality cotton to work with. I do pin my seams before sewing because it is more slippery than cotton. For pins, I like to use the silk pins as they are sharper and finer than regular quilting pins.

Do I need to use silk thread? I don't use silk thread because it is very expensive. I use cotton thread, 50 wt, for piecing. I use a 40 wt or heavier for quilting, and generally use cotton (King Tut being my preferred thread because it doesn't lint up my machine and it is strong). I have used polyester tri-lobal thread for quilting when I wanted the sheen of polyester.

What about needles? Because kimono silk is generally very tightly woven, and silk is a stronger fibre than cotton, I use a very sharp needle in my machine... generally either a microtex needle or a topstitch needle as both have very sharp points. For piecing I generally use a size 70-80 needle because I'm using a 50 wt thread. For quilting I generally use a 90100 needle because that size needle will punch a big hole through the silk, allowing the cotton thread to pass through and back without breaking, and then when the needle comes out the silk tightens up around the thread and doesn't break the thread. **That's it for the FAQ now... any more questions, just let me know!**