

Lesson 5.6: Threading, Knotting, and the Running Stitch

Unit: Unit 5, Make It, Mend It, Wear It (Apparel and Textile Production and Design) **Topic:** 5.2 Hand Sewing Skills **Grade:** 6 to 8 (written at grade 7; see Differentiation for the grade 6 support and grade 8 stretch) **Days:** 1 class period of 40 minutes (day 122 of the year) **Room:** FACS lab, three sewing stations of about seven students (a no-station version is below)

First stitch day. Three skills, in this order, and no further: measure and cut a thread, thread the needle and knot it, sew a running stitch on a line. A student who can do those three things can do everything else in this topic, and a student who cannot thread a needle will sit frustrated for the nine sewing days that follow, so most of this period is spent on the part that looks trivial.

Written so a teacher who has never taught sewing can run it. The demonstration technique matters more than the talk: everything gets shown twice, once large and slow with yarn and a big needle on burlap so the back row can see the motion, then once small at real size under a document camera or at a table with the class standing around it.

Standards

- NYS module line: NYS ATPD 2. Production a) Identify common equipment and supplies used in hand and machine sewing
- NYS module line: NYS ATPD 2. Production c) Demonstrate basic hand and machine sewing techniques by creating or repairing a textile product
- CTE theme line: CTE HSW 4. Classroom and Workplace Safety c) Apply safety practices when using tools, machines, and equipment
- CTE theme line: CTE PSI 2. Design Process (Proactive) b) Demonstrate personal development of design skills through practice of these skills in a variety of classroom applications
- NYS FACS Learning Standard 2 (Intermediate), Key Idea: Students will know the basic principles of home and community safety. They can demonstrate the skills necessary to maintain their homes and workplaces in a safe and comfortable condition. They can provide a safe and nurturing environment for themselves and others.; Performance Indicator: Students use age-appropriate techniques to select and maintain clothing.
- CDOS Standard 3a Universal Foundation Skills: Basic Skills. Students listen to and read the ideas of others and analyze what they hear and read; acquire and use information from a variety of sources; and apply a combination of mathematical operations to solve problems in oral or written form.
- National FCS 3.0: 16.4.1 Work skillfully with traditional and newer equipment, tools, and supplies to construct, alter, repair, and recycle textiles and apparel.
- National FCS 3.0: 16.4.5 Show the basic skills for making, altering, repairing, and recycling textiles and apparel.

Note on the citations: the task asked for a verbatim PSI or HSW line. PSI 2. b) is used because it is the state's own "practice these skills in a variety of classroom applications" line for the design theme, which is exactly what a practice cloth is; HSW 4. c) carries the tool safety that runs every sewing day. The crosswalk's ATPD 2. c) row pairs with PSI 2. a), the full design process, which fits Lesson 5.10 where students design and build an item rather than today, where they practice a motion.

Enduring understanding and essential question

Big idea: A hand stitch is one motion repeated. If the setup is right, the motion is easy. Almost every sewing problem a beginner has is a setup problem: too much thread, no knot, or a needle too small for the thread. **Essential question:** What makes a stitch line even, and what is my hand actually doing?

Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. (Low: remember or understand) State why a thread is cut to about the distance from hand to elbow and name the three setup steps in order (cut, thread, knot).
2. (Mid: apply or analyze) Thread a hand needle and tie a knot that holds, then sew a running stitch along a printed straight line with stitches of roughly even length.
3. (High: evaluate or create) Evaluate their own stitch line against three criteria (even length, on the line, no puckering) and name the one change that would improve it most.

Vocabulary

Tier 2 (general academic): even, spacing, tension, setup, evaluate Tier 3 (FACS): running stitch, knot, quilter's knot, thread the needle, needle threader, eye (of a needle), practice cloth, pucker, stitch length. See the unit vocabulary list (Vocabulary 05.md) for Turkish, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Materials and setup

Three stations of about seven students, same kits and same layout as Lesson 5.5.

Per station:

- The station kit from Lesson 5.5, counted: 10 needles in the cushion, 30 pins
- One spool of all-purpose thread in a color that shows against white (red or navy is best; white thread on white cloth teaches nobody anything)
- Four needle threaders
- One count sheet on a clipboard, the day's row ready
- Two pre-threaded and knotted needles parked in the cushion for anyone who needs one

For the whole class:

- Practice cloths, two per student plus ten spares: white cotton muslin or an old sheet cut to about six by nine inches, with the practice lines printed or drawn on them. Printing works: run cut muslin squares through a copier or a home inkjet, or draw the lines with a ruler and a fine marker. The lines are described in Handout 05.06 - Practice Cloth Guide.md. *[Sal: an old flat sheet from a thrift store, about \$4, cuts into roughly sixty practice cloths. At three stations of about seven, 21 students, two each plus ten spares is 52 cloths, so one sheet supplies the topic. A section of 28 runs a fourth station and needs 66, so cut a second sheet. Do it once with the fabric shears and a ruler and the topic is supplied.]*
- The demonstration rig: one large blunt yarn needle, a ball of yarn in a bright color, and a piece of burlap or plastic canvas about twelve inches square stapled to a foam board or held in an embroidery hoop. This is what the back row watches.
- A document camera if the room has one; if not, the small demonstration is done at one table with the class standing in a ring, twice, once for each half of the class.
- Handout, one per student: Handout 05.06 - Practice Cloth Guide.md
- Slides: Slides 05.06 - Threading Knotting and the Running Stitch (outline in 05 Materials; the site renders it as a deck)
- The six needle rules posted at every station from Lesson 5.5
- Index cards for the closure
- Timer visible to the class
- Setup notes: cut and mark the practice cloths before the unit starts, not the night before; it takes longer than it sounds. Count the needles and pins into each cushion and fill in the starting numbers on the count sheets. Put the threaders out in the open, not in the kit, so using one does not look like asking for help. Any student from Lesson 5.4 with extended time on the quiz finishes at the front during the do now.

Pre-assessment

The do now is the pre-assessment and it is a race nobody wins: thread a needle before any instruction. Walk the room during it and count how many succeed in ninety seconds. In a typical middle school class that number is low, which is the point, and it tells me exactly how many pre-threaded needles I will need parked in the cushion for the next nine sewing days. The students who succeed become station helpers for Step 2, identified from yesterday's "who has sewn before" question.

Do now and hook (Time: 5 min)

On the board: "On your table is one needle, one threader, and a piece of thread. Do not cut anything. Try to get the thread through the eye of the needle. Ninety seconds. If you get it, put your hand flat on the table and wait."

Debrief: count the hands. Then the hook: hold up the big yarn needle and the burlap. "Everything I am about to teach you, I will do twice. Once big, so you can see my hands from the back row. Once real size, so you can see what your hands are supposed to do. The first thing I am going to fix is the part that just made half of you want to quit."

Procedure

Step	Teacher will	Students will	Time
1. Direct instruction and demonstration: cut the thread	Demonstrate and explain in one move. Pull thread off the spool from the hand to the elbow, about eighteen inches, and cut it with the snips at an angle. Say the three reasons not to go longer: a long thread tangles on itself, it wears out passing through the fabric over and over so it frays and snaps near the end, and your arm cannot pull it all the way through without standing up. Say the reason for the angled cut: a clean point goes through the eye. Then the rule for the whole unit: when the thread gets to about four inches left, stop and finish off, do not try to squeeze out two more stitches.	Measure hand to elbow, cut one thread at an angle with the snips, hold it up.	5 min
2. Demonstration and practice: thread the needle and knot it	Demonstrate large first on the yarn rig, then small under the camera, each step twice. Threading: hold the needle in front of something white or against your palm so the eye shows; flatten the thread end between your teeth or your	Thread the needle, using the threader if needed. Tie a knot. Test it by tugging. Do it twice. Station helpers assist at their own station only, hands off other people's needles.	12 min

	fingers, or trim it at an angle; hold the thread still and move the needle onto the thread, not the thread into the needle, which is the single tip that fixes most students; if that fails in three tries, use the threader, and show the threader: wire loop through the eye, thread through the loop, pull the loop back out. Knot: teach the quilter's knot because it does not slip and it looks like magic, which makes students want to learn it. Lay the thread end along the needle, wrap the thread around the needle three times, pinch the wraps between finger and thumb, pull the needle all the way through the pinched wraps, and keep pinching until the knot slides down the thread and tightens at the end. If the quilter's knot does not land, the fallback is a double overhand knot: tie a simple knot, then tie a second one on top of the first, then tug. Say the size rule: a	
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	knot has to be bigger than the hole the needle makes, or it pulls straight through the cloth. Then circulate hard. This step is the whole reason the lesson exists.		
3. Demonstration and practice: the running stitch on the straight line	Demonstrate large: needle up from underneath at the first dot, down at the second, up at the third, down at the fourth, keeping every stitch and every gap about the same length, roughly an eighth to a quarter of an inch. Show the two honest tricks: load two or three stitches on the needle before pulling it through, and let the fabric lie flat instead of holding it up in the air. Show the two failures on purpose: pull too tight and the fabric gathers into a pucker, which is what a running stitch does when the tension is wrong; sew off the line and it wanders. Then small, under the camera, on a real practice cloth. Then release the class to the practice cloth: the dotted straight	Sew the dotted straight line with a running stitch, all the way across. Then start the curve. Free hand stays behind the needle.	12 min

	line first, then the dotted curve if there is time. Circulate with the clipboard. At the five-minute warning, everything stops for the count.		
4. Self-check, count in, and dismissal routine	Call the five-minute warning. Every needle and pin back in the cushion. Station Manager counts out loud and writes the return numbers; teacher initials each row. While the count runs, students do the three-criteria self-check on the handout. Then two students hold up a practice cloth and say one thing they would change.	Return the needle and pins, run the count, rate own stitch line on three criteria (even length, on the line, no puckering), and write the one change.	6 min

Day total: 5 (the do now) plus 5 plus 12 plus 12 plus 6 = 40 minutes. The 4-minute closure runs inside Step 4, with the count.

Questions to ask

Monitor understanding:

- How long is your thread supposed to be, and how do you know without a ruler?
- Are you moving the thread into the needle or the needle onto the thread?
- Tug your knot. Did it hold? What do you do if it did not?
- Look at your line. Are your stitches all about the same length? Show me two that are not.

Deepen learning:

- Why would a long thread actually make the job harder instead of easier?
- Your fabric is gathering up. Nothing is wrong with your stitch shape. So what is wrong?
- A running stitch is the fastest stitch there is. Where would you not want to use it, and why?

- What does the pucker tell you about tension, and where else in FACS have you seen tension matter?
- Somebody at your station threaded a needle on the first try. What did their hands do that yours did not?

Check for understanding

Clipboard with three boxes per student, checked during Steps 2 and 3: threaded a needle (with or without a threader, both count), tied a knot that held a tug, sewed at least two inches of running stitch on the line. That is the gate for Lesson 5.7. Any student with an unchecked box gets the first three minutes of the next period at my table, with a pre-threaded needle if that is the box that is missing. Nobody is held back from the next stitch; they get the support and move on.

Closure (Time: 4 min, inside Step 4)

Exit card, three lines: (1) the three setup steps in order, (2) your own rating on even length, on the line, and puckering, out of 3 each, (3) the one change you will make tomorrow. Three students read line 3 aloud. Sort into “got it” and “needs more.” Keep every practice cloth in the student’s own zip bag with their name on it; it becomes their sampler card base in Lesson 5.11.

Differentiation and supports

- ELL: every step is demonstrated twice before any words matter, once large and once small, so the motion carries the meaning. The handout is a numbered step card with a picture described for each step, so a student can follow the sheet alone. Word bank with Turkish, Portuguese, and Spanish for needle, thread, knot, eye, stitch, even, tight (see Vocabulary 05.md). The self-check is three numbers, not sentences.
- IEP and 504 (general): pre-threaded, pre-knotted needles are parked in the cushion at every station from today on, and any student may take one with no explanation asked and no comment made. Extended time: the curve is optional today and can be done in Lesson 5.7’s first minutes. A student who cannot manage the knot uses a needle I knot at their table. Printed step card at every station, so the student who missed the verbal demonstration is not lost. Larger-eye embroidery needles are in every kit for anyone who wants one; a bigger eye is not a lesser tool.
- Grade 6 support: the target is the straight line only, with the stitch length set by the printed dots so spacing is a matter of hitting the dot rather than judging a distance. Thread cut and knotted by me for the first cloth if the period is slipping away.
- Grade 8 stretch: sew the straight line, the curve, and then the same line again on the back of the cloth without the printed dots, judging spacing by eye; then measure ten stitches with the measuring tape and report the average length and the range, which is the CDOS Basic Skills math line made real.
- UDL checkpoint used: multiple means of representation (large demonstration, small demonstration, printed step card with pictures described) and multiple means of action and expression (a student proves the skill with a stitched line, not with writing).

- No-kitchen or no-machine alternative: no machine is used. Reduced-dexterity alternative: a large plastic needle and yarn on binca, plastic canvas, or burlap, where the holes are already there and the stitch is about the motion rather than the precision. This is the same running stitch, it satisfies the same objective, and it goes on the sampler card the same way. Also available: a needle grip (a small rubber disc or a pencil grip slid onto the needle) and a magnetic pin dish for anyone who cannot pick a pin off a cushion.

Assessment

Objective	Standards met	Learning task	Assessment (formative or summative; tool)
1. State the thread length rule and the three setup steps	ATPD 2. a); National FCS 16.4.1	Do now debrief, Step 1, exit card line 1	Formative; exit card checked for cut, thread, knot in order
2. Thread, knot, and sew a running stitch on a line	ATPD 2. c); HSW 4. c); PSI 2. b); Std 2 PI C; National FCS 16.4.5	Steps 2 and 3 on the practice cloth	Formative; the three-box clipboard check. Summative on the running stitch row of Assessment 05.2 - Stitch Sampler Performance Check.md
3. Evaluate own stitch line on three criteria and name one change	PSI 2. b); CDOS 3a Basic Skills	The self-check, Step 4	Formative; the three ratings plus one change, scored complete, partial, or missing for daily work

Homework

None. Optional: teach one person at home the quilter's knot. If they already know a different knot, learn theirs and bring it back.

Connections

Art: the running stitch is a drawing on cloth, and the art teacher's line quality vocabulary transfers directly; trade the practice cloths for their contour line lesson. Mathematics: measuring stitch length, averaging ten of them, and reporting a range is real measurement and data, and the math teacher can use the class's own numbers. Community: a quilting guild or a senior center craft group will often send two volunteers for an hour, and two extra pairs of hands on threading day is worth more than any material. *[Sal: a local quilt shop or a senior center is the easiest ask; threading day is the day to ask for.]*

Sources

- NYS Middle Level CTE FACS Content Module 03, Apparel and Textile Production and Design (nyctecenter.org, June 2018), lines 2. a) and 2. c). Copy in 02 Standards/NYS Module PDFs/.
- NYS Middle Level CTE Theme Module 04, Health, Safety, and Wellness, line 4. c); Theme Module, Problem Solving and Innovation, line 2. b). Text per 02 Standards/NYS ML CTE FACS Modules - verbatim extract of all twelve.md.
- NYS Learning Standards for Health, Physical Education, and Family and Consumer Sciences (1996), Standard 2, Intermediate, Key Idea and PI C. Wording per the crosswalk, Part A.6.
- National Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences Education 3.0 (LEAD FCS Education, 2018), competencies 16.4.1 and 16.4.5, per 02 Standards/STANDARDS SOURCES - web research.md, section 4.16.
- The quilter's knot and the "move the needle onto the thread" technique are standard hand sewing practice taught in quilting and garment sewing references. This lesson is written new; nothing is reproduced from another teacher's materials.

Teacher notes

- Twelve minutes on threading and knotting sounds absurd until you run it. It is the right number. If you cut it, you pay for it every day for the next week.
- The single best tip in the lesson is "hold the thread still and move the needle onto the thread." Say it three times. It fixes more students than the threader does.
- Have a dozen needles already threaded and knotted in the cushion before the bell, in two colors. Hand them out without ceremony. A student who spends twenty minutes failing to thread a needle learns that sewing is not for them, which is the opposite of the point.
- Common mistake: the knot is too small and pulls through the cloth on the first stitch. Show the "bigger than the hole" test: hold the knot up next to the needle; if it is not clearly fatter than the needle, tie another one on top.
- Common mistake: thread cut three feet long because longer feels like fewer refills. Let one student do it and then let them discover the tangle. It teaches faster than the rule.
- Common mistake: students hold the fabric up in the air and stitch toward themselves. Fabric flat on the table, free hand behind the needle.
- Put the practice cloths in named zip bags at the end and keep them in the room. They are the sampler base, and a cloth that goes home does not come back.
- *[Sal: yesterday you asked who had sewn before. Use those students as station helpers today and tell them the rule out loud: they teach, they do not touch somebody else's needle. It keeps them busy and it gets you three extra pairs of hands.]*