Tips for Working with Silk

1. Silk is an extremely strong fiber, so cutting it requires a sharp blade in a rotary cutter or very sharp scissors. If you are cutting a lot of silk, you may need to replace your rotary cutter blade.

2. Many types of silk are lightweight and tend to slide across a cutting board. You can try using fabric weights (or heavy washers from the hardware store) to hold the fabric in place while you cut it.

3. Silk can be gently washed by hand in cold water with a drop or two of Dawn or Woolite. Agitate gently, rinse well, and dry by rolling in a towel and hanging over a towel rack. Gentle machine-washing in cold water also works, but do not try this with a whole garment until you have re-stitched the seams. The original kimono seams are loosely hand-sewn and may pull out during machine washing. Silk that hasn’t been washed before will shrink.

4. To stabilize the structure of a garment or other project, you can use lightweight fusibles like Mistyfuse or Wonder Web to fuse silk to paper or fabric. This will stiffen the silk significantly, so experiment first. Instead of fusing, you may prefer hand-basting.

6. Silk frays easily and a lot; you can use a serger to secure cut edges.

5. Pin and needle holes in fine silks may be permanent. You can minimize this problem by using silk pins and fine, sharp needles. Alternatively, you can use wonder clips or binder clips to hold fabric edges together.

6. Use a #60 or #70 sewing machine needle to stitch on silk. Test your machine stitching on a scrap of silk before sewing. Check tension and stitch length as well as needle quality. The sharper the needle, the better! You may find that you need to slow your machine or even turn the wheel by hand to penetrate several layers of silk. BUT in topstitching on one of the vintage kimono, #70 needles broke; it required a #80 and even so it was impossible to sew through multiple layers such as the padded collars.

7. With many fine silks, pressed creases can be difficult to iron out. Using a pressing cloth and a low heat setting (or the “silk” setting) will help.

For additional tips on sewing silk, see [www.wikihow.com/Sew-Silk](http://www.wikihow.com/Sew-Silk).