

Metallic and Glass Fibers

A short section on *metallic* fibers and *glass* fibers, since use for crafters is limited.

Metallic fibers have industrial applications but are occasionally used by home sewers and crafters for decorative purposes. Real gold and silver have been used for thousands of years to add decoration to fabrics and to give an indication of wealth. Today most metallic “fibers” are tape yarns: plastic-coated metal or metal-coated plastic. A metal sheet (think of aluminum foil) is “sandwiched” between two layers of plastic film or a metal is applied under high pressure to a polyester film. You may be familiar with the tradename Lurex™. These “tape yarns” can be sensitive to heat, so use caution when cleaning or pressing.



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[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Purse,_18th_century_\(CH_18305211\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Purse,_18th_century_(CH_18305211).jpg)

18th century purse embroidered (above) in pink and blue silk and gold metallic thread, strip, coiled wire and spangles, edged with woven metallic trim. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.



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https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cloak_worn_by_Helen_Mirren_as_Cleopatra,_1982.jpg

Gold Lurex™ cloak (above) worn by Helen Mirren as Cleopatra in the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1982 production of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Designed by Nadine Bayliss.

Glass fibers should not be used by home sewers and crafters due to problems in handling and washing. The tiny glass fibers can injure tissues, skin and lungs. You may be familiar with fiberglass used in industrial applications. Professionals who install fiberglass materials are trained in how to handle fiberglass. They wear protective clothing.