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Selecting Furniture Fabric Understanding Furniture Fabric



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THERE'S MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

What you can't see is just as important as what you do when choosing the fabric on your new upholstered furniture.

Yet, few shoppers know how to make a value judgment about a fabric beyond what they can see in the way of color, texture and pattern.

The purpose of this booklet is to take the mystery out of fabric selection so that you can make good buying decisions with real confidence.

"HOW WILL IT WEAR?"

"HOW WILL IT CLEAN?"

The answers to these two important questions lie in your own personal needs regarding fabric performance. To get solid answers to these questions you should first decide what it is you expect, then tell the salesperson exactly what your fabric performance expectations are.

No two families live the same way. An adult couple who entertains very little probably does not have the same need for a durable heavy-duty type fabric as would a growing family with several active youngsters. A more delicate fabric might last a very long

time in an "adult" home because of the way they use their furniture, and a very short time in a home with extensive use by the entire family.

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Also, whether the fibers are woven loosely or tightly is another factor in wear. The backing of the fabric plays an important role, too.

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Professional sales-persons in every showroom are the experts. They want to help you reach a wise decision. But you have to help them to help you.

No salesperson has a crystal ball. Tell him (other) how many children you have and what their ages are. Don't pretend they are all perfect if they are really accident prone and are apt to spill their snacks wherever they sit. If the room where the furniture will be used is going to get a lot of activity, as opposed to a seldom-used room, this is important to tell.

Also, if you feel insecure about selecting the color, texture and pattern help is right there if you spell out your problems.

Once you "level" with the real facts you can expect straight-forward answers.

HOW IMPORTANT IS KNOWING THE FIBER CONTENT?

Knowledge about fiber content can be misleading unless the fabric is woven of a single fiber. In a blend of several fibers, the relative percentage of various fibers is not a dependable guide to durability. In any type of

weaving, the surface yarns get the greatest use. If a certain fabric had a high percentage of one high-performance fiber but this fiber was not prominent as surface yarn, it would not give you the wear you might expect.

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For example, a fiber which takes color well and is lustrous, but not particularly sturdy, can be woven with

SHOP FROM A BASE OF KNOWLEDGE

Knowing the language of fibers and fabrics will make you feel less like a stranger in a foreign land.

With the information in this glossary, you will be able to ask better questions and will be able to understand the answers.

This booklet will not attempt to get into the area of aesthetics.

There is much good information available in magazines and books about choosing the right colors, patterns and textures, to match the mood of the room you are decorating or redecorating.

Rather, it focuses on four areas of information:

1. The type of fibers from which the yarns for fabric are made.
2. The various ways fabric is woven and the names associated with these weaves.
3. The soil-resistant treatment.
4. Cleanability guide.

WHY ARE FIBERS BLENDED?

Each fiber, natural or man-made, has unique properties. Blending of fibers takes advantage of these properties and can make for a more exciting fabric than any single fiber might provide.

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ACRYLIC

(Identified as Orion, Creslan, and Acrilan). A man-made fiber with a soft wooly feeling; fair resistance to sunlight. It has good cleanability characteristics and takes vivid color well. Acrylic is normally used to create velvet, plush looks.

COTTON

A vegetable fiber, perhaps man's oldest; fair resistance to wear and sunlight; a soft feeling; dyes well; poor resistance to soil unless treated.

one which is duller, but durable, to produce a vivid and heavy-duty fabric for family use.

In other cases such as with nylon or olefin, the man-made fibers have so much versatility, through chemistry, that a visually appealing fabric can be achieved within a single fiber.

Fibers may be either animal, vegetable or synthetic (man-made). Examples of animal fibers are silk and wool. Neither is commonly used in upholstery fabrics today because of cost. Examples of vegetable fibers are cotton and linen. Man-made fibers or synthetics include olefin, nylon, polyester, acrylics and acetate. Man-made fibers are easy to clean and take color well; they are moth-proof and virtually immune, if not downright hostile, to mildew. Many upholstery fabrics today are a blend of fibers.

But more about them later. First, a description of each fiber and its good and bad points.

THE FIBERS ACETATE

(Identified by such brand names as Celaperm and Chromspun). A man-made fiber with a luxurious feeling, which dyes in brilliant colors, and is economical. But it offers low resistance to wear and only fair resistance to sunlight. When blended with other fibers, it can add beauty and luster to a fabric. Acetate is seldom used in today's fabrics.

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THE WEAVES

When any fiber or blend of fibers are woven together, the visual texture and pattern of the fabric is created .

There are two basic methods of weaving upholstered fabrics: Flat and Pile. These two weaves are the beginning of all the furniture fabrics.

Flat weaves are tweeds, twills and satins. They have no pile although they may be course and nubby; shantung, for example, because of the uneven size of yarns used.

The basic flat weave is a simple one thread crossing others at right angles and going over the first and under the second, over the third, and soon.

NYLON

(Antron, Enka, Chemstrand and Dupont Nylon). A man-made fiber, considered the strongest synthetic for upholstery fabrics, offering the best resistance to abrasion and soil; offers a cool, soft feeling. Good clean ability characteristics.

OLEFIN

(Herculon and Vectra). Another strong man-made fiber giving high resistance to abrasion and has a high stain resistance. It has a softer feel than nylon, good resistance to fading when solution dyed, very sensitive to heat.

POLYESTER

(Dacron, Fortrel, Kodel). A man-made fiber, crisp and strong, fairly resistant to wear and sunlight. Most like natural cotton in its appearance and physical properties. Low resistance to heat. Accepts color well, easy to clean.

RAYON

(Jetspun and Colorspun). An economical man-made fiber, soft feeling, dyes well, fair resistance to wear and sunlight.

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THE YARNS

In order to weave a fabric, the fiber or blend of fibers must first be made into a yarn. Yarns vary in size and shape, both of which have an effect on the appearance of the fabric.

BOUCLE

A yarn of unequal diameter (also called nub or slub).

TASLAN

A soft, fluffy yarn.

CHENELLE

A soft yarn with a barbed-wire look.

FILAMENT

A man-made yarn created directly from the liquid synthetic.

THE DEFINITIONS

These are the names used to describe the completed fabric.

BASKET WEAVE

A simple flat fabric, which gives the appearance of a woven basket (tweed,

Pile weaves are velvet, plush, terry cloth, velour and corduroy.

The pile weave is raised loops, cut interlacings of double cloths and other erect yarns or fibers, deliberately produced on cloth forming the surface of the fabric.

THE NON-WOVEN FABRICS

KNITTED

Method of construction where yarns are looped and interlocked instead of woven.

FLOCKED

A way of creating a velvet affect using cut fibers applied electro statically.

TUFTED

Another method of locking yarns on the surface. These loops can then be cut to create a velvet surface.

Non-woven fabrics can also be random fibers pressed and/or bonded with an adhesive.

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CORDUROY

A pile fabric with the pile usually cut into ridges. The fabric was developed in France and for years was a specialty of royalty, thus its name which means cord of the king.

CUT VELVET

A pile fabric on which the pile has been cut into different lengths to create a design.

DAMASK

A flat fabric with a woven design now made on the Jacquard loom. It was one of the first elegant fabrics of the Renaissance and was used for vestments. Crusaders brought the fabric back to Rome from Damascus, hence its name.

JACQUARD

A method for producing elaborately patterned weaves on a mechanical

loom. It is named for the Frenchman who invented a loom which operates somewhat like the roller on a player piano. But instead of notes, it gives instructions to the machine on how to

twill or satin).

BROCATELLE

A heavy decoratively patterned flat fabric, usually using a satin yarn. It has a raised, woven-in design.

BROCADE

A heavy flat fabric, similar to brocatelle with a raised design but usually without the lustrous yarn.

CHINTZ

A flat fabric which has been treated to give it a polished look, usually printed with a design.

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SATIN

A tightly woven flat fabric usually with a high luster. The actual woven pattern is hidden by the use of a third yarn as a cover. Handsome, but liable to snag.

SHANTUNG

A cousin to Satin. The difference lies in the use of a yarn of varied thickness which gives the fabric a nubby texture. It is also known as Antique Satin.

TAPESTRY

An ornamental woven fabric, in the design is usually a picture which illustrates a story.

TWEED

{See Basket Weave }

TWILL

{See Basket Weave}

VELVET

A pile fabric with a clipped nap. Before clipping, the nap is a loop as found in frieze or boucle. Velvet was introduced during the Renaissance in Italy and Spain and later moved to France.

Crush marks will appear as a result of normal wear. This will create a random shading which is generally considered a desirable expression of the fabric's comfort and elegance.

create the design.

MATELASSE

A tightly woven, patterned flat fabric with a quilted puff effect. Royalty in Renaissance France used Matelasse for apparel as the quilted fabric was warmer than Damask.

PRINT

Not really a type of fabric but a method by which the pattern is achieved .

The design is usually printed on a flat woven fabric but pile velvets can also be printed today.

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THE "LEATHER" LOOK

There is one other cover popularly used for upholstered fabrics, and it doesn't fit any of the above categories. It is Vinyl, a non-woven man-made coated material which can provide a hard-to-tell- from-leather look or a multitude of other appearances from embossed grain, patchwork patterns to prints. There are several brand names; the most popular of which is Naugahyde.

Vinyl is easy to clean. It can be wiped off with a soapy sponge. It is strong, and it can imitate the most expensive of leathers at less cost than the natural material.

Good vinyls are supported by a non-woven polyester or polypropylene backing. This offers support for the already strong material.

PROTECTIVE FINISH

In addition to one fiber or a blend of fibers and the weave of the fabric, there's one other consideration: The soil-resistant finish is offered its customers the option to purchase a fluorochemical custom soil-resistant fabric treatment for upholstered furniture. This soil-resistant fabric treatment is applied to the entire upholstered piece at your local the showroom and carries a manufacturer's written warranty.

The fabric treatment is odorless and does not affect the feel of a fabric.

<p>9</p>	<p>What it does is increase the cleanability of a fabric but does not affect its wearability or durability.</p> <p>Ask your salesperson for more detailed information on the fabric treatment available at an additional charge.</p> <p>10</p>
<p>11</p> <p>FABRIC COLOR SELECTION</p> <p>Some manufacturers of Living Room furniture offer the consumer an alternate color selection of the same fabric. Color Charts are displayed with Living Room items that have alternate color selections available.</p> <p>QUILTING THE LILY</p> <p>Quilting is usually used on a flat print or on plain satin. There are two types of quilting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Loom quilting which produces an over- all pattern over the fabric; 2) Outline quilting in which each element of a design, a lily for example, is outlined. Outline quilting is more expensive. <p>A quilted fabric consists of two layers of fabric with padding in between. Quilting adds interest to a fabric but nothing to its wearability. Quilt threads are sometimes subject to pull-ups and may wear out before the fabric itself.</p> <p>The best stitch to use in quilting is a "lock stitch" which prevents raveling. If you sew you can recognize the stitch. If you don't, ask.</p> <p>CLEANABILITY</p> <p>At Levitz, furniture fabrics carry the furniture industry's voluntary Cleanability Code adopted in 1969. It gives the shopper information about the proper methods to clean the fabric in which the furniture is covered. Look for this code when you shop.</p> <p>There are letters in the Code, immediately followed by care instructions. The code letters are W, S, W-S, and X. Look under Seat Cushions for a permanent label offering specific cleaning instructions.</p> <p>11</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Stores require furniture manufacturers to use this label, and the fabric will be identified with a code and cleaning method described in one of the following four codes:</p> <p>CODE "W" CARE METHOD (Water-Based)</p> <p>To prevent overall soil, frequent vacuuming or light brushing to remove dust and grime is recommended.</p> <p>Spot clean, using the foam only from a water-based cleaning agent such as a mild detergent or non-solvent upholstery shampoo product. Apply foam with a soft brush in a circular motion. Vacuum when dry. Pretest small area before proceeding. Use a professional furniture cleaning service when an overall soiled condition has been reached.</p> <p>CODE "S" CARE METHOD (Solvent)</p> <p>To prevent overall soil, frequent vacuuming or light brushing to remove dust and grime is recommended. Spot clean using a mild water-free solvent or dry cleaning product. Clean only in a well ventilated room and avoid any product containing Carbon Tetrachloride which is highly toxic. Pretest small area before proceeding. Cleaning by a professional furniture cleaning service only is recommended.</p> <p>CODE "W-S" CARE METHOD (Water/Solvent)</p> <p>To prevent overall soil, frequent vacuuming or light brushing to remove dust and grime is recommended. Spot clean, with a mild solvent, an upholstery shampoo, or the foam from a mild</p> <p>12</p>

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detergent. When using a solvent or dry cleaning product, follow instructions carefully and clean only in a well ventilated room. Avoid any product which contains Carbon Tetrachloride which is highly toxic. With either method, pretest a small area before proceeding. Use a professional furniture

cleaning service when an overall soiled condition has been reached.

CODE "X" CARE METHOD (Vacuum Only)

Clean this fabric only by vacuuming or light brushing to prevent accumulation of dust or grime. Water-based

foam cleaners or solvent-based cleaning agents of any kind may cause

excessive shrinking I staining or distortion of the surface pile and, therefore, should not be used.

CONSUMER TIP

DON'T use ZIPPERS to remove cushion covers for separate cleaning.

It may change the colors, shrink, shred and ruin the cover. Zippers are used for a neat fit, and allow you to straighten the cover, or to insert a towel to absorb moisture when spot cleaning.

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