WITH THE MANY DEMANDS made on our time today, many folks are interested in selecting and using laborsaving furnishings. This is especially true if there are small children in the home. Due to their construction, plastics fulfill this requirement of modern living. Ease in upkeep makes plastic covers especially practical for a recreation room or the popular family room in today's home. For the average home, however, plastics cannot replace the comfort, appearance, and decorative value of woven fabrics. They do have real value for special rooms, such as:

- Recreation rooms
- Children's rooms
- Family rooms
- Kitchen
- The nursery
- A boy's room

Specific uses for plastic covers:
- Kitchen and dining chairs with slip seats
- Upholstered chairs, sofas, and stools
- Window seat or bench covers
- Large television cushions—stacked and used as an extra floor seat; can also be used for an emergency guest bed
- Extra cushions for the car
- Hassocks
- Headboards
- Children's furniture
- Lawn furniture
- Decorative folding screens
- Card table covers
- Wall coverings

Be sure to select the type of plastic most suitable for the item to be upholstered.

Care of Plastic Upholstery Covers

Dirt and grime can be removed with a damp cloth or with soap and water.

Grease stains, inks, lipstick, oil-base crayons, and stains of similar nature should be removed immediately. Nail polish remover, ball-point ink, and a few other such stains can permanently stain vinyl sheeting.

To remove scratches and scuff marks rub the scratched portion lightly with very fine steel wool. Continue the rubbing until the scratch or scuff is almost gone. Take care to avoid severe rubbing. Rub over the scratched or scuffed portion with a mild paste wax, and then polish.

It is possible to patch a tear in a nonsupported plastic cover. If it is done properly the mend will be minimized as much as possible. Insert a patch of the same material through the torn area so it will be directly beneath the rip. Smooth it out so it will lie flat. If your cover has a smooth top texture, place a smooth piece of aluminum foil on top of the area, then touch the foil with a medium hot iron. The heat of the iron causes the plastic materials to fuse together. The foil conducts the heat to the plastic cover, but does not stick to the softened plastic material. If you are working with a plastic cover that is rough in texture, wrinkle the foil and flatten it out, then use your iron in the same manner.

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plastic where it feeds under the presser foot. This is unnecessary with fabric-backed plastic which feeds more easily.

Do not sew twice over the same seam. Arrange to make one seam do all the work (two seams just about cut an unsupported cover in half; a little wear and it tears at the seams). If a welt is to be used in a cushion, the welt strip and covers are placed one under and one on top, then the sewing machine seams all of these together at once. You may use scotch tape to help hold the welt in place.

Avoid hand sewing, but when it must be done be sure to use a round pointed curved needle.

When base tacking, let the base tacks fall into the part of the cover which will be permanently hidden. The reason for this is that any or all holes through the cover will show. Tacks partially driven sometimes rip the cover. If this happens, drive small tacks all the way down and remove as necessary when tacking permanently.

When buttons are required for a seat or inside back, follow this procedure: Locate their position carefully in advance, then place a piece of cloth-backed adhesive tape about 1 inch square in place on the reverse side of cover. Use a small pin to pierce the cover to help you locate the tape over the correct spot where the button is to be placed. The tape prevents the plastic cover from tearing. In placing the button, be sure to use a round needle, and see that the needle passes through the adhesive tape backing. This is especially important for a nonsupported plastic.

Since many plastics are airtight you need to allow for "breathers" in cushions. The best way to do this is to use a woven fabric on approximately two-thirds of the bottom of the cushion. If your cushion is a reversible one, put your "breather" in the middle of the rear boxing by inserting a muslin-like inset about 6 inches long. Another possibility is to insert air vents, called grommets, in the plastic boxing at the sides or back. Grommets are metal breathers available from upholstery supply sources. They require special equipment to install them.

The "breathable" form of plastic eliminates this step and is more comfortable.

Selecting and Using 
Plastics for Upholstery

Upholstery Plastics on the Market

Nonsupported

This type is a solid sheet of plastic not supported with a fabric backing. You can recognize it by looking at the wrong side. It will have a slick back of the same color as the right side.

This type is best used over a firm base, such as a bench.

Supported

Supported plastic materials are built from a cloth base which has had a plastic coating applied to one surface. Today many of these are supported with a knitted fabric back (so-called "elastic base") which makes them much easier to handle, especially for a beginner. The knitted fabric back permits the plastic to stretch somewhat, both lengthwise and crosswise. Even this type, however, will be harder to work with than a woven fabric. Plastics with ordinary cloth backing will not stretch at all, making them much harder to handle.

Always use this kind over a spring base or deep-seated piece of furniture, whether spring base with traditional fillings or spring base with foam rubber fillings.

Trends in Plastic Upholstery Materials

More and more plastic upholstery materials are coming with knitted backing or special elasticized treatment. This makes them much easier to handle. Elasticized plastics are available in both the supported and the nonsupported types.

The newest form of supported plastics is the "breathable" type, so called because it has thousands of individual pores that permit the vinyl surface to "breathe." Since the average plastic will not permit air exchange, it is necessary to insert a fabric inset in the cushion so air can escape satisfactorily. The "breathable" type eliminates the need for an air vent and gives more of the comfort of woven fabric; hence this type will probably be a "pace setter" for the future.
Today, we find a wide range of colors, both smooth and rough textures, and a broad choice of designs in all types of plastic materials. They are available in light, medium, and heavy weights. The weight should be selected with future use in mind. For a situation where maximum service is required, as in recreation rooms or public buildings, the heavier weights will cost more initially but will be more economical over a long period.

Upholstery plastics are available in widths varying from 36 to 54 inches, and are priced by the yard, depending upon weight and quality of the product.

Upholstering With Plastics

In handling plastic upholstery yardage, make sure the room is warm since the plastic will handle best when warm. This does not mean, however, to heat the material against a stove or over a fire. Just apply the cover in a warm room. If the plastic is cold let it stand in a warm room for some time before working with it.

Estimate which way you want the material to stretch. Let it stretch from selvage to selvage on supported covers, or both ways on nonsupported or elasticized covers.

If you are not using "elasticized" plastic, you will find it best to square up your work to keep it as flat as possible. Curved areas (crowns) tend to cause corner wrinkles which are hard to remove in the nonelastic type of material.

Take care to pad or remove all sharp corners and edges of the frame.

Transfer pattern to the reverse side of the plastic with pencil, crayon, chalk, or ink. Never use pins or bastings during the construction period.

Cut patterns full rather than scant, allowing 1 to 2 inches for all seams.

Any notches or fitting around the posts of a chair should have a rounded cut. Straight slits have a tendency to split the plastic.

Nail tacks in a straight row (not hit-or-miss) at least ½ inch from the edge of the material. Put them close enough together so there will be no pull on the cover. Always drive the tacks straight down. Do not allow one edge of the tack to cut into the cover as it may cut the plastic. In some instances staples may be used in place of tacks, if a staple gun is available.

All tacks should have round shanks and large flat heads. Try to bring the tack head in firm contact with the material, but avoid imbedding the tack head in the plastic.

Fit the plastic covering just tight enough to remove surface wrinkles. It is not necessary to pull it taut as you would a fabric. Plastics will not usually stretch with use.

Welting is made the same as for slip covers. If you are using a fabric-backed plastic, cut the strips on the bias. Otherwise, cut the strips across the roll.

Before selecting a heavy weight plastic for separate cushions, try stitching several thicknesses of the material on your sewing machine. You can get a large sample for this purpose. Not all home sewing machines will stitch through this thickness. Professionally, heavy-duty sewing machines are used for this work. Stitching through the welting, boxing, and cushion top will be the most doubtful section for your home sewing machine to handle.

For machine stitching, adjust your machine to about 6 stitches per inch. Sew at least ½ inch from the edge of the material. Use heavy-duty cotton thread and about a No. 19 needle.

Never backstitch or sew one row on top of another as this weakens the seam.

Do not rush your sewing by pulling. Let the machine proceed at a normal speed. Adjust the presser foot on your machine to take the thickness of the plastic just tight enough to offset the pull of the needle as it is drawn from the plastic.

On upholstery plastics that do not have fabric backing, use a 50-50 solution of glycerin and water on the
plastic where it feeds under the presser foot. This is unnecessary with fabric-backed plastic which feeds more easily.

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