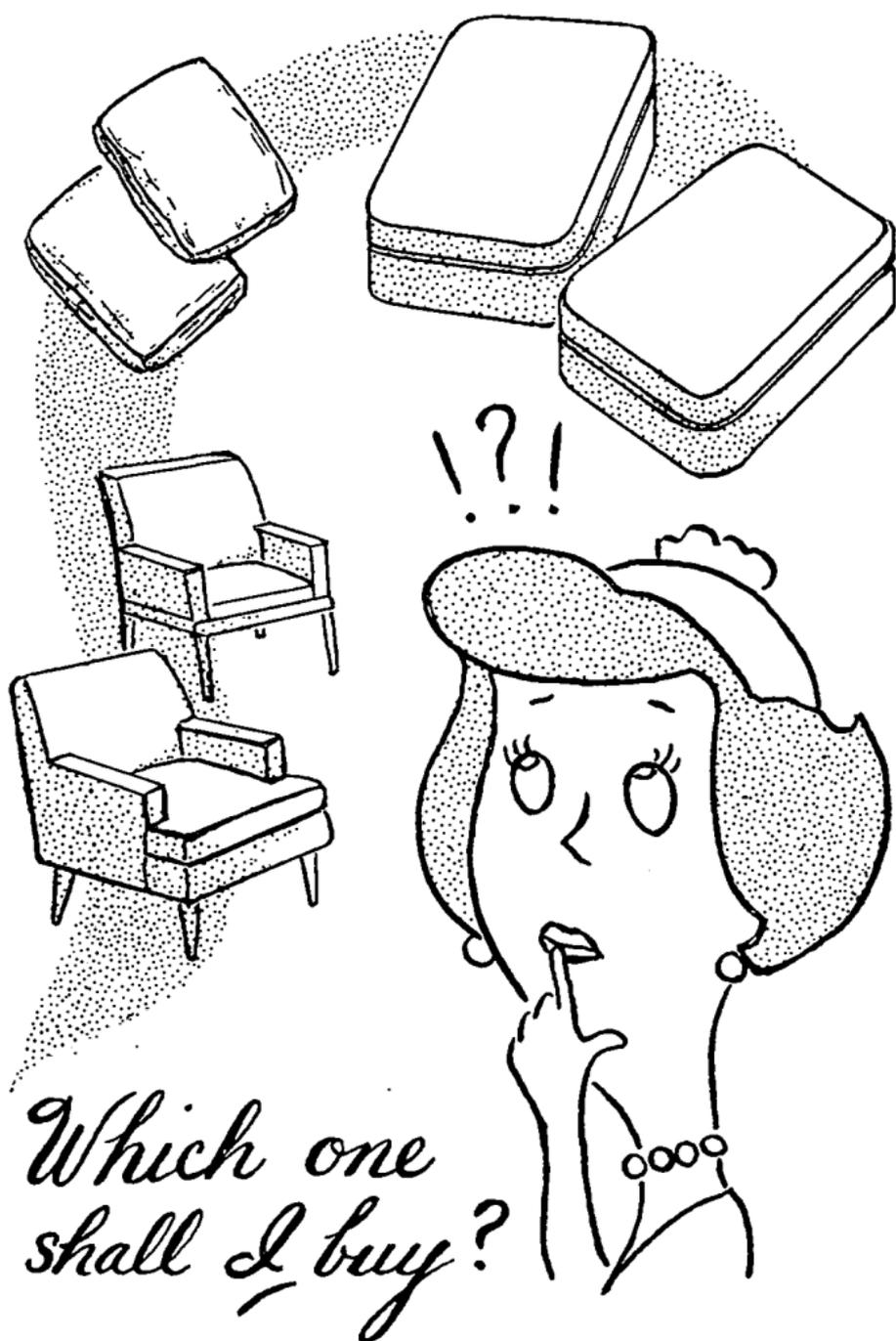


# Shopping Guides for Foam Rubber Furnishings



*Which one  
shall I buy?*

**Federal Cooperative Extension Service  
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# *Shopping Guides for* **Foam Rubber Furnishings**

**M**RS. HOMEMAKER is interested in receiving the best dollar value for the money she spends on furnishings. Since she is less familiar with furnishings containing foam rubber, the purpose of this circular is to point up some "basic guides" to help her in this shopping.

- For the best buys, compare merchandise and check prices in different stores. Learn what to look for in quality, and you will know "when a bargain is a real bargain."
- Be sure to check and read all labels for details on construction.
- Each year merchants promote sales to reduce their inventory stocks. Often, prices on standard merchandise are reduced, particularly for showroom samples. If such pieces fit your needs, they may be a good buy for you.
- Check the manufacturer's name on a tag or label attached to the furniture. A reputable manufacturer labels his products, and stands back of them should anything go wrong.
- Save all labels for future reference on how to care for the piece.

## **Furniture**

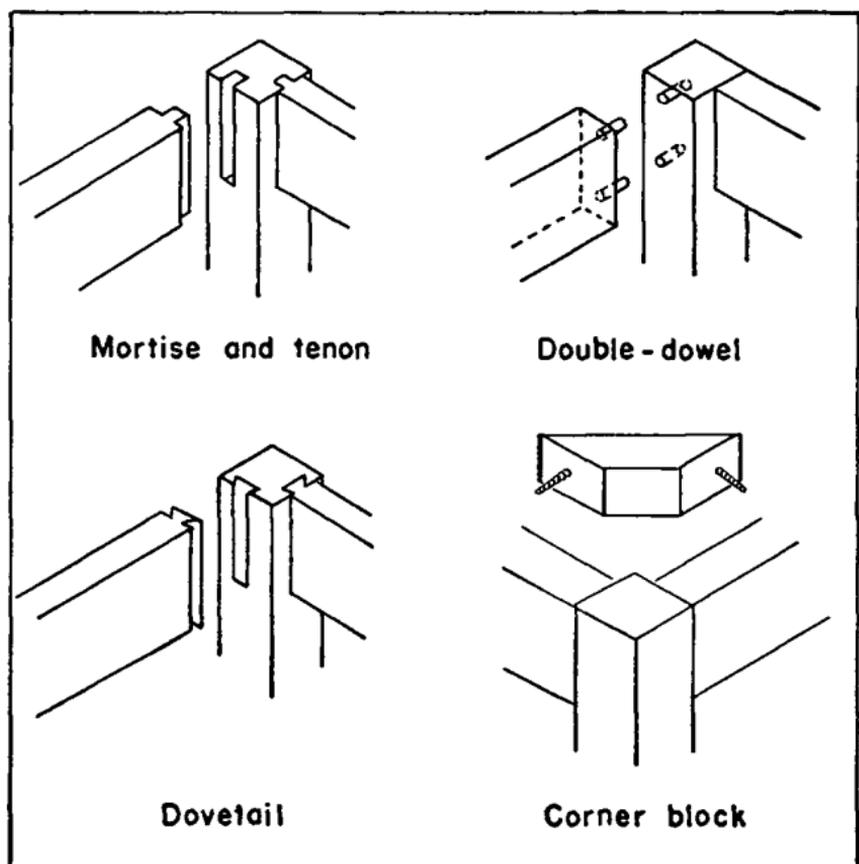
Mrs. Homemaker will find price tags somewhat higher on foam-rubber-cushioned furniture than on furniture with traditional type fillings. At this writing, she may expect the cost to be approximately 10 per cent higher. This will be counterbalanced, however, by a lower over-all cost since the repair of furniture made of foam rubber is less over a period of years.

### **Always buy from a reliable dealer**

When you buy furniture you are usually making a long-term investment. To be sure this investment will be sound, one of your best guarantees is to buy recognized brands from a merchant who has a good reputation. If defects are found, reliable manufacturers and merchants stand back of the merchandise.

## Ask questions about construction

Is the frame sturdy?



Be sure the furniture you buy has a sound frame. Corner joints are especially important. Some of the better methods of corner construction are shown. Corner-block braces are commonly used with any of the other methods.

Is the filling of solid foam rubber, a combination of cotton and rubber, a layer of rubber over cotton, or a combination of loose fillings and shredded foam? The "State Law Tag" will give you this information. You cannot get the same degree of comfort from a layer of foam rubber placed over a loose filling as you can from a fully molded foam rubber cushion.

Check the type of spring construction under the foam rubber cushion. If the salesman cannot give you this information, ask for the buyer of the department.

### Sit in the chair or sofa

People require different furniture if they are to be really comfortable. The average piece of furniture is geared to a person 5'8" tall. If you are above or below that height you will not find all pieces comfortable.

# Read the "Law Tag"

(Space for stitching)

**DO NOT REMOVE THIS TAG**  
Under Penalty of Law

**ALL NEW MATERIAL**  
Consisting of

Body

Foam rubber.....	80%	
Cotton-1st cut linters 45%	} 20%	
Mill run..... 45%		
Staple..... 10%		

Cushions

Foam rubber..... 100%

**Reg. No.** (Required in Oregon)

(Space for Stamp)  
(Not required in  
Oregon)

Certification is made  
that the materials in  
this article are de-  
scribed in accordance  
with law.

(Name of Manufacturer or Vendor)  
(Address of Manufacturer or Vendor)

(Additional Information)

This tag or label is for the protection of you, the consumer. It must be attached to every piece of upholstered furniture and all forms of bedding sold in Oregon. All fillings used in the piece must be listed on this tag, which is placed in an accessible place on the furniture.

## Check on the kind of wood used in the frame

Labels may give you this information. If not, ask. Distinguish between the true wood used and the type of finish used. Not all woods that look like walnut are really walnut. If you are paying for genuine wal-

nut be sure you are getting it. Today, the most popular furniture woods are maple, walnut, oak, and mahogany. Cherry and birch also are used. Gumwood is used in moderately priced lines and is frequently stained to imitate more expensive woods. Hardwoods will always give better service in furniture than softwoods.

### **Examine finish on exposed wood parts**

Look at the finish in good natural light. Does it have a good depth with a soft, satin sheen reflecting a hand-rubbed finish? Rub your hand over the finish to see if it is rough or smooth. One test is to rub the surface of the wood with your finger until the wood is warm. If the coating becomes sticky, this shows a poor finish.

### **Note how the cover is made**

Examine the tautness of fabric over separate cushions. Is it loose, or just slightly snug? If the fabric seems loose on the cushion, the cover will not stay in place. It will tend to turn on the cushion, and some fabrics will wrinkle badly.

Inserted zippers at back of separate cushions simplify cleaning problems. When cleaning time rolls around, you will find it easier to remove the fabric from the rubber molded cushion. This will prevent any possible damage to the rubber from cleaning agents.

If the fabric has a design, is the pattern matched at seams and in the body?

Is the piece well tailored throughout; are the cushions reversible?

### **Check the fabric**

Ask to see the full choice of fabrics and color line. In most cases, you are not limited to the color and fabric of the one piece shown on the floor.

What fibers are used in the fabric?

What service can you expect from the fabric?

What is the recommended care?

Is the fabric colorfast to light and cleaning? When your furniture is to be placed so that it is exposed to strong light, as against a window wall, fading can happen very rapidly if dyes are not fast to light. All upholstered furniture will need to be cleaned and should be fast to shampooing, done either at home or professionally.

Does the fabric have a special soil retardant treatment? This is especially important for light-colored fabrics, and for the home with small children.

How has the fabric been woven? Loosely twisted yarns tend to hold dirt more readily than hard, tightly twisted yarns. For maximum service, you want to avoid fabrics that are loosely woven, or that have floating threads that will have a tendency to snag or pull easily.

You may expect some wrinkling of certain fabrics over foam rubber seating areas, directly after pressure is released. Unless the fabric has a lot of stretch to it, the wrinkles will usually disappear within a short time. Often, loosely woven fabrics will remain wrinkled in the seat section.

Tape cemented to the rubber and sewed in the cushion welted seam prevents the fabric from turning on the cushion. If the fabric is removed for cleaning purposes, re sew the tape in place.

For plastic covers—ask if a supported plastic (cloth-backed) has been used. No other type of plastic will give satisfactory service on heavy pieces of furniture.

## **Mattresses**

### **Ask what densities are available**

Mattresses are available in several densities (degree of firmness)—soft to very firm, with a medium density being the most common. Since more rubber is used in firmer densities, they are more expensive.

If you like a very firm bed you must ask for a firm density, and a firm box spring. Determine this by making a “rest test” of the mattress at the store. Lie down on it to see if the density is right for you.

Rubber mattresses are not selected on the basis of your body weight, as are spring-filled mattresses. The foam rubber will support any weight, evenly and strongly, which prevents any sag-in-the-middle when two people of varying weights sleep double.

Since rubber is not in large supply, you seldom find a “bona fide” sale on rubber mattresses. When prices are reduced, it usually means mattresses with soft rubber density. They can be sold for less money as less rubber is used. Naturally, they cannot wear as well as the firmer densities. The box springs sold with such mattresses also should be considered.

### **Check quality and prices**

You will find many different qualities of foam rubber used in mattresses. For the most part, these quali-

ties are reflected in the price you pay—the old axiom is still true “you get what you pay for.”

### **Ask to see a cross section sample**

You may expect solid foam rubber mattresses to be “thinner” than spring-filled ones. They will be approximately 4½ inches thick. For this reason a higher spring unit is required if your bed is to be standard height.

### **Read the guarantee carefully**

Most manufacturers’ guarantees on rubber mattresses will not be effective unless you buy the entire unit—springs and mattress.

### **Read the “Law Tag”**

By Oregon law all upholstered furniture, and all forms of bedding, must carry a label listing filling materials used.

### **Check the quality of ticking**

An 8-ounce ticking is the best available today.

### **Check the stitching on the cover**

A small, even, and tight stitch should be used.

### **Examine the construction of ticking**

The cover should be attached firmly to the foam rubber, rather than merely “slip covered” over the rubber. This is done by a tape cemented to the rubber and attached in the seam of the mattress boxing, which prevents the ticking from turning on the rubber.

## **Mattress Pads**

Two general types of pads are available on the market.

### **Solid slab**

Since rubber does not slide easily, this type must be handled carefully to avoid tearing. Sprinkling talcum powder under the pad will overcome this disadvantage.

### **Solid slab bonded to muslin**

This type is the better buy because the fabric top prevents the rubber from tearing or ripping. Place the rubber side down on the mattress to keep the pad in place.

## **Bed Pillows**

### **Learn what to expect of foam rubber pillows**

Do not expect to punch a rubber cushion and have it stay in that position. It is an inherent characteristic of rubber to bounce back. As a result, foam rubber pillows will always be different from feather or down. It may take a bit of time for you to get accustomed to this characteristic in rubber pillows.

### **Specify the size pillow you prefer**

Rubber pillows are available in several sizes and densities. Select the "thickness" of the pillow to meet your individual needs. Height and firmness cannot be separated. A very soft, thick pillow may let your head sink lower than a firm, thinner one.

### **Test the "bounce" of pillows**

As pillows tend to vary in resiliency, this will tell you which is the least resilient.

### **Check sizes of your pillowcases before shopping**

Pillows vary in length and width. It is wise to check your pillowcase measurements against the size of pillows you are buying.

### **Examine the fabric covers on the pillows**

Rubber pillows are usually covered with a washable, zippered cover. A preshrunk cotton fabric, guaranteed not to shrink over 1 per cent, is the most practical.

### **Do your children have "pillow fights?"**

Research tells us that the tensile strength of foam rubber is poor. You had best avoid rubber pillows if "pillow throwing" takes place in your home.

Always handle the rubber with care when it is removed from the protective zipper cover, especially when it is wet.

## **Rug Pads**

Research by the U. S. National Bureau of Standards tells us that the use of rug cushions increases rug wear from 73 to 146 per cent, depending on the type used.

Thick, resilient cushions prolong the life of rugs more effectively than those which tend to become hard and compressed. The pad transfers the impact of the

blow as you walk on the rug from the surface of the rug to the back. When the rug is on a firm, unyielding surface, the face of the rug must take the beating from your steps. If the rug is on a soft cushion, the blow on the surface is passed on to the cushion beneath.

Rubber pads give a luxuriant feeling to a rug—the degree will depend on the type of pad. They will make a medium-priced rug seem more expensive. You will find several types on the market.

### **All sponge rubber**

*Solid slab*—1/8, 3/16, and 1/4 inch thick.

The 1/4-inch sponge rubber pad will contribute most to the wearing qualities of your rug, as it gives the greatest resiliency. It will also give the most luxuriant effect, but the initial cost is higher than the other rubber pads.

The nonskid 1/8-inch slab rubber pad is not intended for an all-purpose cushion pad. It gives protection against skidding under small rugs.

To avoid creepage on the floor, a slab rubber pad should be lightly stapled to the floor, both ends and sides, if it is to be used under an area or room-sized rug. Use a gun stapler so that you will not harm a good floor. For wall-to-wall installations, pads are always fastened to the floor.

*Waffle or crimped sponge rubber with fabric or paper backing*—The purpose of jute fabric or paper backing is to add strength and simplify installation problems.

If you cannot fasten the pad to the floor, the crimped sponge rubber pad with a fabric top will creep less than the all-sponge-rubber type. The paper-topped crimped sponge rubber pad is less expensive than the fabric-topped. Since less rubber is used, these pads cost slightly less than 1/4-inch slab rubber.

### **Foam rubber annealed to rubberized felt**

This type represents the newest trend in rubber pads. It was developed primarily to eliminate creepage on the floor, and to decrease costs.

The quilted-pattern rubber surface and the rubberized, felted top stops skidding and creeping of the carpet and cushion. It functions both as a nonskid pad and

as a rug cushion, making it a good choice for a hall rug. It is less luxuriant than the thicker all-sponge-rubber pad, but also is less expensive.

### **Rubber sprayed to a felted base**

Do not expect rubber resiliency from a pad on which the rubber is merely sprayed to a felted base. The function of the rubber is to make the felted pad stronger, and to make it skidproof. Not enough rubber is used to add resiliency. This type is less expensive than other rubber cushioning pads.

Sponge rubber pads can be used satisfactorily over radiant-heated floors. Research tells us that:

✓ The insulating effect that sponge rubber has on heated floor slabs is not great enough to be serious in properly designed and installed systems. Tests indicate heat conductance through sponge rubber pads to be approximately  $3\frac{1}{2}$  times that through jute and hair waffle pads.

✓ The temperature level at which these systems operate will have no harmful effect on the rubber. Temperatures must reach  $160^{\circ}$  F. to do any harm.

✓ The possibility of enough moisture coming through the concrete to cause mildew development is so small that it need not be considered.

Consider two disadvantages of rubber pads:

✓ The greater depth they give to the rug tends to tire some people.

✓ Under heavy furniture, the rug may be permanently indented. This tendency may be minimized by using furniture glides.

Under normal conditions rubber rug pads will maintain their resiliency over a longer period of time than other types of pads. Today, however, they are about 15 per cent more expensive than hair rug pads. You will want to compare values before you buy.

## Care of Foam Rubber Furnishings

In cleaning foam rubber upholstered furniture you must consider the type of fabric involved, the kind of stain or dirt, and the effect of the cleaning agent on the foam rubber itself.

See Farmers' Bulletin No. 1474 "Stain Removal From Fabrics" for general procedures on removing stains from fabrics. This bulletin is available from County Extension Offices, and from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C.

Foam rubber manufacturers say that the following cleaning agents used on upholstered fabrics will not harm the rubber base: soaps, detergents, sodium hydro-sulfite, sodium thiosulphate, glycerine, denatured alcohol, carbon tetrachloride (avoid breathing fumes), and ammonia in weak solutions (not over 3 teaspoons per quart).

When using carbon tetrachloride, be sure to apply it sparingly. If a temporary swell or blister effect is noticed on the cushion, be sure to give it enough time for complete evaporation. Normal rubbing of upholstery fabric will not cause harm to the rubber. It is wise to avoid excessive use of carbon tetrachloride, as this material is a rubber solvent.

Foam rubber is more tender while wet, but it returns to normal strength when it is dry. Check any commercial cleaner you buy, as it may be harmful to the foam rubber.

Cleaning agents that have a harmful effect on foam rubber are generally of the bleaching and oxidizing type. The following agents are *not recommended*: vinegar, chlorine bleaches, turpentine, acetone, hydrogen peroxide, oxalic acid, and sodium perborate. If you must use any of the harmful agents, remove the upholstery fabric from the cushion, and clean it off the rubber base. If you find a stain has penetrated the foam rubber, you may use any of the *recommended agents* listed above.

For normal upkeep, frequent use of the vacuum cleaner attachments will keep the upholstery fabric free of dust. Professional cleaning or recommended home cleaning methods are suggested *before the upholstery fabric is badly soiled*.

Rubber mattresses do not require turning as do spring-filled mattresses. Clean the mattress regularly with a vacuum cleaner attachment. Use a mattress pad to protect the mattress from stains. To avoid tearing a rubber pad, pick up the pad when you need to move it, rather than pulling on it.

It is seldom necessary to wash foam rubber pillows, as the zippered cover gives adequate protection to the rubber. If desired, they may be washed occasionally in *mild soap* and water. Squeeze the suds through and rinse thoroughly. Remove the excess water with turkish towels. The drying period may be shortened by putting the pillows through the spinning cycle of your washer. Balance the load by adding a heavy turkish bath towel. *Never put them in the dryer.* To protect the rubber from tearing, leave the pillow in the zippered cover, or put it in an old pillowcase with the end pinned shut. Any trace of copper in the wash water will cause the rubber to deteriorate. Dry in a good circulation of air, but *do not expose to direct sunlight or to high heat.*

Rubber rug pads require no special care, just ordinary good housekeeping methods.