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# Tailor Your Draperies

*By* GRACE RYAN



**DISCARD**

Extension Bulletin 709

July 1950



## The Tailored Touch

The draperies you make at home can have a tailored touch. Careful measurements, combined with the proper construction methods, pay excellent dividends in attractiveness, superior finish, and precision which mark the custom-made hangings.

Fabrics for a room are very important. They do much to create types of rooms in homes; the cheerful room in contrast to a dull spot, or the colorful, modern one in contrast to the more formal, traditional type.

Draperies rank high among fabric finishings, because they serve

two purposes: (1) They hold the decorative scheme of a room together, (2) They provide a connecting link between two mass-surfaces, the ceiling and floor.

Your buying trip for drapery fabrics can be exciting. There seems to be no limit to color, texture, and interesting designs on the market. There are fabrics suited to many incomes and many styles of window treatment.

Well-made draperies require sewing skill. They call for patience and precise work, but repay you in grace and beauty if construction is properly done.

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Illustrations and cover by George Alstad



# Tailor Your Draperies

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## Materials and Tools

Collect these items for drapery making:

Yardage.

Lining.

Interlining (where needed).

Heavy crinoline banding for the headings.

Heavy-duty sewing thread.

Weights (See illustration on Page 8).

Average sewing tools, such as scissors, thimble, needles, and dressmaker pins.

Yardstick and tape measure.

Pencil.

Hem and heading gauge.

Other handy tools are a tracing wheel, tailor's chalk, and a carbon marking-board. These add to effective work, but are not essential.

## In General

### Amounts to Buy

Be as generous with yardage as your purse allows. Skimpy hangings are not attractive, and in certain types of draperies, such as pull curtains, they are not "good buys."

### Basic Measurements

1. Take measurements **carefully**. Use a steel tape if available. It will not shift, stretch, or slump.

2. For **length**, measure from rod to the floor, or to the bottom of the window "apron," or to the sill of steel frame windows.

3. Be generous in **width**. Allow 100% fullness if possible, which means a full width of drapery material at each side of a normal-size window.

4. Allow for **matching** figures where designs are large. Here is a simple rule for allowance:

a) Measure the distance from the top of one design to the top of the next.

b) Determine whether the number of inches in the design will divide evenly into the whole length of the curtain.

c) If not, add enough inches to the curtain length to make a measurement that is evenly divisible by the pattern measurement. Example: If a design measures 15 inches and the drapery is to be 80 inches, add 10 inches to the total measure, making 90 inches. Divide the 90 inches by the 15-inch measure for the design. (90 divided by 15 equals 6.) Thus, each drapery would require six designs.

#### 5. Allow hems and heading.

Remember, there are three hems and a heading to allow for in draperies — the two side hems, one bottom hem, and the top hem or heading.

Allowances are as follows:

8½ inches on any drapery for a 4-inch heading, doubled.

6½ inches on any drapery for a 3-inch heading, doubled.

3½ to 4½ inches on any drapery for a bottom hem.

1 to 1½ inches, finished, for wall hem of unlined drapery.

1½ to 2½ inches, finished, for front hem of unlined drapery. In washable draperies, plan to double the bottom hem to allow for shrinkage.

6. See Page 9 for instructions about **amounts** to plan for linings and interlinings.

## Construction

Certain practices are common in making any type of drapery.

1. Cut all drapery materials straight with the grain, or thread, of material. Do not "tear" materials.

2. Straighten all materials by pulling, zig-zag, from corner to corner. Then pull gently on the straight thread.

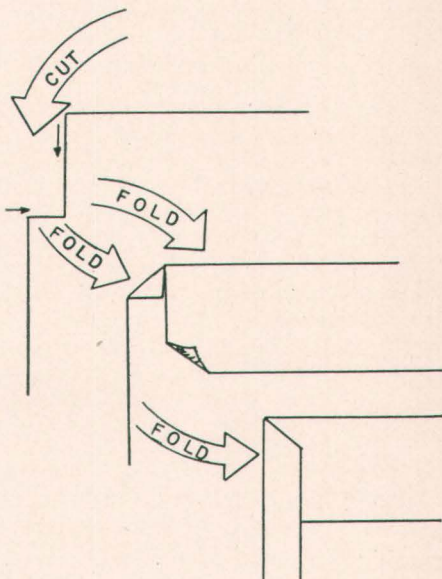
3. Remove selvages; or clip partly through the selvaqe on a slant, every 3 to 4 inches.

4. Recheck all measurements before cutting.

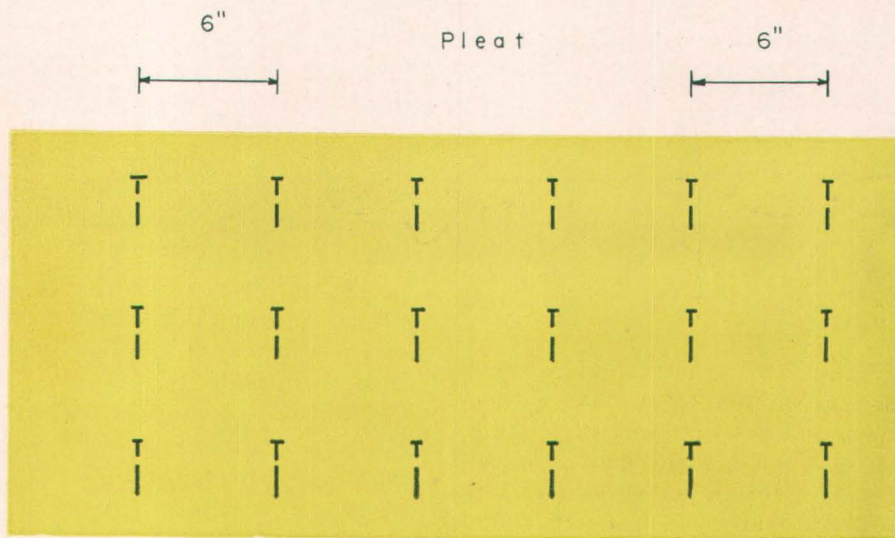
5. Provide crinoline bands or other type of stiffening for all except washable draperies. Use crinoline the depth of desired **finished** heading.

6. Use hem and heading gauges, which you may make or buy.

7. Miter corners, as shown by steps in the illustration below. ▼







8. If possible, work on a flat, firm surface large enough to lay out the whole drapery.

9. In machine-stitching draperies, begin each side seam at the **top** and stitch toward the **bottom**. Do not stitch side seams in opposite directions.

10. Hand-stitch draperies if you want them to look better and hang more gracefully.

## Headings

You have a choice in types of headings for either lined or unlined draperies. The most popular are: (1) pinch pleats; (2) box pleats; (3) cartridge pleats; (4) pipe-organ pleats; (5) shirred tops. Each has its place in drapery construction.

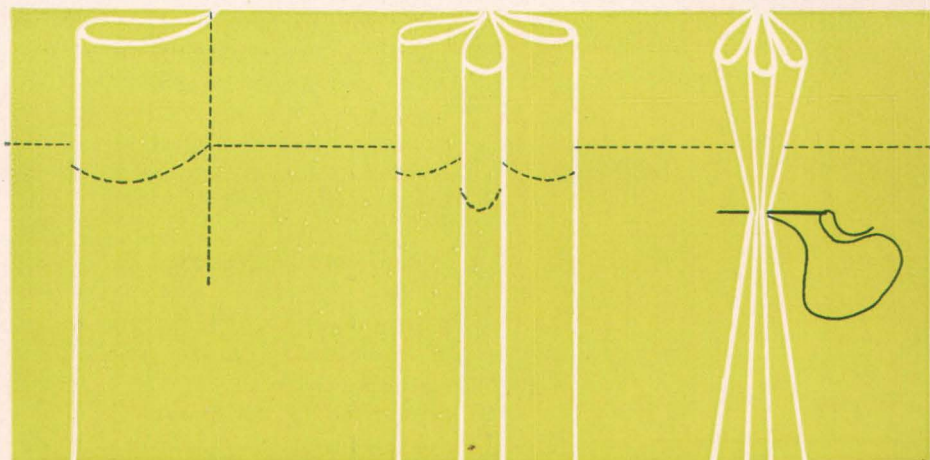
Pleats are usually 3 inches wide. This requires an allowance of 6 inches for each pleat, as illustrated above. An odd number of pleats across the drapery is desirable.

Planning pleats is important. There is a simple way to plan for all types of pleats:

1. Measure the distance from the center of the rod to its end, and around to the wall.

2. Subtract this figure from the width of the drapery. This indicates the number of inches left for pleating.

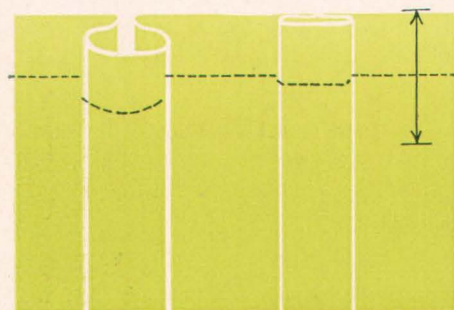
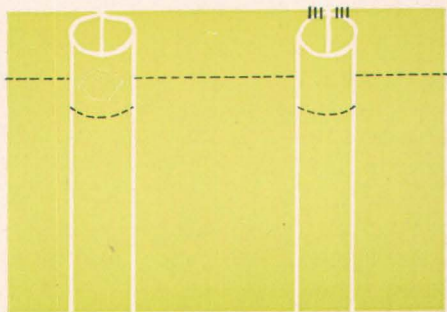
3. Start with pleats 3 inches in from the drapery top at the wall side and 2 to 3 inches from center edge. Next, locate center pleat; then space all others evenly, from center to edges. The number of pleats is determined by the width of materials.



**Pinch pleats:** The illustration above shows each large pleat divided into 3 small pleats. Catch all together with firm, small, hand-stitches at the base of the heading.

Note tacks at top edges to hold pleat in curved shape in the illustration below. Otherwise, the pleats are planned and stitched as for pinch or box pleats. ▼

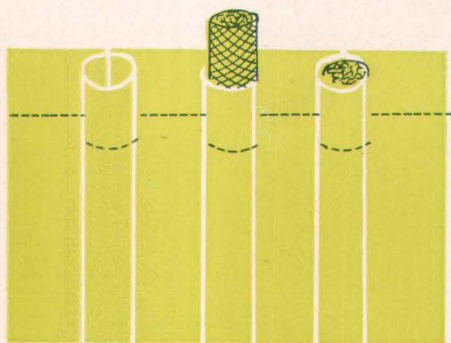
**Box pleats:** Measure and stitch pleats as indicated in step 3 under "Planning Pleats." Flatten and press instead of pulling together in a group of three pleats. (Illustration below.) ▼



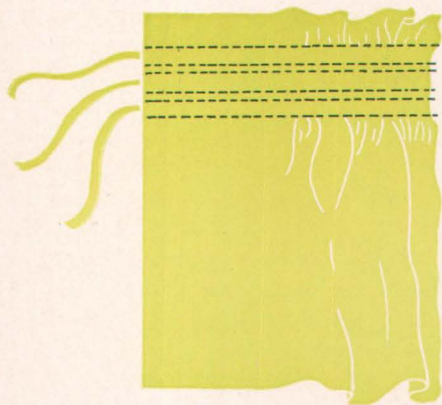
**Cartridge pleats:** These are effective pleats for glass curtains, without draperies, or for formal, heavy draperies.

**Pipe-Organ pleats:** This treatment resembles cartridge pleats but these are larger and longer. They are used on long, wide windows in a formal setting. Each pleat is from 4 to 5 inches wide and from 6 to 8½ inches long. Fill with cotton rolls in a crinoline foundation. (Illustration top of next page.)





**Shirred headings:** Shirred headings are suitable for light-weight draperies, either lined or unlined. Allow 8 inches for a heading. (See illustration below.)



Begin a shirred heading by placing a 2-inch strip of crinoline 2 inches down from the top edge of the drapery. Stitch crinoline at top and bottom. Fold the drapery top forward 4 inches. Turn  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch on the edge and stitch.

Two inches up from the base of the heading, place a line of stitching; then divide the remaining space into half-inch rows of stitching. Thread twilled tape through

the rows created by the stitching and shir to the desired fullness. The use of tape as shirring strings adds to appearance, durability, ease in making, and convenience in ironing. Attach tapes firmly by machine, within one inch of the center hem.

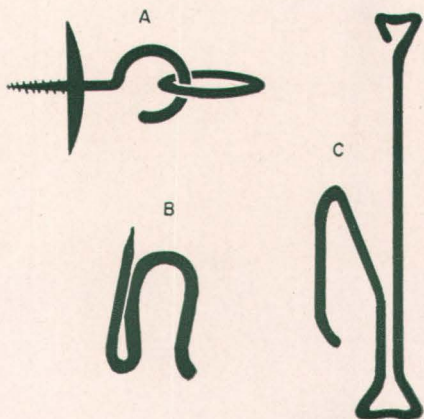
**Stitching pleats:** Stitch all pleats at least 3 inches below the bottom of the heading. Pipe-organ pleats, as indicated, require even longer stitching — from 6 to  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches from the top of the pleat.

This practice of sturdy stitching “below” the base of the heading creates well-formed pleats that guide the folds in the remaining length of the drapery.

## Fixtures

Suitable fixtures add the finishing touch to well-made draperies.

Choose bar hooks (See “C” below) for pleated headings. The bar supports the pleats, and slips over the rod. Such hooks prevent limp, drooping headings.



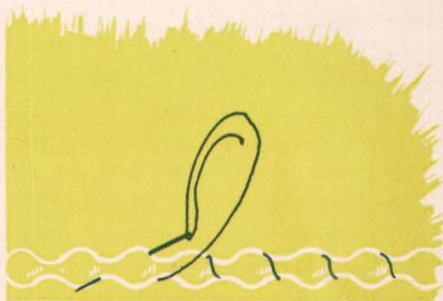
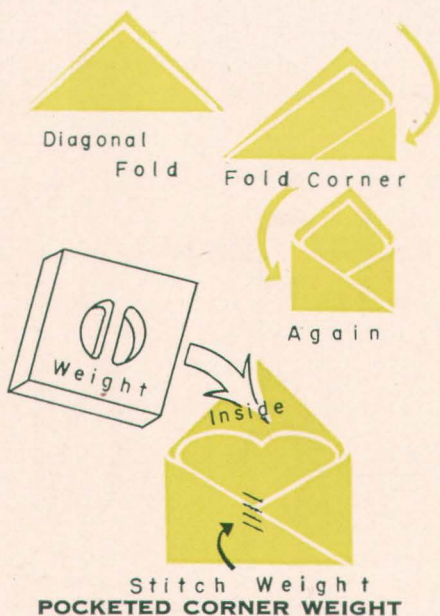
Select "pin-on" or "sew-on" hooks of the type illustrated on page 7 (see "B") for light-weight curtains without wide headings. A new type bar hook has an effective "safety pin" clasp.

The outside edges of draperies should hang straight from rod to hem. Give them this trim line by anchoring the edges. A ring, attached to the corner of the drape-ry, slips into a cup hook screwed to the wall or baseboard, as illustrated on page 7 under "A."

When using rings to mount drap-eries, decide whether they are to be a decorative feature. If so, avoid heavy headings below the rings.

### Weights

Weights add good lines to drap-eries. Use single corner weights or yardage weights, depending on the weight of material in the drape-ry. The illustrations below and above indicate attachments of two types.

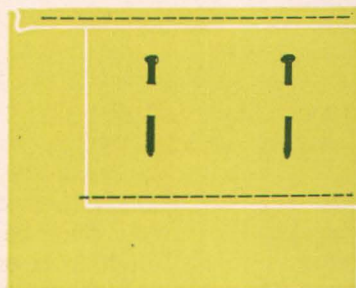


**YARDAGE WEIGHT**

### Unlined Draperies

To the general steps (Page 3) add the following when making **unlined** draperies:

1. For unlined drape-ry with a **single** top hem, place stiffening  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from raw edge. Pin in place and baste raw edge over the top edge of stiffening. (Illustration below.) ▼

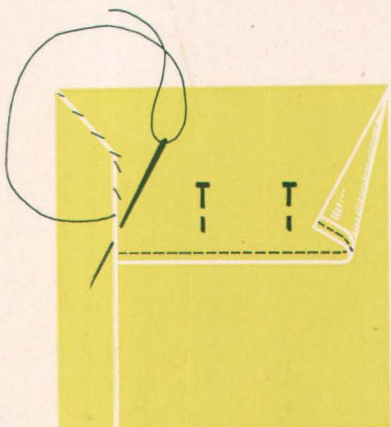




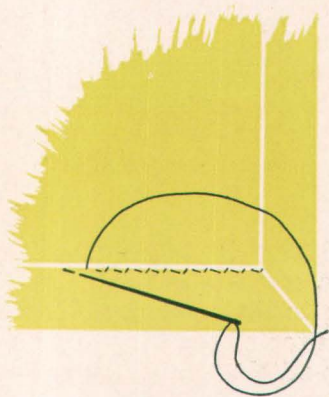
2. Next, turn side hems using  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch for first turn and the choice of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 inches (Page 4) for the second turn. Baste.

3. Turn the bottom hem with  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch first turn and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches for the final turn. Baste.

4. Fold the heading to required depth, mitering the side hem over the heading. (Illustration below.) Baste. Overhand the miter, and stitch the base of the heading by hand or machine. ▼



5. Sew other hems either by hand or machine. Use a slip-stitch if making a hem by hand. (See below.) ▼



6. Finish heading with pleats or shirring, depending upon use and type of fabric.

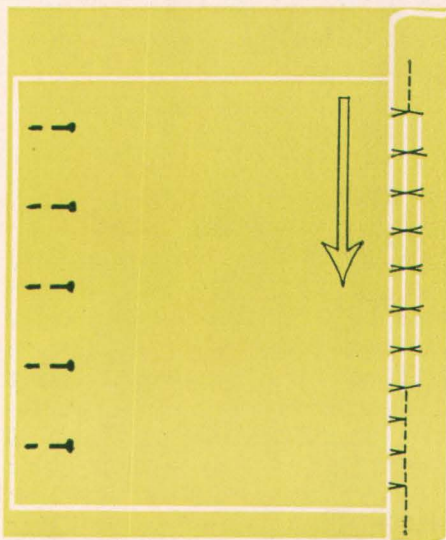
## Lined Draperies

1. Measure lining and interlining (if to be used) as follows:

a) Measure lining the length from base of heading to the hemmed length of the drapery, adding  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch for top hem and 2 inches for the bottom. Allow  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch at each side.

b) Cut interlining, if used, the dimensions of the **finished** drapery. As it is fitted, you may trim small amounts on all edges, if needed.

2. Lay the cut and straightened drapery length with selvage cut or clipped, right side down on table. (See below.) ▼



3. Put crinoline stiffening in place; **between** a double turn if a double, top hem is used; or **even** with the top raw edge if a single, top hem is used. Baste.

4. Press in all hems before placing lining:

3½ to 4½ inches raw edge hem for bottom.

1½ to 2½ inches raw edge hem for front hem.

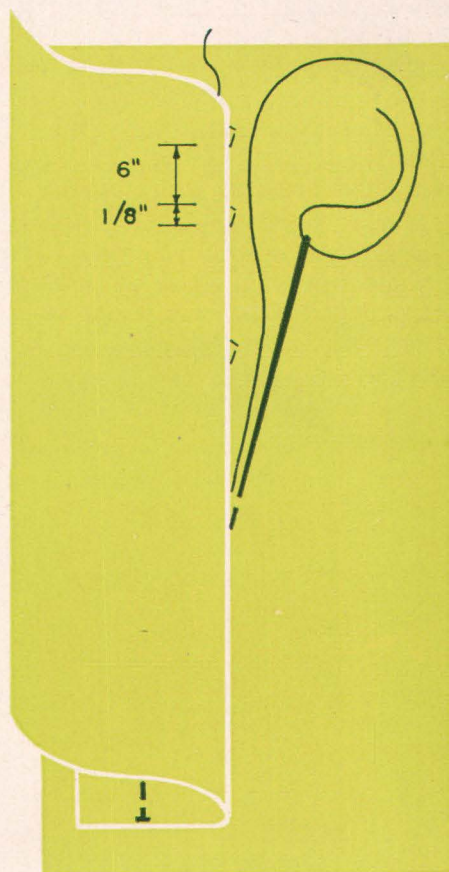
1 to 1½ inches raw edge hem for wall hem.

5. At this point, decide whether drapery is to have machine-stitched side hems, either at wall hem or front hem. This decision determines the method of lining.

6. If drapery is to be **machine-stitched** and lined, place right side of lining flat on right side of drapery with the recommended hem allowances at top, sides, and bottom. Anchor with several lengthwise lines of pins.

7. Baste the lengthwise drapery edges to the lining edges. Stitch only one lengthwise hem. Notch, and press the seam open. Turn the drapery right side out.

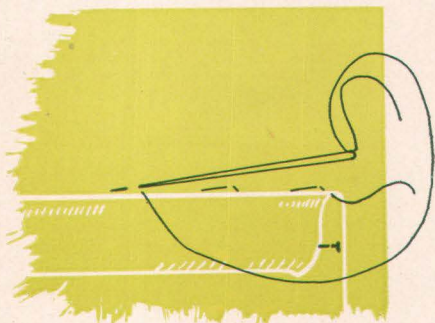
8. If making draperies by hand, spread drapery and lining materials flat on the table, wrong sides together. Fold the lining lengthwise on itself, through the center and toward the front hem. Crease lightly and pin at intervals. Along this center crease make a lengthwise line of tacking stitches 6 inches apart. Use a buttonhole loop. These are "balloon" stitches; invisible, but attaching the lining



to the drapery fabric to prevent its sagging. (See illustration above.) For 36-inch material create one line of tacking between the center and each side hem; for 48 to 50-inch hangings, use 5 rows of tacking. Relieve the strain on the rows of tacks by brushing a little fullness toward each line of stitches as you work.

9. Make the heading, using the pleats of your choice. Catch the lining to the heading as illustrated at the top of page 11. Finish with a slip-stitch.





shown below. Hem lining with a long, running stitch or catch stitch. Let it hang free of the drapery. Attach weights, as illustrated on page 8.

## Interlined Draperies

Interlining adds to the work of construction and requires skill in handling. Interlinings may be used in making formal, heavy draperies, or to soften the light which filters through light-weight open weaves.

Attach the interlining to the wrong side of the drapery material, using parallel rows of balloon stitches described in Step 8 under Lined Draperies. Run one line of these stitches **crosswise**,  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch above the line which will mark the base of the heading. This crosswise line "anchors" the interlining to the top section of the hanging.

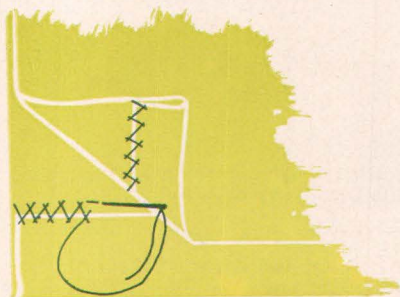
After tacking the interlining, proceed with Steps 8 through 13 as described for lined draperies.

10. Baste side hems and press. Smooth lining toward the basted hems. Pin, then baste loosely in place. Slip-stitch lining to the side hems.

11. Before hemming the bottom, let the draperies hang for two or three days at the window. The materials will "give" a little, and adjust to their weight.

12. With the draperies in position you can mark the hem as you would a skirt.

13. Remove from rod. Turn drapery hem  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch and machine-stitch, as near the turn as possible. Catch-stitch hem to the drapery as



## Shaping Folds

Draperies will hang in straighter pleats if handled after finishing as follows:

Lay finished drapery flat. Fold lengthwise, "accordion fashion," in line with the pleats of the heading. Fold the draperies, crosswise, two or three times, tying loosely with cord. Let set a few hours to establish the unpressed folds from top to hem.

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Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics  
Wm. A. Schoenfeld, Director  
Oregon State College and United States Department of Agriculture, Cooperating  
Printed and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of  
May 8 and June 30, 1914