Make Your Own Draperies

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MAKE YOUR OWN DRAPERIES

The right draperies can add much to the attractiveness of a room. By planning, you can establish harmony between them and walls, rugs, furniture, and accessories. Draperies offer great variety in color, design, and texture, and are important in the decorative scheme of the room.

Choice of draperies is influenced by the atmosphere or character of the room—"that certain something" associated with furnishings, frequently with period furnishings such as Provencal, Early American, Victorian, or Modern. Occasionally the atmosphere of a room is described by the characteristics of the furnishings as formal, informal, simple, luxurious, rustic, elegant, or sophisticated. Often, because of the sturdiness or daintiness of the furnishings, the appearance of the room may be described as masculine or feminine.

In planning draperies, consider more than just eye appeal. Draperies should also serve a useful purpose.

Purpose of draperies

Draperies can help to control light, provide privacy, and make the room more attractive. They should also help to make rooms look comfortable but not closed in. Draperies should not block off windows which must be opened for ventilation nor obstruct heat from wall registers or radiators. Draw draperies across large glass areas give protection from direct sunlight and heat and from drafts and winter cold.

To get maximum service from your draperies, decide upon the points you consider most important and select drapery fabrics accordingly.

Fabrics for Draperies

A wide variety of desirable fabrics is available. Many are blends, a combination of fibers—all natural, all synthetic, or both. Special appearance, textures, and weaving qualities are achieved by various blends. Many are mixtures; for example, one type of yarn for the warp and another for the filling. Such a fabric is as serviceable as its weakest fiber.

Natural fibers

Cotton, linen, silk, and wool are all available. Cotton has the widest usage. Many new textures are being developed. Manufacturing processes make many fabrics colorfast, sanforized or preshrunk, crease resistant, and dirt-and-stain resistant.
Man-made fibers

Many man-made fibers are used in drapery fabrics and include: Acetates (Cellperm, Chromspun, Estron), Acrilan, Bemberg, Dacron, Dynel, glass fiber, Fortisan, mineral fibers (asbestos), Nylon, Orlon, Rayon, Viscose (Coloray, Colorspun, Jetspun), Saran (Velon, Permalon).

Each of the synthetic fibers in these fabrics has advantages and disadvantages. The quality of the blends depends on the combination used. However, most fabrics of man-made fibers:

**Look well.** They drape in soft folds, are sheer, flawless, keep their crispness, and tailor well.

**Are easy to care for.** They are slow to soil but dry clean or wash easily and need little ironing. Dry cleaning is preferable for fabrics which may shrink.

**Are durable.** Most synthetic fabrics hold their original shape and do not noticeably stretch, sag, shrink, or wrinkle in high humidity, laundering, dyeing, or dry cleaning.

Metal yarns now used in draperies, such as Lurex and Metlon, are soft, supple, non-tarnishing, abrasive-resistant, and can be either washed or dry-cleaned.

Glass fiber used in draperies is strong; it is heat, wrinkle, and water resistant. However, it tends to be brittle and break along crease lines where rubbing occurs. These fabrics should be handled carefully. Launder by hand only and drip dry. Avoid snagging and do not scrub or wring. Glass fabrics dry quickly and require no ironing.

Treated linings such as Milium, Therma-line, and Weatherwall, supposedly keep out cold in winter and heat in summer. They are still being improved but require special handling in dry cleaning. Drapery fabrics which need no lining because they have a treated backing are in the experimental stage.

Lining selection

While some draperies look attractive without linings, others should be lined to look their best. The lining protects the fabric from light and moisture, lessens fading, gives body to the drapery fabric, makes the drapery hang better, and gives a pleasing appearance to windows from the outside view. If you choose a patterned fabric, it may need a lining to keep the daylight from blurring the design.

Linings are usually made from lining sateens. Choose a lining material about the same width as the drapery. Satten and other linings are available in varying widths and colors.

Questions to ask when buying

Before you buy a fabric for draperies, see it in folds. Be sure the design of a patterned fabric is equally pleasing when it hangs in a few folds and also in deep folds. Choose drapery fabrics with labels printed on the border rather than attached to the bolt only, so that you can be sure of guarantees. The term “vat” on the label indicates the use of the best obtainable dyes for cotton, linen, and rayon.

Questions:

How can you clean them?
Will the material shrink or stretch?
What type of finish does it have? Is the finish permanent?
Is the color suitable to the room in which you plan to use it?
Is the pattern in proportion to the size of your room and furnishings?
Is the texture suitable to the wall and other furnishings in the room?
Is it the best quality material for the money spent?

Look for information on the labels and ask the sales person about points not covered on the label.
Measure Accurately for Material

Lengths

Draperies should begin and end in line with some structural part of the window (Figure 1). The length of the drapery should be in proportion to the length and width of the window. Length depends, also, upon the place of the window opening in the wall.

Measure from the rod to apron or floor, depending upon the desired length.

Widths

Draperies need to be wide enough to hang in graceful folds. If they are on traverse rods, allow two to two and one-half times the width of the window. For sheer, soft fabrics, allow three times the width of the window.

How to measure

1. Measure the window with a yard stick or metal tape. A cloth tape may stretch or shrink and measurements will not be accurate. Measure each window, as they may vary as much as one inch in height or width.

2. Measure from the rod to apron or floor, depending upon the desired length.

3. The width—for pull draperies, allow two to two and one-half times the width of the window. For panel draperies, allow a full width of material.
4. Allow for matching design. Measure distance between designs. Add enough yardage so design will match on each panel.

5. *Hems and headings.* Allow for two side hems, one bottom hem, and a top hem or heading. Allowances are as follows:

- $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches for a 4 inch heading (top hem)
- $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches for a 4 inch bottom hem
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches to 2 inches finished for side hem

**WORKSHEET FOR DRAPERY YARDAGE REQUIREMENTS**

**Measure:**

1. Window width, including frame or length of rod.
2. Finished length desired (floor or apron length).

**Figure drapery material:**

1. Width $2$ or $2\frac{1}{2}$ times width of window = width needed.
2. Width needed $\div$ fabric width = number widths of fabric.
3. Number of fabric widths $\div 2$ = number widths in each panel.
4. Finished length desired $+ \text{pattern repeat length} \times$ number of fabric widths = yardage required.

**Figure lining material:**

1. Make lining seams correspond in position to drapery fabric seams.
2. Measure lining one inch narrower and one inch longer than completed drapery.

**Preparation for Construction**

**Straighten fabric**

Drapery materials do not tear well without puckering and stretching. Pull crosswise thread and cut on line.

Fabrics are always woven straight, but often in the pressing process they are pulled out of shape before they are wound on bolts. If the material is not pulled and pressed back into shape, the drapery will not hang straight at the window. Straighten all materials by pulling, zigzag, from corner to corner, gradually working toward the center of the fabric. If this pulling does not straighten the fabric, bring the two ends together and pin them to the ironing board. Pin the lengthwise edge together at intervals.

If it will not harm the fabric, dampen the section with a cloth. Press toward the part that needs straightening.

If you have a patterned design and the pattern is not printed true, cut with the design or at right angles to selvage; use the straight side and end of the table and a yardstick or carpenter's square to guide your cutting. Recheck all measurements before cutting fabric. Cut only one length or lengths for half a window at a time.

**Selvage**

Selvages are usually woven more firmly than the rest of the fabric. To keep sides from puckering, snip selvage or cut off.
If only one width of fabric is needed at each side of the window, snip or cut off the selvages or printing that will show. Snips should be 6-12 inches apart.

**Join fabric widths**

If more than one width is to be used at each side of the window, place the fabric on work surface, right side up. If the fabric has a pattern, match design length with another. Fold under the edge of one piece at least \( \frac{1}{4} \) inch. Turn under any printing on the selvage. Lay this length on the other. Pin the two together with pins at right angles to the seam. Slip-stitch the two lengths together.

Turn the fabric to the wrong side and machine stitch the seam. Snip edges, or trim seams to \( \frac{1}{2} \) inch. Press seam open and flat. For an unlined drapery, a flat feld seam may be used.

Pin plain fabrics in a seam on the wrong side with pins at right angles to the seam. Stitch and press.

**Stitches**

**Hand stitching.** The slip stitch is shown in Figure 2; the blanket stitch in Figure 3; and the catch stitch in Figure 4.

**Machine stitching.** Machine stitch hems and seams with tension loose enough to prevent puckering—8-12 stitches to the inch, depending upon the weight of the fabric.

**Lining construction**

Seam widths of lining together, if more than one is needed. Make the lining seams correspond in position to the fabric seams.

For two widths, put right sides together. Pin \( \frac{1}{4} \) inch seam with pins placed at right angles to the seam. Machine stitch on wrong side, making seam \( \frac{1}{2} \) inch wide. Snip the selvages. Press seams open and flat.

Attach matching seam of lining to drapery seam with long, floating basting stitches, about 6 inches in length. Do not pull thread tight. (Figure 5.)
Headings

Crinoline. Crinoline for top hems or headings varies from 3 to 4 inches in width. It gives support and stiffness needed in drapery headings for a well-tailored appearance. When selecting crinoline, inquire if it is washable (pre-shrunk or sanforized), if draperies are to be laundered.

Pleater tape. Commercial pleater tape may be used instead of crinoline for the top hem. Tape is available with either stitched or woven-in pockets to hold hooks firmly in place. When draperies are soiled, remove the hooks, clean or launder draperies and press them out flat. When hooks are replaced, you will have the same pleating arrangement.

This tape can be used for double or triple French pleats, box pleats, or cartridge pleats (Figure 6).

Pleating arrangement

You have a choice in types of pleating for either lined or unlined draperies. The most popular are French pleats.

Pleats vary in width according to the amount of fullness allowed for the drapery.

The use of pleats is the most effective way of finishing draperies and controlling fullness which is to hang in even, graceful folds.

It is important to have sufficient fabric in each pleat to allow the folds to hang gracefully when the drapery is drawn. Measurements should allow the amount of fabric needed for the returns (the distance from the corners of the rod to the wall) and overlap at the center of the window. If the returns and overlap are the same measurement, generally 3 inches, panels can be changed from one side of the window to the other to equalize wear.
ESTIMATING PLEATS AND SPACES FOR DRAPERIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rod</th>
<th>Your drapery measurements</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure length of rod ..................................................................</td>
<td></td>
<td>66&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divide by 2 to get the center ..................................................</td>
<td></td>
<td>33&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add distance from wall to rod (this will vary from 2 to 4 in.) .......</td>
<td></td>
<td>4&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add for center overlap (this will vary from 2 to 4 in.) ...............</td>
<td></td>
<td>2&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add 1&quot; (for small window) for ease (2&quot; for large window) .............</td>
<td></td>
<td>2&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&quot;Ease&quot; allows for give so drapery isn’t stretched too tightly .......)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total .................................................................................</td>
<td></td>
<td>41&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(This sum is one-half the length of the rod to be covered by .........</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one drapery panel.) ..................................................................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Drapery                                                                 |                           |         |
| Finished width of drapery for one side of window ..........................|                           | 83"     |
| Subtract length of rod from finished width of drapery ..................|                           | -41"    |
| ____________________________ .................................................|                           | 42"     |

| Pleats (number and width)                                             |                           |         |
| Divide the amount available for pleats by the number of pleats ........|                           |         |
| desired. Each pleat will take from 4 to 6 inches, depending ...........|                           |         |
| on the width of the fabric. Estimate three pleats for 36-inch ........|                           |         |
| material and 5 pleats for 50-inch material. ...............................|                           |         |
| Desired number of pleats ................................................................|                           | 11      |

| Spaces (number and width)                                             |                           |         |
| The space between pleats should be no wider than the pleats ...........|                           |         |
| themselves, otherwise loops will be large when drawn back and .......|                           |         |
| may sag rather than hang in pleasing folds. ................................|                           |         |
| Measure the distance to the first pleat, either from the wall ........|                           |         |
| or the end of the rod. If these two measurements are made ..........|                           |         |
| the same, the panels may be exchanged to prolong wear. Wall ..........|                           | 4"      |
| to rod allowance ......................................................................|                           | 2"      |
| Add for center overlap to cover master slide...............................|                           |         |
| Total ..................................................................................|                           | 6"      |
| Subtract this total from the length of the rod to be covered by .......|                           |         |
| one drapery panel ....................................................................|                           | 41"     |
| Space between pleats ....................................................................|                           | 35"     |
| Number of spaces will be one less than the number of pleats ..........|                           | 10      |
| Divide 35 inches by 10 ..................................................................|                           | 3½"     |
| Distance between each pleat ......................................................|                           |         |
| Check your measurements ................................................................|                           |         |
| Distance from wall to first pleat ..............................................|                           | 4"      |
| Amount taken up in pleats ..........................................................|                           | 42"     |
| Amount for spaces between pleats ...............................................|                           | 35"     |
| Amount for center overlap ...........................................................|                           | 2"      |
| Total width of hemmed, unpleated drapery .....................................|                           | 83"     |

Check pleat size on rod before stitching, adjust if necessary.
Steps in Making Lined Draperies

Pin crinoline on wrong side of panel $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from top and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches from sides. (Figure 7.)

Pin baste crinoline in place. Stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from edge at top and bottom of crinoline. (Figure 8.)
Turn down width of crinoline. Cut away surplus fabric at top corners, cut along crinoline edge to within \( \frac{1}{4} \) inch of top. Fold bottom hem \( \frac{1}{2} \) inch and stitch. (Figure 9.)

Cross-stitch over raw edge on top hem. Turn bottom hem 3 or 4 inches. Blanket or slip stitch in place. (Figure 10.)

Step 1. Turn corner and stitch across fold. (Figure 11.)
Step 2. Corner may be cut on diagonal fold if material is bulky. Allow approximately \( \frac{1}{4} \) inch for seam. Turn seam allowance as shown. (Figure 12.)

Step 3. Corner of side seam turned back 1\( \frac{1}{2} \) inches over crinoline. (Figure 13.)

Step 1. Turn corner as shown 1\( \frac{3}{4} \) inches in from outer edge. (Figure 14.)

Step 2. Corner when side seam is turned 1\( \frac{3}{4} \) inches over hem. (Figure 15.)
Turn 1\(\frac{3}{4}\) inch hems at side. Do not turn raw edges under. Baste in place. Use cross-stitch to secure side hems. Slip-stitch mitered corners. (Figure 16.)

Panel ready for lining. (Figure 17.)
Cut lining 1 inch narrower and 1 inch longer than completed drapery. Turn raw edges ¼ inch to wrong side all around, including across hem. Turn 3-inch hem in bottom. Baste hem and stitch on machine. (Figure 18.)

Place wrong side of lining to wrong side of drapery. Lap lining over side hems 1 inch and to the line formed by the mitered corners at top and bottom. Place approximately 1½ inches from bottom of hem. (Figure 19.)
Pin lining accurately around all edges except bottom hem and baste. Slip-stitch lining to drapery, working from the bottom to the top. (Figure 20.)

Pin baste crinoline on wrong side of panel \( \frac{1}{2} \) inch from top and 1\( \frac{3}{4} \) inches from each side. Turn \( \frac{1}{4} \) inch seam allowance over crinoline and stitch. Turn \( \frac{1}{4} \) inch seam allowance on sides and bottom and stitch. (Figure 21.)
FIGURE 22

Turn down width of crinoline. Cut away surplus fabric at top corners, cutting along crinoline edge to within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of top. Turn up 3 or 4 inch hem. Pin baste. (Figure 22.)

FIGURE 23

Catch or slip stitch top and bottom hems. Miter corners. (Figure 23.)
FIGURE 24

Catch or slip stitch sides. (Figure 24.)

FIGURE 25

Pillow case method

Turn under $\frac{1}{2}$ inch then 3 or 4 inches for bottom hem and stitch. (Figure 25.)
Cut lining 4 inches narrower and 1 inch shorter than drapery fabric. For bottom hem turn ¼ inch then 3 or 4 inches and stitch. (Figure 26.)

FIGURE 26

Stitch lining and drapery material right sides together using ½-inch seam allowance at each side. Begin stitching at top of drapery hem. (Figure 27.)

FIGURE 27

Make heading by extending crinoline above top of drapery and lining. Stitch. Allow ½-inch seam. Stitch through crinoline on seam allowance. (Figure 28.)

FIGURE 28
**FIGURE 29**

Turn casing to right side; press. (Figure 29.)

**FIGURE 30**

Mitered corner finished. (Figure 30.)
French pleats

French pleats are used most often for draperies, casement, and draw curtains. Make a fold of heading material the desired width for pleat. Pin in place. Make sure the hem edges meet on the underside. (Figure 32.)
Use a sturdy machine needle. Adjust sewing machine to 6 to 10 stitches to an inch. Stitch the fold vertically on the straight of the grain. Back stitch at the top and at the lower edge, a little below the crinoline. Remove pins as you stitch. Stitch rest of folds in same manner.

From each large fold, crease three small folds or pleats. At the lower edge, crease the pleats together. Hand sew through the layers or machine stitch below the crinoline.

**DRAPERY HARDWARE**

**Hooks**

Pins and clip-on hooks or rings can be fastened to the top hem of drapery, or hooks can be pinned on the back of the hem near the top.

A variety of hooks is available to fit your drapery needs. Select hooks to suit the type of fabric, depth of heading, and type of stiffening. Consider the time and labor of attaching and removal for laundry or cleaning. (Figure 33.)

**Wire hooks**

May be used for light fabrics to be hung stationary on rods. “Heavy duty” wire hooks are available for traverse rods and may be used on heavier fabrics.

**Sew-on heading hooks**

Hand sewn to heading at top and bottom of crinoline. The long shank offers support to hold headings of drapery upright.

**Grip hooks**

Works like a safety pin. Saves sewing and is adjustable. Has a long shank to hold drapery upright.

**Self-pleating hooks**

These hooks are available for commercial stitched pleating tape. Hooks may be purchased to form box, French, or cartridge pleats.

**FIGURE 33**

1. Wire hook for light fabrics to be hung stationary on rod.
2. Basic or conventional pin-on traverse hook.
3. Pin-on heading hook with long shank designed to hold headings erect at all times.
4. Grip hook which holds fabric firmly without sewing.
5. Conventional sew-on heading hook.
6. Hook used with tape attached to back of pleated fabric.
7. (Back view of number 6.)
Drapery rods

Various styles of rods are available for almost any type of window: bay, bow, and corner windows; wall to wall, ceiling hung, and others. Rods are also available by weight: extra heavy duty, heavy duty, regular, brass tubing, and others.

The sales person can be of most help if you give him the weight of rod needed, size needed, including length and projection, and the number of each size needed. Traverse rods are used most often. (Figure 34.)

Rod supports

Supports are available for home installation to make rods secure on the wall.

Ask about supports for wood installations, plaster board or wall board, and plaster installations. (Figure 35.)
Weights
You can buy weighting shots by the yard for sheer draperies. Cut weights to fit bottom hem of drapery. Turn under the raw edge, pushing out one of the shots if necessary. Hand tack each end just inside each corner of the bottom hem. As the drapery hangs at the window, the weighting stays in place without further tacking. Select rust-proof weighting to make sure moisture does not rust weights.

Some draperies may need weights to make their corners hang well. A variety of weights may be purchased to be sewn into the corners of draperies. (Figures 36, 37, 38, and 39.)

![FIGURE 36](image)

Cut square of fabric three times the diameter of the weight being used. Fold the square in half. (Figure 36.)

![FIGURE 37](image)

Fold the corners over, and slip the weight into the pocket formed. (Figure 37.)

![FIGURE 38](image)

Stitch across the top edge to hold in place. (Figure 38.)

![FIGURE 39](image)

Turn desired hem width and fasten in place with a hand stitch. (Figure 39.)