



## *Sewing for the Home*

Tired of the way your home looks? Add a fresh, updated appearance to your home with fabric! Sewing for your home can be quick and easy, and you'll have professional results using timesaving methods that require a minimum of sewing skills. If you don't sew at all, don't give up! Many items can be created with no-sew techniques. Guidelines are available for selecting fabrics appropriate for your project . . . whether you're making the items yourself or having someone make them for you.

Fabric furnishings add softness and a distinctive character to any room. You'll discover almost limitless ways to use fabrics in decorating with curtains, draperies, upholstery, bedspreads, dust ruffles and tablecloths. Fabrics are both attractive and practical on walls and ceilings or when used for room dividers, padded headboards for beds, wall hangings, picture frames, pillows of all kinds and shapes, storage devices and any number of other creative uses. Look for ideas as you browse through decorating books and magazines or page through pattern books found at fabric stores. Take time to observe the uses of fabrics in store displays, model homes and even the homes of your friends. Don't try to copy ideas, however, but adapt them to create your own one-of-a-kind items.

### **Fabric Choices**

Shopping for fabrics can be both fun and frustrating because there's an unlimited variety of fabric colors, textures and designs available. Consider trying an idea used by professional designers by selecting a fabric in a pattern and colors that you like as the basis for a room's color scheme. More companies are now offering coordinating fabrics that make designing your room a real delight. Wide fabric widths of 54", 60", 90" and even 120" mean less piecing and also reduce both cost and sewing time. Bed sheets provide another source for wide widths of fabric in the latest colors and patterns.

Select fabrics that are appropriate for the intended use and desired method of care. They should also look well with the other furnishings in the room. Study design trends for current colors and patterns and be alert to new ideas that are starting to appear in stores and magazines. Then use these new colors and patterns to give your present furnishings an updated look.

### **Purchasing Pointers**

As you are planning your project and selecting the fabric, consider the following guidelines:

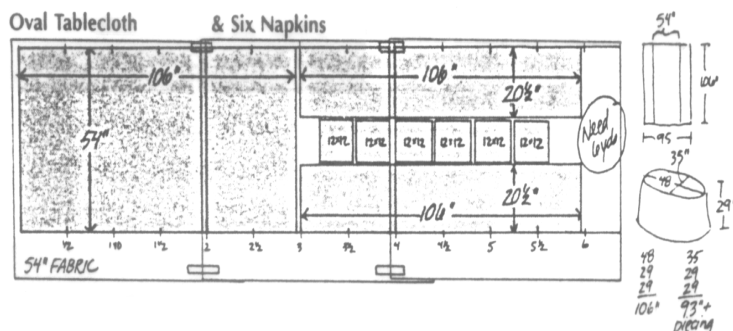
- ☐ Know your budget limitations before you go out to buy. Having a price range established helps to eliminate some choices immediately.

- ☐ Take time to plan your project carefully. What colors are used in the room? How will one pattern complement or blend with another? What will this item add to the decor of the room?
- ☐ Measure carefully and write down these dimensions to take with you when shopping. Also include a tape measure, pad, pencil, paint chips, fabric and carpet samples, so you'll be prepared for comparing colors and purchasing items that you need for the project.
- ☐ Be careful with color! If you are considering either a bright or a dark color, will it be placed where direct sunlight will hit it? Some dark colors fade *very* quickly, and bright, intense colors will stand out as *new* when combined with older furnishings in a room. In situations such as this, choose more subdued or grayed colors. And remember that colors change dramatically when viewed under different lighting or with different color combinations. Play it safe by asking if a large sample is available to be taken out and viewed in the intended setting. When samples are not available, purchase a yard to try out in your home in both daylight and night lighting.
- ☐ Examine the fabric construction before buying. Remember that fiber content, type of yarn, fabric construction and finishing techniques all play a part in determining the serviceability of the fabric. As a rule, the tighter the yarns are twisted, the longer the wear you can reasonably expect. The tighter the weave or higher the thread count (number of threads per inch), the stronger the fabric. It pays to use good quality fabrics for most decorating projects. The items last longer and give a finer finished look. Consider, too, the length of time you expect to use these items. You'll need a better quality fabric for draperies that you expect to last 10 to 15 years than you will for a pair of kitchen curtains that you plan to replace in two or three years. Don't hesitate to ask your County Extension agent for help or guidance.
- ☐ Carefully evaluate the appropriateness of the fabric, color, pattern and texture, keeping the intended use in mind. Is the fabric sturdy enough for the intended use? Is it soft enough to drape if you want it to drape or crisp enough to hold a desired shape?
- ☐ Ask for and read carefully any labels and hang tags that are attached to, printed on or come with the fabric. These are important guides in knowing how to care for your finished items. If using a washable fabric, plan to pre-shrink it along with other materials, such as buckram or linings. Do not wash a fabric if dry cleaning is recommended. Vacuum these items regularly to prevent dust from accumulating on the fabric surface. It is recommended that fabrics be thoroughly vacuumed, dry cleaned or laundered after the pollen season for health reasons, especially if someone in your household has allergies. Electronic air cleaners or regular cleaning/changing of the filter on forced-air furnaces will help to protect fabrics from dust. Dust may also be removed by tumbling fabric items, such as drapery panels, in the clothes dryer without heat.
- ☐ Consider the size of a design when selecting fabric for your project. Random patterns, small all-over prints and stripes are easier to work with than large, strongly defined repeat patterns. Figuring the extra yardage that is needed for matching a repeat can become quite involved and add to the total cost of the project. If you fall in love with a large or dominant pattern, be sure to purchase enough additional fabric to match patterns and complete the project.
- ☐ If a vertical line is important, such as for window curtains, **be sure** that any pattern is on-grain. Don't buy fabric that is printed off-grain or that has been pulled off-grain during finishing or wrapping on the bolt. Examine the fabric carefully, and ask the sales clerk for help in determining if the fabric is grain perfect.
- ☐ If you are covering furniture or pillows, will the fabric require a lining to prevent showing through? Most window coverings will be more durable and save energy if they are lined.

- ## Figuring Fabric Amounts

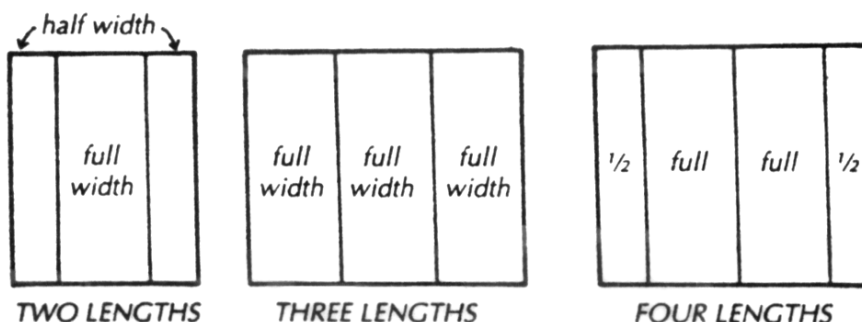
To do this, use graph paper to draw rectangles to scale to represent widths of 45", 54" and 60" (or 90" and 120" widths if you know that you will be shopping for these wider fabrics). Make a number of copies to use as "master" forms.

**16" Chair Cushion  
+ Shirred Mirror Frame**

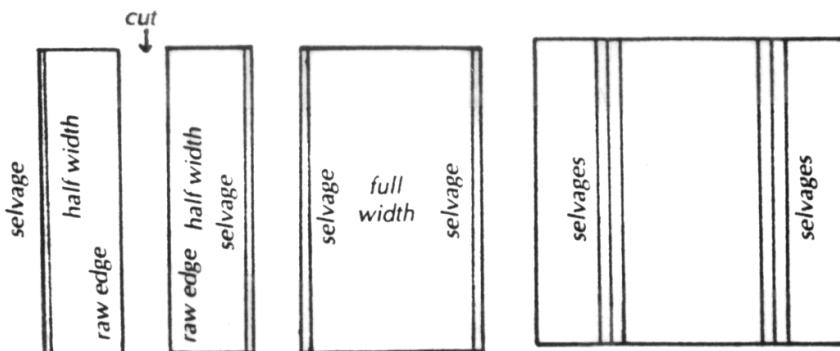


## Joining Lengths of Fabrics

When figuring the amount of yardage needed, remember that the primary rule for positioning seams is to make them as inconspicuous as possible. That usually means that seams will be placed on the side, rather than down the center of tablecloths and bedspreads.

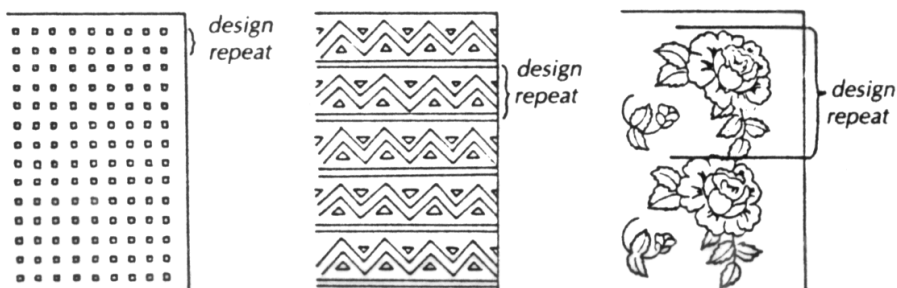


Use selvage edges when possible for sewing lengths of fabric together. Be sure to add 1/2 inch seam allowances to **each** piece for seams.



## Matching Patterns

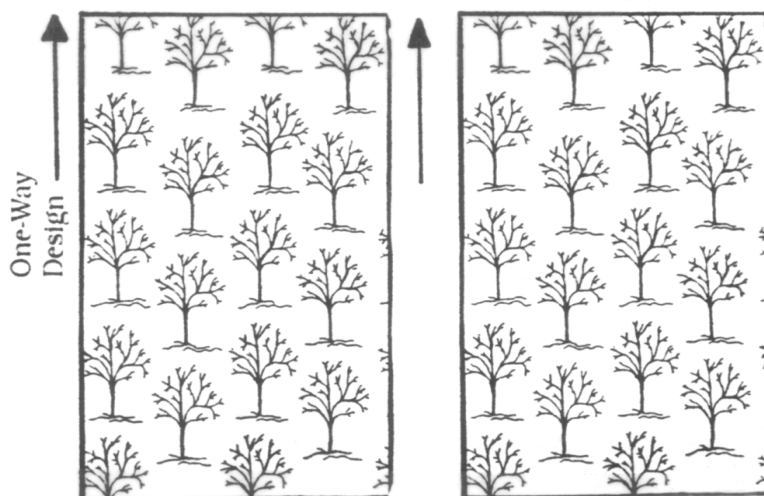
Any design repeat must be measured and figured carefully when purchasing fabrics. Small prints may not be that noticeable, but larger prints can be as much as twenty or thirty inches in length for one repeat. Measure the repeat on the fabric you are considering and add to the required yardage of each length to be pieced. (For instance, there should be a full design repeat positioned along the top of each panel on fabric-covered walls or along the top of each curtain and drapery panel.)



## One-Way Designs

If arranging pieces on a one-way design or napped fabric, such as velvet or corduroy, be sure that all pieces are placed in the correct (same) direction. Check to be sure that patterns are matched when necessary and that large motifs are centered on cushions and tablecloths.

Also, check the design repeat across the width of the fabric to be sure that you will have enough fabric to complete your project as you would like for it to be finished.



## Trims

Fringe, tassels, braid, cording, lace, ribbons and bows add distinction and character to otherwise plain items. Consider the decorating style in the room as well as the weight and recommended care of fabric when you are selecting trims. When planning the placement of trimmings, mark guidelines with either a water-soluble marking pen or a marker using ink that disappears. A glue stick will hold the trim in place while stitching. Some trims can be attached with fusible fabric or glue.

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## For More Information . . .

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revised 5/2000