



Consumer Decisions For Buying Pillows

Pillows come in all shapes and sizes to add color, texture and a finishing touch to a decorating plan. They add interest by helping to carry the eye from one point to another and tying together visually the different colors and textures used in a room.. A pillow in a bright accent color adds life to a dull room.. An unexpected or humorous design adds a touch of whimsy or surprise.

Some pillows are merely decorative while others may be primarily for comfort. Whether you're shopping for decorative pillows for the sofa, floor pillows to expand seating or bed pillows that are comfortable for sleeping, you'll want to get the best buy for your money. To do this, it's wise to have a plan and know quality as you shop.

Before You Buy...

When selecting pillows, you'll be making several decisions. These include size, shape, color, texture, quality, filling materials, type of care required and price. Many pillow styles are available in stores, but consider also the options of buying materials of your choice for custom-made or do-it-yourself projects. The choices in colors and designs are unlimited and many quick-sew and no-sew designs make do-it-yourself projects a viable option even for busy people and non-sewers.

Before going shopping, take time to plan your purchase. Your lifestyle will help to determine the type of wear your pillows must withstand. Ones that will be handled and moved around a great deal will receive more wear and soiling than those which are strictly decorative. This influences your choices for fabric (fiber, finish), comfort (texture feels good to touch), construction of item, and recommended care. Keep in mind any allergies that family members have in your fabric selection. For instance, soft, heavily textured fabrics hold more dust than smooth, firmly woven fabrics. Some fillings are made of allergy-free materials.

Avoid temptation by setting a price limit before you start shopping. Since pillows of all colors, shapes and sizes are available in a wide range of prices, take time to look through catalogs and magazines and to browse in several stores to study the displays and room settings.

Notice ideas for decorating, the various styles of pillows and how

they are displayed in the room settings. Analyze trends and compare prices and workmanship. Look at higher priced and custom-made pillows for fashion ideas and trends and use this information as a guideline for selecting pillows in a price range that fits your budget.

Keep in mind that pillows usually follow the latest home furnishing fashion trends. They offer an inexpensive way of updating a room or adding a bright dash of the latest color to your decorating plan. Be creative in your thinking. If you find an expensive fabric that you love, use a small amount of it in a pillow! If you have a favorite color that's unusual and hesitate to use it in an expensive, long-lasting item such as carpet or upholstered furniture, use it in a pillow instead!

As you look for ideas, narrow down the choices for the kinds of decorative pillows you will consider. Think about color and ask yourself such questions as:

-Selecting Pillows-

Consider wearability factors-

- ✓ *Lifestyle*
- ✓ *Fabric/filling*
- ✓ *Comfort/allergies*
- ✓ *Care*
- ✓ *Price*
- ✓ *Special needs*

Consider design factors-

- ✓ *Color*
- ✓ *Texture/ surface interest*
- ✓ *Size*
- ✓ *Shape*
- ✓ *Pattern*

...What colors, shapes, sizes and styles might be appealing in the room where they will be used?

...What colors are already used in the room? Could one or two of these colors be repeated in pillows to help 'tie' the room together?

...Are the colors well-balanced? Is there too much of one color in the room? Is another accent color or two needed to bring in some contrast?

Consider texture and surface appeal, too. Does the room have too much of one type of texture? If most of the textures in the room are smooth, introduce fabrics in a medium texture for contrast. Pattern, whether in fabric, needlework or applique, also adds surface interest in a room with mostly plain fabrics.

Look at the over-all appeal of the room. Does it seem too subdued and dull? If so, add sparkle by repeating some colors in a brighter intensity. These small areas of bright color bring life to boring rooms.

Are you tired of the same look that seems a bit dated? New decorative pillows can change the image at moderate cost.

When shopping for more functional types of cushions and pillows, consider both the use and the user. For instance, prime considerations for selecting bed pillows include size, degree of firmness or softness desired, type of support needed and allergy-free materials.

Shopping Options...

Many choices are available when shopping for home furnishings accessories. Some larger communities have more alternatives than others. Mail

order and electronic shopping opportunities are popular with many at-home consumers who have busy schedules. Some of the shopping options include:

Department Stores... Larger stores feature attractive displays of the latest trends, decorating assistance and convenient store credit. Pillows may be located in furniture departments, in home accessories or near linens.

Furniture Stores... Some furniture stores sell pillows that are on display in room settings and may have an area set aside primarily for decorative pillows.

Discount and Mass Merchandisers... It's possible to save money but be sure to examine each piece carefully for quality. Make sure you can live with any defects.

Catalogs and Mail Order... Advantages include a wide variety of brands and products that can be considered at your convenience. A major disadvantage is the fact that you can't actually see the product until it is delivered. Also check on the length of time before delivery could be expected.

Electronic Sources... Many manufacturers have web pages and e-mail addresses. Television home shows, the home and garden television channel and general home shopping channels give decorating advice along with product showings and are gaining in popularity.

Interior Design and Custom Design Services... They are usually small, exclusive and run by designers who are knowledgeable about quality decorating considerations. Customers will pay more for their expertise and full one-stop service.

Speciality Furnishings Shops... These shops have a limited selection that often include more unusual items. Items may be more expensive.

Custom Sewers... Seamstresses who sew home furnishings items will make custom design pillows in the fabric and style of your choice. An unlimited variety of options are available. Price is determined by the style, fabric and filling you select. Be sure to get a price estimate first.

Arts and Crafts Shops and Fairs... Woven and special design one-of-a-kind pillows may be available at some local arts and crafts events. Artist's in your local area or region will have hand-crafted the items. Speciality pillows include needlework, patchwork, quilted, loom or hand woven, designs featuring old lace and other materials.

As You Shop...

Read tags and labels as you shop. Check quality guidelines to see how well each piece is made. Compare prices from at least three different stores. Find out what's included with any warranty. Be sure to check fiber content of covering and filling. Also, be sure to check and understand care instructions.

Bring paint chips, wallpaper samples and swatches of fabrics with you to help in selecting colors and patterns. Check colors in both natural daylight and artificial lighting before buying.

When You Buy...

Make a note of the brand, fabric, filling and recommended care of furnishings that you buy. This information can be kept in a home furnishings file folder for future

reference on additional purchases, recommended care or defects. If the item must be returned for any reason, do so as soon as possible.

When purchasing from a mail order business or manufacturers web page, be sure that all information requested is on the order form. Check to see how the order will be shipped and return policies—just in case the item needs to be returned.

Do-It-Yourself versus Ready-Made...

Numerous choices for ready-made pillows are available in stores and through catalogs. Pattern books also offer many ideas for making pillows in both standard and unusual shapes and sizes. Many pillows can be made without patterns by cutting fabric to fit pillow foams of your choosing.

Alphabet letters, numbers and animals make interesting designs for either the pillow shape or applique designs on pillow tops.

Quick-sew and no-sew pillows are good options for busy people and non-sewers who cannot find just what they want in the stores. As you decide whether to make or purchase ready-made pillows, consider your own time, skills, supplies needed and costs. It may save you time if you can find just what you want ready-made in a price that you are willing to pay. However, if you cannot find the design you want in a color and pattern that you need, having it custom made or making it yourself may be just the answer to your problem!

Fabric stores often have recommendations for custom sewers but be sure to look over the

quality of their work first to get an idea of prices as well as quality of workmanship. Be sure to get a commitment from them on how soon your items would be completed.

Care...

Cleaning instructions for individual pillows vary greatly, so a word to the wise: read and heed recommended care instructions on labels and hang tags! If a tag says that a pillow should be spot cleaned only, this is not a good choice for a pillow that will be handled a great deal or for a family with small children and pets. Some commonly found instructions include:

- Spot clean only...do not launder or dry clean
- Spot clean or dry clean
- Dry clean only
- Machine washable warm, tumble dry low.

Quality checkpoints in construction and design...

- ✓ Shape is true (round is rounded smoothly, etc.).
- ✓ Square corners are actually “square”.
- ✓ Straight stitching and edges.
- ✓ No loose threads.
- ✓ Thread color matches fabric.
- ✓ Cording applied smoothly and neatly with no “ruffles” or bumps..
- ✓ Ends of cording have been turned under and tapered for a firm closing.
- ✓ If possible, check inside seam width (not so narrow they will pull out).
- ✓ Has amount of “filling” desired (firm for support or soft for plump).
- ✓ Removable cover for cleaning or washable filling.
- ✓ Inner cover over filling or form.
- ✓ Applied designs are neat and stripes or patterns match at seams. Needlework, patchwork, quilting, applique threads tied on underside.
- ✓ Any needlework or quilted tops have been properly blocked and shaped.
- ✓ Care instructions are included and understood.

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