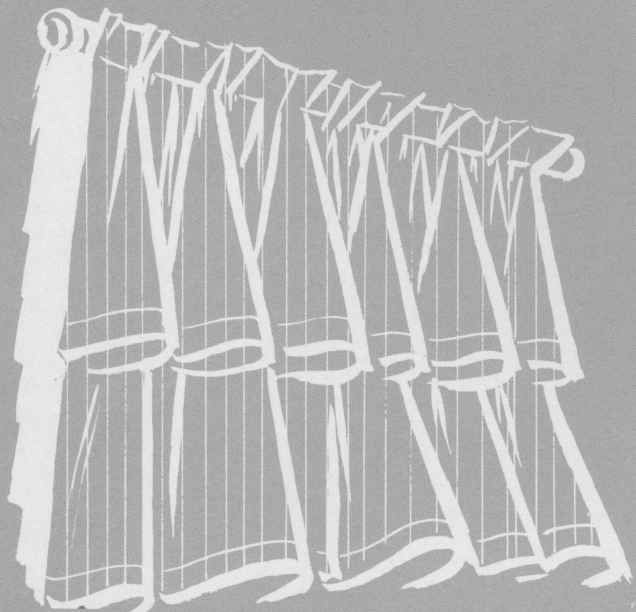


**CHOOSING
CURTAINS
AND
DRAPERIES**



CHOOSING CURTAINS AND DRAPERIES

Curtains and draperies are important parts of the design of a room. When they harmonize with other furnishings, and with the room as a whole, they add much to its attractiveness and comfort. They can regulate the amount of sunlight in a room, provide privacy from the outside, screen out an undesirable view, frame an interesting view, soften lines of windows, and change apparent size and shape of windows. They may also conceal undesirable architectural features of a room. Heavy, deeply folded fabrics are also good acoustical materials.

In addition to curtains and draperies, shades, blinds, shutters, valances, or cornices may be used around or over windows. One, or a combination of these furnishings, is called "the window treatment." Besides the window treatment inside the house you should consider awnings, shutters, screens, storm windows, and weather stripping on the outside. They are part of the total cost of windows, and their use may add much to the comfort of a room.

In this discussion reference will be to the following:

Curtains are made of either translucent or opaque, sheer, or lightweight fabric. These may be straight hanging panels, tie backs, one tier, or cafe styles. They hang next to the glass and may or may not be mounted on traverse rods.

Draperies are usually made of a heavier fabric, sometimes lined. They may hang at the sides of windows or be mounted on traverse rods.

Valance is a short length of fabric hung across the top of a window. It may be used over full-length curtains or draperies or with the lower part of a tier curtain.

Cornice is a strip of lightweight board covered with fabric, paper, or paint and attached to the wall or wood trim at the top of the window.

STYLE OF WINDOW TREATMENT

When you plan a window treatment take into account:

1. Kind of window—double hung, casement, sliding, awning, combination, picture, single, group, bay, corner, dormer, ranch, narrow vertical, small, high, low.
2. Kind of hardware that can or will need to be used.
3. The room, its use, and other furnishings.
4. General effect to be achieved inside and outside.
5. Style trends.
6. The view, exposure, amount of sunlight.

7. Amount of money to be spent.
8. Kind of fabrics and finishes available.
9. Amount of time and kind of care needed and available.

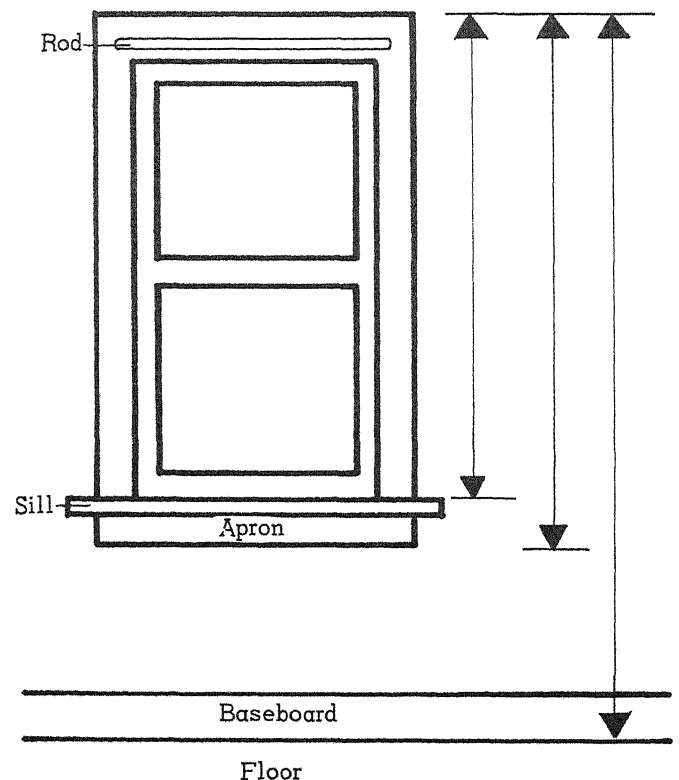
Windows are usually considered as part of the room background. In rooms where a certain window or group of windows might be featured as a center of interest, plan the window treatment as a decorative highlight. Curtains, draperies, valances and cornice boards should follow the lines of the room and windows. In some rooms gentle curves, scallops, and swags are suitable. Cafe or tier curtains are most appropriate in simple informal rooms. In rooms of contemporary design, where the architectural features are of special interest, straight hanging curtains or draperies are a good choice.

How Wide Should They Be?

Plan your curtains and draperies to hang in soft deep folds. Skimpy widths detract from the appearance of the whole room. It is better to hang an inexpensive fabric in generous folds than to use a more expensive fabric in skimpy widths. A good average is to allow at least 100 per cent fullness for the space to be curtained. If very sheer fabric is used to cover a window, or if draperies are pulled at night, 150 per cent fullness may be more desirable.

How Long Should They Be?

Curtains and draperies should follow the structural lines of the window. The lower edge of the hem may come to the window sill, the bottom of the apron, or to within one inch of the floor. (See drawing.) Curtains and draperies used together may be the same length, or the draperies may be longer, providing both end at one the structural lines shown in the drawing.



Tie-back curtains should be tied back to give a soft curve and a pleasing balance between the upper and lower parts of the curtain.

If a window is very narrow or the wood trim is unattractive, you may extend curtains and draperies above and beyond the outer edge of the wood trim. In some cases you may find it necessary to attach wooden blocks at the outer edge of the trim to support rod brackets. Make rods strong enough to hold curtains and draperies without sagging. If part of the rod is exposed, you may paint it the color of the wood trim.

When Should a Valance or Cornice Board Be Used?

You may use a valance or cornice board to change the apparent height of a window or to unify a group of windows. Make the valance of the same fabric as the curtain or drapery. You may cover a cornice board to match the drapery or the wall. To reduce the apparent height of a window, a cornice which matches the wall may be effective. To make a window appear higher, hang a cornice board which matches the drapery as far above the drapery as possible and still conceal the rod and heading.

Make valances and cornice boards about one-sixth of the total length of the drapery. Try several sample lengths at the window to find the best one.

What Color Will You Choose?

Choose curtains and draperies which harmonize in color with other furnishings in the room. The fabric may repeat one or more of the main colors in the room scheme. Small rooms seem more spacious if walls and window treatment are the same color or if one is slightly darker or lighter than the other. Wall and window treatment in sharply contrasting colors calls attention to windows and tends to make small rooms seem smaller and to emphasize windows of unattractive proportions and placement. Such color contrast is often pleasing in larger rooms with regularly spaced windows of similar size. With patterned paper, plain curtains or draperies of the background color of the paper are a good choice. When you shop, carry small swatches of other furnishings in the room as guides for color and texture choices.

What Texture Will You Choose?

Choose curtains and draperies which harmonize in texture with other furnishings in the room. Rough-textured fabrics, such as coarse net and lace, crash, bark and pebble-cloth, hand-blocked linen, monk's cloth, and novelty weaves are suitable with rough-textured furnishings. Bamboo or match stick curtains and shades are suitable with rough-textured furnishings. Smooth-surfaced fabrics, such as fine net and lace, marquisette, ninon, taffeta, glazed chintz, antique satin, and faille, are good choices for smooth fine-textured furnishings.

Should Fabrics Be Plain or Patterned?

An easy guide to follow is this: either the walls or the window treatment should be plain; both may be plain, but both should not be patterned. Because curtains and draperies are seen against a wall, it is restful and less confusing to have one or the other plain. An exception

is the use of wallpaper and fabrics in identical or coordinated color and pattern. If the floor covering and wall are plain, patterned window treatments will add interest; plain curtains and draperies are desirable in rooms with much pattern in other furnishings.

Choose a pattern that is pleasing with the colors in other furnishings. Strongly contrasting colors are sometimes so conspicuous that they overpower other furnishings in the room. The pattern should not appear spotty when hung in folds against the light. When you shop, hold the drapery or fabric in folds and view it at a distance to get the general effect.

How to Curtain Groups of Windows

If windows are very close together, you may treat them as one window with one curtain or drapery at each side and one between adjoining windows. If you use a valance or cornice board, let it extend over the group. If windows are more than a foot apart, put a pair of curtains or draperies at each window.

How to Curtain Casement or Awning Windows

If casement windows swing inward, attach rods to the top and bottom of the casement so that curtains can swing with the window. Traverse rods may be attached to the frame and may swing with the window. If casement windows swing outward, you may fasten the rod to the frame of the window above the casement.

How to Curtain French Doors

French doors are best treated by gathering a thin material on rods that are attached to the top and bottom of the window frame. If protection is needed from drafts of cold air, you may hang draw draperies of heavy fabric from a rod attached to the door frame. Swinging door traverse rods may be attached to the door and swing with it.

In general, the more simply these windows are treated, the less conspicuous they will be. Straight-hanging curtains of plain fabric that match or blend closely with the wall color are often satisfactory, even though they are not like the other curtains and draperies in the room. Hang these so the window frame is covered.

WHAT FABRIC WILL YOU CHOOSE?

There are many types of fabric for curtains and draperies on the market. Some are made from one fiber and some from a combination or blend of fibers. Some of these are natural and some are man-made. Characteristics of these fibers, the way the fabric is made, and any finish that is applied to it help direct the choice and use of the fabric.

For most purposes look for a fabric that:

1. Has good draping quality.
2. Has a wide range of colorfast colors and patterns.
3. Keeps it crispness.
4. Will not shrink, stretch, or sag.
5. Is wrinkle resistant.
6. Is resistant to the weakening effects of light, sun, heat, moisture, and impurities in the air.
7. Is resistant to moths and mildew.

8. Is easily and satisfactorily cleaned by washing or drycleaning.

Fiber content determines to a great extent the satisfaction on many of these points. To make a wise selection, try to find out both the desirable and less desirable properties of the various fibers used. Not all fibers possess the same properties in maximum amounts.

Most Commonly Used Fibers

Natural Fibers—

1. *Cotton* drapes well, is usually strong when either wet or dry, stands high washing and ironing temperatures, is available in wide range of colors, is usually fast to light, and takes finishes readily in washing.
2. *Linen* is durable, is pliable, drapes well, stands high washing and ironing temperatures, usually holds colors fast to light and washing, is crisp, and creases badly unless specially treated.

Man-Made Fibers—(Generic names are in italics and brand names are in bold type.)

1. *Acetate* is soft, lustrous and drapes well. It has good dimensional stability and wrinkle resistance. Dry cleaning is primarily recommended but some constructions and finishes may be hand washed. It is sensitive to heat so use only warm water and a warm iron. Colorfastness and dyeability is average or fair unless the fiber is solution dyed. **Celaperm** and **Chromspun** are two brand names of solution-dyed Acetate. These have better color fastness to sun and washing.
2. *Rayon* is soft, handles and drapes well and is relatively inexpensive. It can be washed or dry-cleaned, depending on the construction and the finish. It has fair durability, wrinkle resistance and dimensional stability. It takes dye well, and the fibers have excellent resistance to sun and washing when solution dyed. This is a versatile fiber which can be made to look like other fibers. It combines well with other fibers and can be given many finishes. **Fortisan** is a strong, shrink and stretch resistant rayon yarn. It has excellent resistance to sunlight. It is often blended with other rayon fibers which may not be as resistant to sunlight. **Avril** and **Zantrel** are two modified rayons which resemble cotton in strength, dye absorption and launderability. These fibers can be mercerized and sanforized. They are durable, retain their shape, are crisp and firm, drape well, and have a subdued luster.
3. *Nylon* is strong, durable, and resists wrinkles and abrasion. Its dimensional stability is good when it is properly heat set. It washes easily and requires little ironing. It may be dry-cleaned. Prolonged exposure to sunlight will cause the fiber to lose strength or deteriorate slightly. The bright yarns have greater resistance to sunlight than the dull or semi-dull ones. **Antron** is a second-generation nylon fiber that has added resistance to sunlight deterioration as well as less static electricity.
4. *Polyester fibers* include **Dacron**, **Fortrel**, **Kodel**, and **Vycron**. This fiber is durable and soft, drapes well, resists wrinkles, takes dye well and does not discolor. It has excellent resistance to sunlight behind glass. Dimensional stability is excellent resistance to

sunlight behind glass. Dimensional stability is excellent when the fiber is heat set. It is easy to care for, either machine or hand washable depending on the construction. Little ironing is required.

5. *Acrylic fibers* include **Acrilan**, **Creslan**, **Orlon**, and **Zefran**. This fiber is durable and soft, drapes well, and has good dimensional stability. It creates a wool-like effect in casement homespun-type drapery fabrics. It takes dye well and retains its color. **Acrilan** is solution dyed. This increases its color fastness, but the fiber tends to darken after long exposure to sunlight. Dry-cleaning is recommended. Some may be hand washable. Ironing must be done at low heat. The fibers soften at 300°-325°F.
6. *Modacrylics*—**Dynel** and **Verel**. This fiber is similar to the acrylic. It is durable, soft, and drapes well. It also has a permanent built-in flame resistance. It resists breaking or cracking. Color retention is good and the fiber remains white after long exposure to sunlight. This fiber has good spot, stain, and wrinkle resistance.
7. *Glass Fibers*—**Fiberglas** and **fiber glass**. This fiber is resistant to moths, mildew, heat, sun, and wrinkling. It is durable, drapes well, does not stretch nor shrink, and is fireproof. It is hand washable, drips dry, and is never ironed. It is durable but has low resistance to abrasion. Many glass fiber fabrics have a guarantee against fading.

Glass fibers have been developed in different weights offer additional performance characteristics.

DE 75—Twice the weight and bulk of conventional yarns. Makes heavier, richer texture in nobby weaves, better hand and eye appeal.

DE 300—A finer and more supple yarn offers a softer hand and better drapability.

Beta—A yarn half the diameter of any glass fiber is more flexible. It is softer, drapes better, is non-irritating, and is more resistant to abrasion. Available since 1963 in both sheer and opaque fabrics.

8. *Saran*—**Rovanna** and **Saranspun**. This fiber is durable and unaffected by sunlight. It is non-flammable and will not support combustion. It is resistant to wrinkles and abrasion, drapes well, and dyes easily. It is solution dyed. It can be machine washed in water under 140°F. or dry-cleaned.

How the fabric is made affects the wearability, maintenance, and appearance of curtains and draperies. In properly woven fabrics, lengthwise and crosswise yarns do not slip against each other. Slippage results in pulled threads and breaks in the fabric. Knots and other such imperfections are emphasized when light shines through the fabric. Firm weaves that drape well and won't ravel or fray are desirable. Loose weaves, especially if diagonal or those made with different fibers, are more likely to pull out of shape or shrink. Fabrics with ribbed or corded weaves may show the wear more quickly than plain flat weaves.

Knitted fabrics for casement curtains were introduced to the market in 1969. These fabrics can be made in widths up to 120 inches without seams. Knitted fabrics are more apt to stretch, however, than is a plain-weave fabric.

Special Finishes—There are many kinds of finish applied to curtain and drapery fabrics to increase the desirability of the fiber used. Some are guaranteed to be permanent for the life of the fabric. Some lose their effectiveness with repeated launderings and exposure

to sunlight, and others react with chlorine in the bleach or water and turn yellow.

These finishes may: (a) add crispness and body or help retain these natural characteristics; (b) reduce shrinkage; (c) prevent yarn slippage; (d) resist wrinkles; (e) be spot and stain resistant; (f) resist months, mildew, moisture, and flames; (g) add a glaze; (h) add a reflective coating (used especially in lining materials); (i) resist fume fading; (j) permanent press.

What Does the Label Tell You?

Informative labels are helpful shopping guides. Good labels give information about fiber content, shrinkage, colorfastness, special finishes, and recommended cleaning methods. Some labels give the amount of residual shrinkage in a fabric. This term refers to the amount of shrinkage remaining in the fabric after it has been preshrunk in the manufacturing process.

Shrinkage is an important problem in cleaning and varies from one fabric to another. Fabric guaranteed to have not more than 1½ percent residual shrinkage will shrink about ½ inch per yard lengthwise. Tests show that it is advisable to allow as much as 2½ inches per yard when using a high count, thin cotton fabric that is not preshrunk. Shrinkage in length causes the most trouble, but cotton marquisette may shrink more in width than in length. Shrinkage in width may cause curtains to hang unevenly. Marquisette with special finishes usually shrinks less than that with ordinary finishes.

Rayon and acetate, especially in thin fine fabrics, are subject to considerable shrinkage. However, certain permanent finishes help reduce the amount of shrinkage. Tests show that it is advisable to allow as much as 6½ inches per yard on untreated, finely woven rayon curtains.

A fabric labeled "not to exceed two percent residual shrinkage" should not shrink more than ¾ of an inch per yard. For example, a 2½ yard drapery with 2 percent residual shrinkage may shrink as much as 2 inches. When buying ready-made draperies or fabric by the yard, make generous allowances for shrinkage if you plan to wash the draperies.

Fabrics in which crosswise yarns are heavier and of a different fiber than lengthwise yarns (rib weaves such as faille) often present special shrinkage problems. Unless the label states otherwise, such fabrics should be dry-cleaned. Because of the difference in yarn size and fiber, one set of yarns may shrink more than the other when the fabric is washed and, sometimes, when dry-cleaned. Do not allow draperies of this type of fabric to become so heavily soiled that wet cleaning is necessary. In this type of fabric, the fibers deteriorating more rapidly than the other from exposure to sunlight.

Yellowing is a problem with some white cotton and cotton-rayon draperies. Both solid white fabrics and those with white backgrounds may become yellow in use; this condition often is more noticeable after dry-cleaning. Those parts of the drapery exposed to sunlight are particularly subject to yellowing. White cotton fabrics are most successfully cleaned by washing. However, because of drapery size, linings, and possible shrinkage, you may decide to have them dry-cleaned. It is difficult to remove imbedded soil from white cotton fabrics by dry-cleaning. Therefore, if you plan to have your draperies dry-cleaned, don't let them become too soiled.

Labels on curtains or drapery ready-mades or fabric by the yard which have come on the market since March, 1960 should show: (1) the generic names and percentages of fibers in order of importance if 5 percent or more is present (when less than 5 percent the label should state "other fiber" or "other fibers"), (2) the manufacturer or other person marketing or handling the product, and (3) the name of the country where manufactured or processed, if the product is imported. This labeling law makes it important to know the characteristics of fibers. This is a basis for performance.

Should Draperies Be Lined?

Linings make draperies hang better, protect them from sunlight and dust, and enhance the color and pattern of fabrics. Patterned or colored draperies which are lined make an orderly appearance from the outside of the house. Linings make draperies harder to launder and more expensive to have dry cleaned; they also add to the initial cost. Some heavy fabrics hang well without linings.

Linings may be made or purchased separately and either used on separate rods or attached to the drapery with pins or hooks.

Firmly woven sateen in cream, beige, or white is a good lining fabric. A plain weave white cotton in various weights and with a variety of finishes is also used for linings. Lining materials specially treated with aluminum crystals (Milium) or vinyl spray or foam might be used to provide some insulation against either heat or cold or to provide complete black out.

Some manufacturers use a "spray-on" lining on the back of the drapery material. This has some thermal qualities, is washable, adds hand to the fabric and gives a fairly uniform appearance to the outside. Some of these are dry-cleanable. Be sure to check label—for "care" instructions.

TO BUY, MAKE, OR HAVE MADE

This depends on the amount of time, money, skill, and patience you have; how long you plan to use the curtains and draperies; standardization of size and type of windows; decorating plan; your standards of appearance, construction, and performance.

RODS, HOOK, AND PINS

The hardware used can make your window treatment satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Rods, pins, and hooks are available for any size, shape, style of opening, for any weight and variety of fabric and for any kind of treatment. The important thing is to know what you want your window or door treatment to do, and how you want to move it (by hands or with traverse rods). Then invest in good hardware. High quality rods will outlast more than one pair of curtains and give continuous satisfaction. Use the right kind of bolts or screws for installation. Problems may be eliminated by having the rods installed by those who sell the rods and/or draperies. Plaster plugs and screws are most secure in plaster or dry wall. Molly bolts or toggle bolts also provide good firm mountings for heavy draperies.

Rods, traverse, or stationary may:

1. Be single
2. Be double

3. Extend—out from wall or beyond window casing
4. Fit curves
5. Fit corners or angles
6. Swing
7. Be plain
8. Be decorative
9. Have a variety of finishes
10. Be round
11. Be flat
12. Be heavy
13. Be light
14. Be combined (one stationary and one traverse)
15. Be mounted inside or outside casing (Use special brackets or spring rods)
16. Be mounted on ceiling
17. Be standard or custom cut-to-fit
18. Be electrically operated

Pins or hooks may be snapped on, sewed on, or slipped into place. The size, kind, and location can regulate the appearance of the curtain or drapery. The kind needed depends on the width and kind of heading, the weight of the fabric, and the kind of rod and window treatment. Checking of the market is the best way to know what is available because new rods, accessories and ideas are appearing all the time.

TIPS FOR LONGER WEAR

1. Rotate curtains and draperies from one window to another to distribute evenly their exposure to sunlight.
2. If design of fabric permits, reverse curtain from top to bottom.
3. Don't let curtains or draperies blow against windows screens which may snag and discolor the fabric.
4. Don't let fabrics become wet with rain.
5. Air and brush draperies frequently to remove surface dust before it becomes imbedded in the fabric.
6. Clean curtains and draperies as soon as they become soiled. The longer soil remains in the fabrics, the more difficult it is to remove.
7. Read the label, and follow the manufacturer's directions for use and care.
8. Simplicity is the best guide. It is better to "underdo" than to "overdo."
9. Use sturdy inconspicuous rods and fixtures.

This bulletin was originally prepared by Doris Snook, former Home Furnishings Specialist, and revised by Dorothy S. Teater, Extension Specialist, Housing and Furnishings.