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Shopping Notes Curtains and Drapes

Michigan State University

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Home and Family Series

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# SHOPPING NOTES

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Curtains

and Draperies



## How to Decide What to Buy

Now that you have decided you want some new curtains or draperies for your home, you probably are wondering what fabric to choose, and how you can be sure about measurements or amount of yardage to buy.

The fiber families listed in the chart, "Clues to Window Fabric," are those which are commonly used for curtains and draperies. Each fiber family carries certain characteristics. In blends, these characteristics are carried over in proportion to the fibers present. This means you will want to look at the label to know what fibers are involved. In this way you can tell more about the wearing quality of the fabric.

You may be more familiar with trademark names such as Dacron, Fortisan, Chromspun than you are with the *generic* or family name, but these trademark names are definitely linked to the fiber families. See "Trade Names Are Clues."

## Take Exact Measurements

Measure each window. No two windows are exactly alike. For length, measure from the top of the rod to the floor, or to the bottom of the apron, or to the sill of the apron, depending on the length you prefer in your room. For width, plan for fabric width twice as wide as the window or the window and wall space to be covered. Draw draperies should be 2 1/2 times the window or window and wall area.

Some window measurements do not coincide with ready-made curtain or drapery measurements. For example, your window measurement may be 42

*Prepared by June Brown, extension specialist in applied arts, Iowa State University.  
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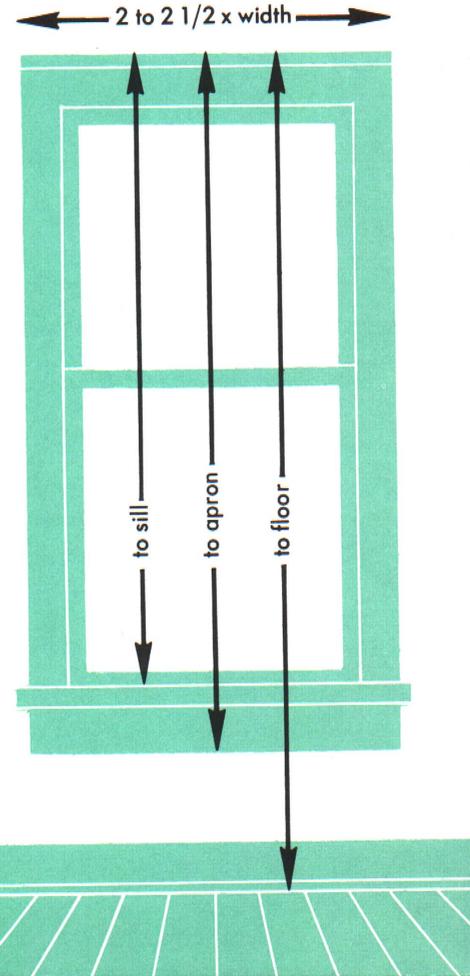
inches, but ready-made curtain may measure only 36 or 45 inches. Never buy skimpy draperies or curtains; it is better to have them fuller than needed. Check hem width at top and bottom to see if an adjustment is possible. You will not have this problem if you decide to make your own curtains or draperies.

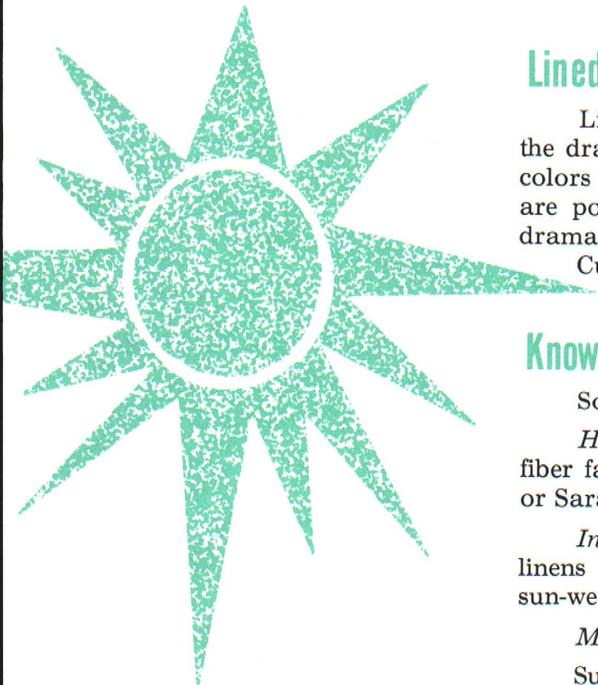
## Figure Yardage Needed

You know the length measurement from top of rod to floor, or bottom of apron or top of window sill. Now allow  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches for bottom hem. Allow  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches for top hem if you are not using a commercial heading. Your allowance in this case is usually the width of the seam. Follow directions given if you use a commercial heading. Allow  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches for side hems.

If you choose a fabric with a design, check carefully to see that design is on grainline. You need to allow extra yardage to match design. You do this by measuring the distance from the top of one design down to the top of the next identical design. This is called design repeat. This measurement should go evenly into the required length of the drapery. Example: If the design repeat occurs every 8 inches and the total amount of material needed for drapery is 101 inches (including hems), add 3 inches to 101 to make 104 inches. Dividing 104 inches by 8 inches gives 13. Thus you will have 13 pattern repeats for each drapery panel. If you left your material at 101 inches, the repeat would not have occurred in the same place and your finished draperies would not be matched.

If you plan to line the fabric, plan for lining material that is 1 inch narrower and 1 inch longer than your finished drapery.





## Lined or Unlined

Lined draperies often hang better and in softer folds. The lining protects the drapery fabric from sun and soil. However, new finishes and new locked-in colors help fabric shed dust and dirt and resist sun-fading. Unlined draperies are popular now. If fabric is textured or semi-sheer, light coming through it dramatizes the texture.

Curtains used at Thermopane windows must be lined.

## Know Sun Exposure at Window

Some fibers can take stronger sunlight than others. Here is a guide:

*Heavy:* Direct, strong sunlight 4 or more hours a day. Consider glass fiber fabrics, Dacron or Fortrel (both polyester), Verel (modacrylic), Rovanna or Saranspun (both Saran).

*Indirect or reflected sunlight:* Same fabrics as above plus rayons, acetates, linens or cottons woven into thicker yarn fabric. Sheers in these fabrics will sun-wear faster.

*Minimum sunlight:* Any type of fiber.

Sun-fast guarantees are hard to judge. Window fabrics made of fibers called "solution-dyed" tend to hold color better. Solution-dyed rayons include Coloray, Colorspun and Jetspun. Solution-dyed acetates include Chromspun, Color-sealed, Celaperm and Colorspun. Kodel (polyester) is now solution dyed.

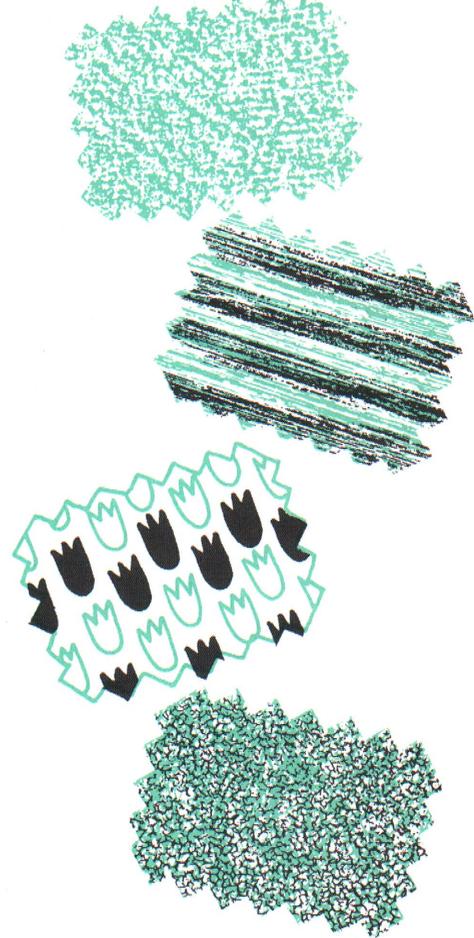
All yarns used in drapery construction with the exception of glass fibers are susceptible to degradation by light over a period of time. In all cases the delustered form of the yarn breaks down much more readily in its resistance to light than the lustrous form.

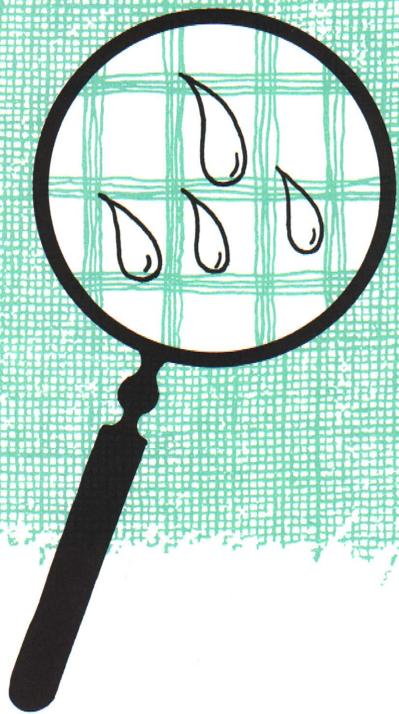
## Plain or Patterned

Plain, textured fabrics are excellent if other furnishings in the room have considerable pattern. Patterned fabric is fine if most of the other furnishings in the room are plain in design. Keep patterned fabric in scale to size of window, size of room and scale of furnishings. If fabric has a pattern, make sure pattern is printed straight with the "grainline" of the material. Grainline must hang straight if drapery is to hang straight. A pattern printed "off grain" will not look right.

## Compare Fabric Qualities

The chart, "Clues to Window Fabrics," will tell you about wear and care qualities. Be sure to read the label telling you what fibers the fabric contains. This label, according to federal law, must be present on the yardage or the ready-made curtain or drapery. For example: Fortisan rayon, Celaperm acetate. If the fabric is a blend, the qualities present will be in proportion to the fibers present.





## Won't Hike, Sag, Shift

Check fabric label to see if material is guaranteed 100 percent dimensionally stable. Sagging happens when crosswise or filling threads of fabric are too thick in relation to fine lengthwise or warp threads. Hiking happens when these crosswise threads take up moisture, swell and pull up or warp. Result: uneven sagging.

Shifting happens when crosswise yarns are not locked tightly to lengthwise threads. This happens with slick fibers such as linen, glass fiber fabrics and the sarans. It happens with open weaves. Quick test: Gently separate weave with thumb and forefinger to see if yarns hold their precise position.

## Won't Wilt

Choose fabric made of fibers with low absorbency, crisp fibers such as tightly spun linen. Fabrics with thick, loose, open weave, or fine fabrics like batistes, gather in moisture and take on a limp look from humidity.

## Trade Names Are Clues\*

Here are some of the frequently seen trademark names associated with each fiber family. No attempt has been made to list all trade names. The name of the fiber family as well as the trademark name *must* appear on the label attached to yard goods or ready-made curtains and draperies.

### ACETATE FIBER FAMILY

Avisco  
Acele  
Celaire  
Celanese  
Estron  
Loftura

### SOLUTION-DYED ACETATE (Holds color)

Avicolor  
Color-Sealed  
Celaperm  
Colorspun  
Chromspun



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\* The trade names listed in this publication are used only for the purpose of information, and are supplied with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no special endorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service is implied. There are many trademark names within each fiber family.

*Jetspun*

KODEL

FIBERGLAS

*arnel*

TRIACETATE FIBER FAMILY

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Arnel

ACRYLIC FIBER FAMILY

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Orlon  
Creslan  
Acrilan  
Zefran

MODACRYLIC FIBER FAMILY

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Dynel  
Verel

GLASS FIBER FAMILY

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Fiberglas  
Pittsburgh, PPG

NYLON FIBER FAMILY

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Antron  
Enka  
Chemstrand  
Caprolan

POLYESTER FIBER FAMILY

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Dacron                      Kodel  
Fortrel                      Vycron  
  
Tergal (foreign produced)  
Tetoron (foreign produced)

## RAYON FIBER FAMILY

SOLUTION-DYED RAYON  
(Holds color)

MODIFIED RAYON  
(Washable; often blended  
with cotton or polyesters)

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## SARAN FIBER FAMILY

SOLUTION-DYED SARAN

Avisco  
Avron  
Bemberg  
Cuprel  
Enka  
Fibro  
Fortisan  
Nub-Lite

Coloray  
Cupracolor  
Jetspun  
Dy-Lok  
Avicolor

Avril  
Lirelle  
Zantrel

Rovana  
Velon

Saranspun

**Dynel**

*avril*

*saranspun*

**FORTREL**

# Clues to Window Fabrics

100% COTTON

100% ACETATE AND  
SOLUTION-DYED ACETATE

100% ACRYLIC  
AND MODACRYLIC

**BASIC CONSTITUENT**

Natural fiber

Cotton linters or wood pulp treated to form cellulose acetate.

Ammonia, gas, salt water and air

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Drapes well

Soft, lustrous. Drapes well.

Soft hand. Drapes well

**CARE AND CLEANING SPECIFICATIONS**

Machine and hand washable. Needs ironing unless treated for drip-dry, no-iron finish

Dry clean primarily. Can be hand washed in some constructions. No-iron finishes can be applied

Hand washable. Dry clean primarily. Resists spotting. Holds crease when wet. Dries rapidly. Iron low temperature

**ABRASION RESISTANCE**

Good

Fair

Good

**DYEABILITY**

Good

Fair for acetates. Good to excellent for solution-dyed acetates

Fair

**CREASE RETENTION**

Poor

Fair to excellent

Good

**WRINKLE RESISTANCE**

Poor

Good (Fair to excellent)

Good

**DURABILITY**

Good

Fair

Excellent

**RESISTANCE TO HEAT**

Excellent

Fair. Tends to lose strength at high heats. Melts at 450° F.

Susceptible. Iron only at low heat. Softens at 300°-325° F.

**RESISTANCE TO FIRE**

Poor

Fair

Does not support combustion

**EFFECT OF SUNLIGHT**

Fair

Excellent color-fastness in solution dyes. Average for regular acetates

Darkens after long exposure

**DIMENSIONAL STABILITY**

Good if processed

Good

Very good

adapted from chart in *Home Furnishings Daily*

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100% GLASS FIBERS	100% NYLON	100% POLYESTER	100% RAYON AND SOLUTION-DYED RAYON	SARAN
Sand, lime, borax and clay	Derived from coal, air, water and petroleum	Petroleum, natural gas, air, water	Wood pulp or cotton linters reduced to liquid form	Salt and petroleum
Drapes well. Is translucent	Soft hand	Drapes well	Drapes well	Drapes well
Washable. Drip dry, no-iron. Dries rapidly	Washable, dry cleans	Washable. Holds crease when wet. Spots wash off in water. Needs little ironing	Hand washing or dry cleaning recommended	Washable in water under 140°. Dry cleans
Fair to good	Excellent	Excellent	Fair to good	Excellent
Fair to good	Good	Good	Excellent	Good
Poor	Excellent	Excellent	Poor to fair	Good
Excellent	Good	Excellent	Fair	Good
Excellent	Very strong. Holds pleats	Excellent	Fair to good	Excellent
Excellent	Melts at 482° F.	Melts at 480° F.	Excellent. Loses strength at above 450° F. Decomposes above 500° F.	Melts at 340°-350° F.
Fireproof	Melts before burning	Melts before burning	Burns relatively fast. Depends on construction	Does not support combustion
None	Good for bright yarns. Poor for semi-dull. Loses strength after long exposure.	Excellent behind glass. Loses strength after long exposure	Excellent for solution dyes. Average for regular rayons	Excellent for life of fabric
Excellent	Good, when properly heat set	Excellent, when properly heat set	Fair	Excellent
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## **THIS BOOKLET WON'T OUTFIT YOUR WINDOWS FOR YOU.**

- It does tell—**
- about fabrics for window curtains and draperies
  - how to size up what curtains or draperies will best suit your home situation
  - how to figure yardage

## **WHEN YOU CHOOSE, CONSIDER—**

- Size and type of window
- Appearance from both inside and outside the house.
- Sun exposure
- Durability and ease of care of fabric
- Whether to make your own curtains and draperies or buy readymades