

Bedding 101



There are all sorts of pieces parts to a well dressed bed. As you know it is put together in layers. You choose the number of layers you want to have from two, a bottom and top sheet, to six or more including a mattress cover, down feather top bed, bottom sheet, top sheet, blanket, quilt or bedspread and a duvet! I think that last list of

items is if you live in Alaska or Antarctica!

Wherever you live, you need some combination of bedding pieces. The list below will help to explain what each piece is, what it is called, sometimes what it is made of and some tips on purchasing.

Decorative Bed Coverings:

Bedspreads: Bedspreads are generally available in lightweight cotton and polyester, they may be outline quilted or simply lined. They are designed to cover your bedding and reach to the floor on three sides.

Comforters: Comforters are a popular alternative to bedspreads and are usually filled with down, a mixture of down and feathers, or synthetic polyfil. A comforter filled with natural materials is an excellent choice for winter, but in many climates may be too warm in the summer. Down filled comforters must also be professionally cleaned. A



polyester filled comforter is best for summer months and may be machine washed according to the manufacturer's directions.

Comforters are designed to use with dust ruffles, and should hang over the bed enough to cover the mattress. Some comforters are designed to fit two bed sizes. The most common are full/queen and queen/king. Manufacturers determine the sizes of their comforters and therefore they can vary several inches in length, so it's a good idea to measure your mattress and carry the measurements with you when you are shopping for one.

Duvets: A duvet is a comforter encased in a removable cover. It is usually used in place of a comforter. You can make your own changeable duvet cover using two flat sheets of the same size as your mattress. With right sides together, stitch one end and the two longest sides, so that the finished size is one inch less on all sides than the finished size of your comforter. This will allow for the fullness you want. Finish the open end with buttons and button holes or ribbon ties!

Dust Ruffles:



Dust ruffles, or bed skirts, are available in gathered, pleated, or straight styles. Most dust ruffles are 14 to 15 inches in length, although dust ruffles with a drop of 18 to 22 inches are available to accommodate taller bed frames. If you have a foot board on your bed, be sure to buy a dust ruffle with split corners to ensure that the dust ruffle will hang properly.

Pillows:

Bed Pillows: There are three different sizes of bed pillows, standard, to fit nicely on a twin, two on a full and two on a queen sized bed. Two queen sized pillows fill a queen sized bed nicely and two king size pillows are perfect on a king bed.

Pillows come in a variety of firmnesses. Soft pillows are perfect for the person who sleeps

on his or her back. The soft pillow doesn't force the head too far upright, protecting the neck. A firm pillow is for a side sleeper. The firm pillow holds up the head to keep it in generally the right position, again protecting the neck from unnecessary bending. A medium pillow is for someone who moves all around. It's a basic middle of the road and perfect for guest rooms.



Pillow Covers: Pillow covers are zippered fabric covers that protect your bed pillow from stains. They also help to keep any allergens and dust inside the pillow and away from you!



Shams: Shams are decorative coverings for pillows designed with an opening in the back. They typically have a ruffled or flanged edge. This type of pillow is intended as a decorative bolster rather than a functional bed pillow. A single sham is usually enough for a twin size bed, while two shams are typically used on full, queen, or king size beds.

Decorative pillows: Smaller decorative pillows make a nice addition to a bed. Pillows should be in a variety of sizes and shapes. Varying the fabrics to include solids, patterns, and textures help to make the bed the focal point of the room. The actual number of decorative pillows used on a bed is a matter of personal taste. To help your decision, ask yourself how many pillows you're willing to remove each night and replace each morning. Don't ask Matt...he will say you need only 1 pillow....the one you sleep on!

Sheets:

Sheets are graded in three different ways. One way that has caught on with consumers is thread count. **Thread count** refers to the number of threads in one square inch of fabric.

Thread count can range between 180 to 400 threads per inch. As thread count increases, the quality of the sheet does too, to an extent. Don't believe the claims of a "1000" thread count.

These are twisted yarns and the layers of the twists are counted to achieve the high numbers. People seem to have latched on to "thread count" as the determiner of softness and durability. It's actually the other two factors that are more telling.

The **weave** is also important. Percale is a balanced weave, which means that the vertical and horizontal threads cross each other one at a time. A percale weave makes for a very strong sheet, but not always a soft sheet.

The term sateen refers to a weave in which one horizontal thread is woven over multiple vertical threads. Since sateen sheets have more threads on the surface, they tend to reflect more light and look slightly shiny. Sateen sheets are very comfortable, but tend to be less durable than the more tightly woven percale sheets.



Two other popular weaves include jersey and flannel. Jersey sheets are woven to produce a stretchy knit sheet (think T-shirt). Flannel sheets have a similar weave to percale, but the surface is brushed to create a softer, warmer feel.

It is important to consider the **fiber content** of the sheet. Long cotton fibers, including Egyptian, supima, and pima, produce silkier, smoother surfaces. A technique called combing, which is used to remove any short fibers, also produces a softer fabric.

Organic cotton is another option. It has all the benefits of cotton but without the harsh chemicals and dyes added to our waste stream.

A bamboo-cotton blend is made from a certain percentage (usually about 60%) of renewable bamboo fibers. These sheets are very silky and soft and best of all, they are made from a renewable resource.

Sheets are sold individually or in sets, which generally include one flat sheet, one fitted sheet, and one or two pillow cases. When sold individually, a flat sheet usually costs the same as a fitted sheet.

It's a good idea to measure the depth of your mattress before you shop for sheets. If it's one of the new high contour mattresses, you'll need a fitted sheet with extra-deep pockets.

Blankets:

Natural fibers used in blankets include cotton and wool. Cotton blankets are lightweight and washable. Wool blankets are naturally warm, soft, and resilient. Lightweight wool blankets are even comfortable in the summer. Some wool blankets are washable and dryable. Blankets made from synthetics are less expensive than wool, easier to wash, and nonallergenic.

Remember, a blanket's warmth depends on the thickness of the fabric and the height of the nap, not the weight of the blanket itself.

Feather Beds:



Today manufacturers are making additional padding for our beds. These “pads” are like big envelopes filled with feathers, polyfil, or a combination and some are simply foam covered in fabric. These pads rest on top of the mattress and create an extra soft, cushy feeling while sleeping, almost as if you are being hugged. However, if you have back trouble and require a

firmer mattress, these extra pads are not for you. Look for channel or box quilting on your feather bed to ensure that the filling stays even and doesn’t bunch up in any areas.

Hmm, could I have possibly forgotten anything? I guess there are canopies and bed curtains, electric blankets and neck roll pillows but maybe we’ll save those for another time.

Good luck pulling your perfect bed together. It may take a time or two to find the perfect sheet or pillow, but when you do, stick to them like your favorite pair of jeans!!

Shari



© 2008. mattandshari.com, all rights reserved.