

How to Purchase Bedding

Doctors say that seven or eight hours of sleep is essential to good health, but how many adults do you know who regularly get a good night's sleep? For many of us, our minds refuse to slow down despite the desperate pleas from our exhausted bodies. There are so many things to worry about, yet so little time during the daylight hours. Our solution – worry at night!

Though there may be no way to guarantee a good night's sleep, Matt and I have found some ways to make those middle-of-the-night problem solving sessions a whole lot more comfortable. We're not talking sleeping pills; we're talking bed linens.

If you've gone shopping for bed linens recently, you know just how confusing it can be. Fortunately, Matt and I have redesigned many bedrooms and in the process have learned some tips to help you improve your chances of a restful night.

Being a decorator, I'm inclined to start with the more decorative elements of a project, but in the case of a good night's sleep, forget decoration. Let's talk function and start with an element which is rarely seen at all – the mattress pad.



A mattress pad or cover serves two important functions. First, a mattress pad protects the mattress from stains, an important feature since mattresses are very difficult to clean. Second, the mattress pad can provide an extra layer of padding on top of the mattress, making a firm mattress feel a bit more comfortable. Make sure to measure

the depth of your mattress before purchasing a cover. Today you can buy extra deep mattress covers to make sure they will cover the top, all sides and wrap underneath your mattress.



The next layer of bedding is perhaps the most confusing - the sheets. There are three things to consider when purchasing sheets: thread count, weave, and fiber content.

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.

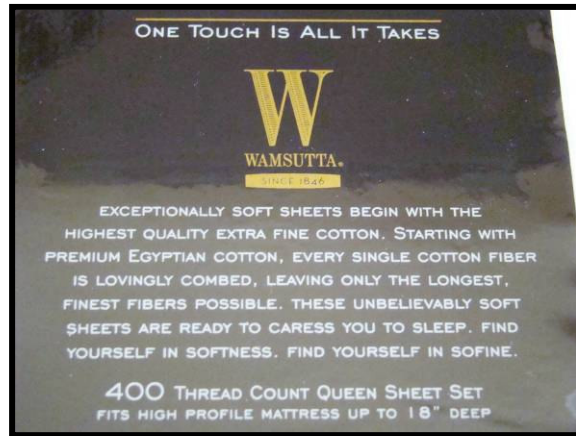
The **weave** is also important. Percale is a balanced weave, which means that the vertical and horizontal threads cross each other one at a time. A percale weave makes for a very strong sheet, but not always a soft sheet.

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.

Finally, 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.

The best sheet is really a matter of personal preference. Consider temperature...yes, I said temperature. Are you interested in getting into a bed that feels cool and crisp or warm and soft? If you like cool and crisp, consider Egyptian cotton and/or a sateen weave. Percale, which is made from cotton and polyester might be an option here too because it's not quite as soft as 100% cotton and dries fast and wrinkles less. Those who love warm and soft should stick to cotton flannel and jersey. Pricier versions for "cool" sheets would be linen while pricier "warm" sheets would be silk!

Whether you prefer the crispness of a percale or the silkiness of sateen, most experts suggest buying the best quality sheets you can afford. Good quality sheets last through many launderings without pilling or tearing, making them well worth the investment.

I've heard said that everyone should have three sets of sheets, "one set in the closet, one set on the bed, and a third set in the wash"!



The final layer of functional bed linens includes a blanket, quilt or comforter. The choice is based on both climate and personal preference. Some people prefer a lot of weight on them as they snuggle in for a long dreamy night, so a comforter might be a good option. Others who prefer lightweight but functional generally

choose blankets or quilts. Blankets, quilts and comforters can be expensive, so make sure to read the manufacturer's directions for proper care and cleaning instructions. Though many blankets and quilts can be washed, some home washers and dryers can't handle the weight in the spinning process. Most comforters will require dry cleaning, again, because of size.

Bed linens can make a real difference in your comfort and the quality of your sleep. Clearly, it is important to give thought and care when making a purchase of functional linens. Once you choose the type of bedding which best suits your needs, the real fun begins. It's finally time to choose colors and patterns for your room! And the choices are almost limitless; there are decorative duvet covers, bedspreads, and coverlets. There are shams, bolsters, and throw pillows.....lots of throw pillows. And, if you're anything like me, you'll be up all night just considering the possibilities!

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