

# ESTHETIC MATTERS

## Important Factors in Fabric Selection

by Aaron Weber, Product Design Manager

When producing a textile product, there are many factors to consider while choosing the fabric. The aesthetics of the finished good are certainly the main consideration; however, to ensure the best end result, these three factors should be taken into account as well:

1. The type of textile
2. The size of the finished good
3. The fabric treatment

All of these elements will affect how the panels are cut for sewing and can change the amount of yardage needed to create the finished product.

### TEXTILE TYPES

Whether picking a single material, or an entire fabric assortment, it is always worth exploring the various options that are available. There are many types of textiles to choose from, but let's explore three broad categories of fabric:

- **Solid textiles** are generally going to yield the best fabric utilization, because the sewing patterns can be cut in the most efficient configuration on the material. Certain grains, velvet naps, or reflective characteristics (i.e., the manner in which light will react on the material) can sometimes be apparent in solid fabric weaves or prints. For this reason, the direction of the patterns should be consistent when placing them on the material for cutting. Other solid materials, such as vinyl goods used in manufacturing outdoor furniture covers, do not have obvious directional qualities.



Solid Fabrics

When using these types of materials, patterns can typically be placed in any direction—independent of each other—yielding the highest possible material efficiency.

- **Striped textiles** can be produced in two main directions: railroaded or up/down the roll. A railroaded material has the stripe running the width of the roll (from selvage edge to selvage edge) and will be defined by a vertical repeat value. Conversely, non-railroaded material has the stripe running the length of the roll and will be defined by a horizontal repeat value. In most cases, all cut patterns will need to be placed in a row along the striped fabric so the stripes match from one panel to the next around the finished product.

This will typically increase the fabric consumption for the finished good.



Railroaded vs. Non-railroaded Stripes

- **Patterned textiles** can come in many different styles. Depending on the specific material, they can be similar to a stripe (having a directional quality either in the railroaded direction or the down-the-roll direction), or they can be similar to a solid (where the pattern is the same repeat size in both directions).

The yardage needed to complete a product will vary depending on the type of pattern and the desired finished look.



Patterned Fabrics

## PRODUCT SIZE

The size of the finished product will also need to be evaluated when selecting fabrics. Many fabrics are produced with a standard 54" usable width, where the fabric roll has 54 inches of material from which to cut patterns within the selvage edges of the material. However, some fabrics may come in narrower or wider usable widths. As an example, certain outdoor furniture cover fabrics have a 60" usable width in order to accommodate larger cut patterns.

The size of the product cut patterns should be carefully evaluated against the potential fabric choices. Product sizes that typically need to be evaluated the most when using a 54" wide fabric roll are those items that have cut panels either wider or deeper than 27" or 54".

For instance, if an ottoman has a finished size of 26" x 26" and a ½" seam allowance, then the cut panels would measure 27" x 27". One top panel and one bottom panel would fit exactly into a 54" wide fabric roll, with 100% material utilization. If this ottoman had a one inch larger finished size— 27" x 27" plus the same ½" seam allowance—then the 28" x 28" cut panels would not both fit across the 54" width of the material. This would double the fabric yardage needed for the patterns, as they would need to be placed one after the other up/down the roll. It's also very important to notice when the usable fabric width measures less or more than 54 inches, because this will certainly affect how the patterns can be placed for the best fabric yield.



Selvage Edge

## FABRIC TREATMENT

The desired fabric treatment will take into account both the fabric type and the product size to determine how the patterns are placed on the fabric for the most efficient use of the material. Occasionally, the construction of the finished good and the item's specific cut patterns will need to be altered in order to manufacture the correct finished part.

For instance, if a 54" wide up/down the roll striped fabric is chosen for a bench cushion that has cut panels wider than 54 inches, then the panels can either be cut with the stripes going side to side on the finished product, or a seam can be added from front to back on the cushion so that the stripes run front to back. Centering striped fabrics on cut panels and engineering cuts for centered pattern placement can also be done, but usually at the cost of additional fabric consumption.



One last point to consider is how to cut product components such as boxing (a strip of fabric that attaches to the top and bottom panels to create a more structured cushion shape) and zipper panels. Similar to fabric direction on the main cut panels of a product, the component cut direction can vary based on the desired finished look of the item. It may be necessary to add seams on longer components in order to achieve the desired goal.

## WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Whether you've already decided on a new textile assortment and need to confirm the necessary yardage totals, or you're looking for guidance on some fabric choices for a specific product line, Easy Way's Product Design Team is here to help. Our extensive experience in the textile product field includes creating the pattern cut files used in the production of both stock and drop-ship programs across countless fabric and product combinations.

Balancing an understanding of the desired finished aesthetics with knowledge of construction options and pattern placement, our designers will help determine the ideal fabric treatment to ensure the successful manufacturing of your product.

