

KWIK•SEW® Sewing Educator Guide
Glossary of Fabric Terms



In sewing, fabrics are typically placed in two specific categories: woven and knit.

Woven Fabrics have straight lengthwise and crosswise or warp (vertical) and weft (horizontal) yarns. These yarns are **woven** together. The weight and type of yarns give the fabric texture and appearance. There are three types of weave:

- **Plain weave** is the strongest weave.
- **Twill weave** has a diagonal design.
- **Satin weave** has a smooth face or right side.

Knit Fabrics are made up of interlocking loops of yarn. Most knits tend to stretch, some more than others. The lengthwise rows are called RIBS and the crosswise rows are called COURSES. These rows correspond to the lengthwise and crosswise grain of woven fabric.

Fashion Fabrics (for garments) are typically sold by the yard and come folded double and are rolled on cardboard bolts in common widths of 36" (92 cm), 45" (115 cm), and 60" (152 cm).

Decorator Fabrics (for interior decorating) are sold by the yard and come rolled on tubes to prevent creases. Most decorator fabrics come in 60" (152 cm) width sometimes narrower, sometimes wider. These fabrics are usually more durable than fashion fabrics and are sometimes treated with some type of stain resistant substance.

WOVEN FABRICS

Batiste: A medium-weight, plain-weave fabric.

Blends: The yarn obtained by combining two or more different fibers in the yarn making process. These differences may occur in color and grade. A "true blend" indicates filament yarns that have been chopped up and blended within one ply to make a multifilament yarn. Fabric is then woven from these blended yarns.

Boucle: Similar to tweed but with a curly, looped finish.

Brocade: A rich heavy, Jacquard-woven fabric with raised floral or figured patterns, emphasized by contrasting surfaces or colors. Satin or twill figures on plain, twill or satin grounds, may be used. It is often made with gold or silver threads. The design appears on the face of the fabric which is easily distinguished from the back.

Calico: Lightweight plain weave fabric with a small print design on the right side.

Canvas: A tightly woven fabric that is strong and durable.

Charmeuse: A lightweight, silk, cotton or man-made fiber dress fabric which is soft and drapes well and is shiny on one side.

Chiffon: A very lightweight, soft, sheer, silk or man-made fiber fabric made in plain weave with fine, hard spun yarn.

Chino: A twilled cotton fabric usually a khaki cotton or synthetic-fiber twill of the type used for military uniforms.

Corduroy: A strong, durable fabric with cotton ground and vertical cut-pile stripes formed by an extra system of filling yarns.

Cotton: A soft, usually white, natural fibrous substance composed of the hairs surrounding the seeds of various erect freely branching tropical plants. Cotton fabric is made of this substance and is available in a myriad of colors and weights.

Crepe: A light crinkled fabric woven of any of various fibers.

Denim: A firm durable twilled, usually cotton, fabric woven with colored warp and white filling threads.

Doupioni: Lustrous stubbed silk with weft yarns made of fibers spun from double cocoons.

Faille: A closely woven fabric made from silk, cotton, wool, or synthetic fibers.

Flannel: A soft twilled wool or worsted fabric with a loose texture and a slightly napped surface. Also a stout cotton fabric of soft yarns simulating the texture of wool flannel usually napped on one side.

Gabardine: A tightly woven, warp-faced fabric made with a 45 or 63 degree angle twill and given a clear finish. Used for men's suits for a very polished look.

Georgette: Made from crepe yarns and has a matte texture.

Gauze: An open weave, sheer fabric made from many different fibers.

Jacquard: A fabric of intricate variegated weave or pattern.

Lace: Ornamental textile without the aid of background fabric.

Lawn: A sheer lightweight, plain weave fabric of cotton or synthetic fibers. It's available plain, in colors and printed designs.

Linen: A cloth made of flax and noted for its strength, coolness, and luster.

Polyester: A synthetic fiber made from petroleum.

Poplin: A strong tightly woven fabric in plain weave with crosswise ribs. It is usually a cotton, but also comes in blends.

Rayon: A semi-natural fiber derived from cellulose (plant fiber). It is a soft and comfortable and has a nice drape. Most rayon requires dry cleaning.

Satin: A lustrous surface on one side and slubbed effect on the other side often cotton backed.

Sateen: The name given to satin weave in an all-cotton fabric.

Silk: A lustrous tough elastic natural fiber produced by silkworms and used for textiles. Thread, yarn, or fabric made from silk filaments which is strong but delicate in appearance and usually has sheen.

Shantung: Plain weave fabric with slubs in the weft yarns. It has a slightly rough, nubbed surface.

Taffeta: A crisp plain weave silk fabric with a shiny surface which can be silk, polyester or acetate.

Terry Cloth: Cotton fabric with a loop pile on one or both sides.

Tweed: A class of rough wool fabrics with a wiry, somewhat hairy surface but soft and flexible texture.

Twill: A strong, heavy yarn dyed cotton fabric. A basic weave characterized by a diagonal rib, or twill line generally running upward from left to right.

Velvet: A fabric characterized by a short soft dense warp pile which give the fabric a rich texture.

Velveteen: A fabric usually of cotton, in twill or plain weaves, made with a short close weft pile in imitation of velvet.

Voile: Lightweight plain weave, crisp, sheer fabric of cotton and blends.

Wool: Fabric woven from soft, scaly fiber covering on sheep. It is strong and resilient and can be stretched as much as 30% beyond its length without permanent damage if the duration of the strain is short.

KNIT FABRICS

Double Knit: Knitted fabric with both sides identical; has excellent body and good recovery.

Fleece: Soft, warm napped knit.

Interlock: Fine-gauge knit fabric produced by interlocking or interknitting stitches on a circular knit machine. Both front and back look identical. Usually used for T-shirts or lightweight pajamas.

Jersey: Generic term for plain, weft-knitted fabrics with extensive crosswise stretch. It does not have a distinct rib.

Matte Jersey: Dull tricot made of fine crepe yarns.

Penne: A pile fabric with a longer pile than velvet, but shorter than plush. It has a high luster.

Single Knit: A fabric constructed on a circular machine with one set of needles around the cylinder. The yarns inter-loop (a loop within a loop). Weights of fabrics vary from very sheer to heavy.

Spandex® Lycra®: Highly stretchable synthetic fiber in a knit fabric. Used primarily for swimwear and active sportswear.

Stretch Lace: Ornamental textile without the aid of background fabric, made with stretch yarns.

Stretch Velour: French word meaning velvet with a short dense warp pile constructed of stretch yarns.

Stretch Velvet: A fabric characterized by a short soft dense warp pile constructed of stretch yarns.

Sweater Knit: Knit fabric resembling hand knitting.