

Fabric Glossary



Applique - Embellishment on a garment where decoration is made by cutting pieces of one material and applying them to the surface of another.

Argyle - A popular design for knitted fabrics (both hand and machine knit) most often used on sweaters and socks. Usually, two or three colors appear in this diamond-shaped plaid pattern named for the tartan of a clan in the county of Argyll, western Scotland.

Barathea - A soft fabric of silk and cotton, silk and wool, or all wool woven with fine two-ply yarns.

Bird's Eye Check - A fabric woven with a pattern of small diamonds, each having a dot in the center.

Binding - A strip of fabric sewn over or attached along an edge, to secure or protect.

Canvas - A strong, durable, closely woven cotton fabric popular for raincoats, handbags and boots. Originally made of unbleached hemp of flax used for sails, tents, etc.

Carefree - Any time you see the name Carefree, expect an easy-care, machine-washable fabric. You'll find wrinkle-resistant 100% linens, washable wools, wrinkle-free cottons and microfibers.

Chambray [shamBRAY] - >A class of yarn-dyed, plain-weave fabrics with a colored warp and white filling. Made of cotton or synthetic fibers, chambray is often light blue. It was originally woven in Cambrai, France, for farmers.

Charmeuse - Tradename of silk and silk-like fabrics that are characterized by a shiny, soft satin-like appearance.

Chenille [sheh-NEEL] - Soft, fuzzy yarns stand out around a velvety cord on this fabric, whose name comes from the French word for "caterpillar." Used for bedspreads, rugs, bathrobes, and more recently, loose-fitting sweaters.

Chintz - A printed and glazed cotton fabric usually of bright colors.

Corduroy - Medium to heavyweight cotton pile fabric with wales, usually cut vertically. This strong, durable fabric, originally used by the household staff of French kings, was called corde du roi or "cord of the king."

Combed cotton - Cotton fabric with a silk-like hand. Considered superior to basic carded cotton.

Crepe - Used to describe all kinds of fabrics--wool, cotton, silk, rayon, synthetics and blends that have a crinkly, crimped or grained surface. From the French word creper, which means "to crimp or frizz."

Crepe de chine [krepp deh SHEEN] - A fine, lightweight crepe usually made of silk.

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Crochet - Loose, open knit made by looping thread with a hooked needle. Used for light, summer sweaters.

Dobby - Type of woven fabric that contains simple geometric forms or motifs, where the design on the fabric is created in the weaving process.

Drop Needle - A type of knit cut and sew fabric where some of the needles are "dropped out" during stitching to produce an openwork pattern in the fabric.

Dryel - A new product from Procter & Gamble that allows you to keep your Liz Claiborne "dry clean only" clothes looking their best in between trips to the dry cleaner - right at home, right in your dryer. Dryel has earned the Good Housekeeping Seal and has met the high performance standards of the Woolmark Company. For more information, visit the Dryel website at www.dryel.com.

Duchess satin - A heavy, lustrous, rich-looking satin weave fabric usually used for wedding and fancy dresses.

Embroidery - Fancy needlework or trimming consisting of colored yarn, embroidery floss, soft cotton, silk or metallic thread. Although hand embroidery is still a widely practiced craft, most commercially produced embroidered clothes are made by machine.

Engineered print - Also called a placed print because it is integrated into a specific area of the design. Border prints are often engineered into place.

Facing - A piece of fabric sewn to the inside of a garment for lining purposes or to add structure to the garment.

Faille [file] - A dressy, flat-ribbed fabric with a light luster that drapes and tailors well. The ribs are flatter and less pronounced than in grosgrain. Traditionally used for women's dresses, suits and coats.

Faille crepe - A dressy, double-faced fabric made with high-twist poly crepe yarns.

Feedstripe - Knit fabric where a stripe pattern is produced by the way colored yarns are fed into the knitting machine. Often used for cut-and-sew knits like t-shirts and other casual knit garments.

Flannel - A warm, soft fabric made in tightly woven twill or plain weave and finished with a light napping. Derived from the Welsh word gwlanen, which means wool.

Foulard [fooLARD] - A lightweight, lustrous twill fabric, usually with a small, repeating printed design. Originally imported from India, it is popular for neckties and scarves.

French terry - A circular knit fabric with a looped pile back and smooth face.

Gabardine - Durable, tightly woven fabric made in a twill weave with distinct diagonal ribs and given a clean finish. Made of cotton, wool or rayon, gabardine wears extremely well. Commonly used for sportswear, suits, uniforms and raincoats.

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Georgette - A sheer, lightweight plain-weave fabric with a fine crepe surface. Sometimes silk, sometimes synthetic. Also called crepe georgette or georgette crepe.

Gingham - Yarn-dyed, checked or plaid fabric made of pure or blended cotton. Checked gingham uses two colors, plaid gingham several. The name comes from the Malay word *ging gang*, meaning striped.

Glen plaid - A woven design that pairs small checks with larger ones of similar colors. Named for Glen Urquhart, a valley in Inverness-shire, Scotland.

Hopsack - A loosely woven coarse fabric of cotton or wool used in clothing. The fabric was originally used for bags by hop growers.

Intarsia - A flat knit fabric with solid-colored, geometric patterns. The sides of the fabric are identical. Derived from the Italian for "inlay."

Interlock - A type of cut and sew knit fabric that is characterized by the interconnecting of the knit stitches.

Jacquard [ja-CARD] - Elaborate woven or knitted pattern made on a Jacquard loom. Invented by Joseph Marie Jacquard in France in 1801, the loom uses a punch card much like a player piano does. Some jacquard fabrics have specific names (e.g., brocade, damask and tapestry).

Jersey - A generic term for a plain knit fabric without a distinct rib. Originally made of wool, jersey fabric was first manufactured on the island of Jersey, off the coast of England.

Linen - Fibers of the flax plant, woven into fabrics that are cooler, stronger and more absorbent than cotton.

Lycra - A DuPont trademark for its spandex fiber. Any time you see this fiber listed on a label, expect comfort, movement and shape retention that won't wash away.

Marled yarn - Two single yarns of different colors twisted together. You see this mottled effect most often in sweaters.

Matte jersey - A dull, flat knit fabric made of fine crepe yarns.

Melange wool - A fancy yarn spun from fibers that have been printed in many shades, tones and hues.

Mercerized - A process to a cotton yarn or fabric which increases its luster, shine and affinity for color dye.

Merino wool - This high-quality wool yarn made from the fleece of merino sheep is fine, strong and elastic, and takes dye well.

Microfiber - Generic term for any synthetic fiber finer than silk. Fabrics made with microfibers are soft, lightweight, breathable and durable.

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Modal - A generic category of manufactured fibers that have a greater ability to retain their shape when wet as well as a high breaking strength.

Picot - A small embroidered loop forming an ornamental edging on a ribbon or lace.

Pima - A high quality cotton known for its softness and durability.

Pinpoint oxford - Lightweight, soft, cotton-like fabric with a small 2x1 basket (rib) weave repeats. High quality. Very smooth surface; used for shirts.

Piqu [peeKAY] - A knitted cotton fabric with a waffle, or diamond-shaped, pattern. French piqu knits became an international favorite when Ren Lacoste, a 1920's French tennis champion, designed the polo shirt.

Placket - The piece of cloth that reinforces a split or opening in a garment; that usually also serves as the closure (i.e. the button placket for an oxford shirt or the zipper placket on a pair of pants).

Pointelle - Very feminine, delicate-looking rib knit fabric made with a pattern of openings.

Ponte - A non-jacquard double knit fabric made on an interlock basis resulting in a fabric that is generally firm and very stable.

Poplin - A durable, plain-weave fabric similar to broadcloth but with a heavier rib and heavier weight. Made of silk, cotton, synthetic fibers, wool or blends.

Raglan - A sleeve where one piece of fabric extends all the way to the neckline, with slanted seams from the armhole to the neck (no shoulder seam). Traditional two-color baseball shirts are a perfect example of raglan sleeves.

Ripstop - A fabric woven with a double thread at regular intervals so that small tears do not spread.

Ruching - Ruching is a detail created by taking fabric and sewing in lines of elastic to the back in neat rows so the fabric puckers creating a stretchy gathered look.

Sateen - A semi-lustrous surface distinguishes this smooth, durable fabric in a satin weave. Sateen is usually made of cotton.

Schiffli - A type of embroidery characterized by vine-like floral pattern on sheer/mesh-like fabrics, named after the type of machine it is produced on (Schiffli machine).

Seersucker - A popular warm-weather cotton fabric with permanent woven crinkled stripes. Laundered well and generally does not need to be ironed.

Shantung - Medium weight, plain weave, silk-like fabric with pronounced slub filling yarns (slub means yarns are uneven or nubby). Used for dresses.

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Sharkskin - A smooth crisp fabric with a dull finish made usually of rayon in basket weave.

Shirring - The gathering of fabric to create soft, feminine folds in the garment.

Soutache - Narrow, rounded braid in herringbone-weave used for trim.

Stovepipe - A type of slim-cut straight legged pants that are characterized by the absence of any sort of front seam or crease.

Tactel - A soft yet durable nylon fiber trademarked by DuPont. It is extremely easy to wash, allows the skin to breathe and readily regains its shape, making it ideal for active sportswear.

Tencel - A trademark of Tencel Ltd for their brand of lyocell, a high-performance fiber used to make soft, beautifully draping fabrics. Tencel, made from wood pulp that is harvested from replenished tree farms, is environmentally sensitive and is washable.

Terry - A woven fabric, usually cotton, with loop pile on one or both sides.

Tippling - Embellishment of a garment by adding some type of trim to the edges (cuffs/pockets/plackets/hems) of a garment for decoration.

Tissue linen - A thin, sheer, lightweight linen used for blouses.

Toile - Light/medium weight, plain weave, fine, cotton-type fabric, usually with one colored printed scenic design. Used mostly for home furnishings, clothing, etc.

Twill - A fabric that shows a distinct diagonal wale on the face (e.g., denim, gabardine, tricotine).

Variiegated - Having streaks, marks, or patches of different colors; distinguished or characterized by a variety of different colors.

Velour - Soft plush fabric with a close, dense pile. Originates from the French word for "velvet."

Velvet - A short, closely woven cut pile fabric with a rich, soft texture. Originally silk, velvet is now made of cotton or blends, as well.

Velveteen - Cotton fabric made with a cut pile technique, which creates depth and richness in the cloth.

Viscose - A manufactured fiber made of regenerated cellulose. It is soft, absorbent and drapes well.

Voile [vwahl] - A lightweight, sheer fabric with a crisp, wiry hand. Originally cotton, voile is now also made in silk, rayon or acetate.