

You Can Make



SLIP COVERS

Circular 498

EXTENSION SERVICE
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DRAFTING THE PATTERN, CONSTRUCTION, AND CARE OF SLIP COVERS

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Slip covers protect furniture against the summer's sun and dust, cover worn upholstery, and fit into the decorative scheme of a room.

There are many factors to consider before purchasing material for a slip cover.

Whether to select a plain or patterned slip cover is always an individual problem. The selection depends upon how much design there is in the room; the other furnishings and walls; the size of the room; and the exposure.

If the room has figured wall paper and figured floor covering or the draperies are figured, the slip cover should be of plain materials. If there is very little pattern in the room, a figured slip cover will add interest.

Striped material often gives color and interest without adding extra pattern.

Striped materials may be used to make low pieces of furniture seem higher. Bold stripes, like bold designs, should be used sparingly but in small amounts they give zest.

Supplies needed for drafting slip cover pattern:

1. One box of sharp-pointed straight pins.
2. Wrist pin cushion.
3. Good grade muslin (see estimate of yardage for type of furniture.)
4. Scissors.
5. Tape measure.
6. Yard stick.
7. Tailor's chalk or colored pencil.
8. Table for cutting.

The color selected may be affected by the size and shape of the piece of furniture as well as the room. A piece of furniture with good lines may have a brighter harmonizing color than an awkward piece with poor lines.

The texture, as well as the design and color of the material, should be kept in mind. Coarse textures are best with sturdy pieces of furniture while lustrous or shiny surfaces suggest formality. Textures that are neither too coarse nor too lustrous are best in the average home.

FABRICS

Some fabrics that are considered suitable for slip covers are: Denim, Sateen, Ticking, Glazed and Unglazed Chintz, Crash, Linen, Gingham, Broadcloth, Sail Cloth, Whip Cord, Cotton Twill and Cotton Gabardine.

Denim, a heavy cotton twill, is an inexpensive washable fabric that makes sturdy slip covers for rural homes.

A desirable slip cover fabric will be constructed of strong threads to wear well and will be tightly woven to shed dust.

Sanforized fabrics are the most completely shrunk and are the best guarantee that the slip cover will not shrink when laundered or dry cleaned. Fabric, cording, and placket fastenings should be pre-shrunk before being constructed into a slip cover.

DRAFTING A SLIP COVER PATTERN

You will need a box of sharp-pointed pins, a wrist pin cushion, muslin, colored pencil or tailor's chalk, scissors, tape measure, yard stick, a good sewing machine and a suitable table. If you place the chair on the table while drafting the pattern, you will not have to stoop.

Use a good firm grade of muslin to draft the slip cover pattern. If the material used for the pattern pulls or stretches, it is hard to draft an accurate pattern.

Using muslin to draft the pattern saves unnecessary musing of the slip cover material and if a mistake is made it is easier to correct it in the pattern. A pattern can be placed to use the least amount of material possible. The designs and stripes on like parts of the piece of furniture can be matched more accurately.

There are so many different types of furniture that no single slip cover pattern would fit all chairs. Two chairs may have seats alike but the arms and back often differ. Separate patterns need to be drafted for each slip cover.

It is better to draft the complete pattern rather than just one-half of it. Use of the chair may have caused the padding to become uneven on the two sides of the same chair. It may not be noticeable but shows up in the finished slip cover. Pin fit to make any necessary changes in drafting the pattern.

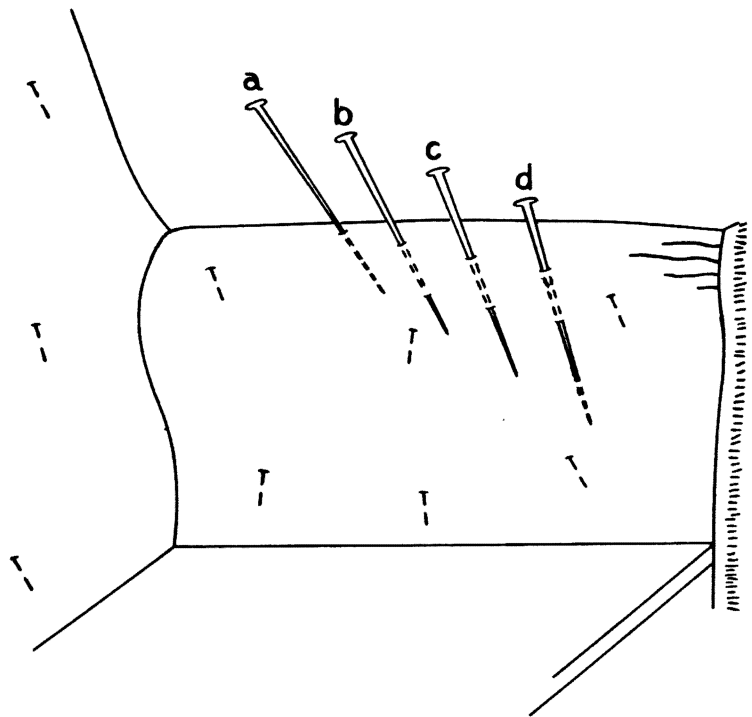
Paper patterns can be bought for some types of furniture, but they must be fitted to the piece of furniture to be slip covered. The paper is hard to fit so it is usually more practical to make a fabric pattern in the beginning.

Smartly tailored slip covers should fit well and be free of wrinkles.

COUNTER SINK PINS

In working with straight pins, see that all points are counter sunk (points turned into upholstery). If the pin point is not completely buried into the upholstery material your hand could be badly scratched or your clothing torn while drafting the slip cover pattern (figure 1).

- a. Sink point of pin through muslin into upholstery material.
- b. Push pin through upholstery $\frac{1}{4}$ inch; bring point of pin to surface of muslin.
- c. Extend point of pin on top of muslin.
- d. Sink point of pin into upholstery material.



GRAIN LINES

Keep grain of material straight (figure 2). All pieces of material must be kept straight with the lengthwise and crosswise thread. The lengthwise thread should be kept perpendicular (straight up and down) with the floor and the crosswise thread parallel with the floor on each piece for proper fit and wear.

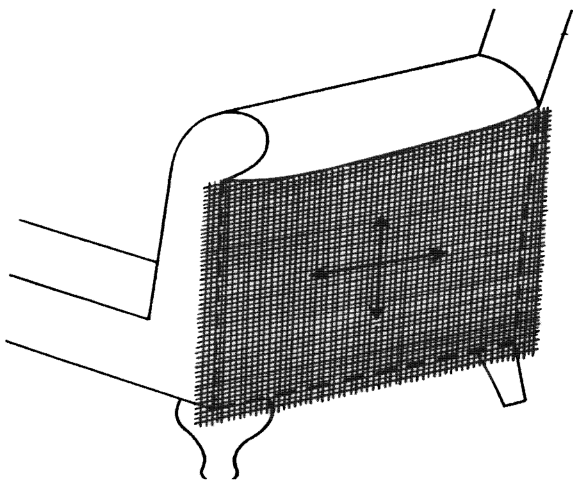


Figure 2

MARKINGS

As the pattern is drafted for the chair carefully mark with tailor's chalk the lengthwise and crosswise threads, seam lines, darts, and tucks with the name on each piece before it is removed from the chair.

Figure 3



Photographs and word explanations suggest the step by step procedure followed in drafting the slip cover for the chair in figure 3.

Draft the outside back, then the outside arms and the back panel to give straight outer lines to pin the curved inside pieces to, as illustrated (figure 4).

Draft inside back (figure 5). Keep the grain line straight on the entire piece. Carefully mark the grain line. The seat tuck-in is formed by continuing the inside back piece to the bottom of the space between the back and seat then bring it back to the top of the seat. This usually requires from 5 to 10 inches.

Carefully spaced darts take up extra fullness in the straight fabric as it fits over the curved edge of inside back. The grain line must be straight across the curved edge (figure 6).

Make these darts by marking with tailor's chalk along the folded edge of the dart. When this is re-

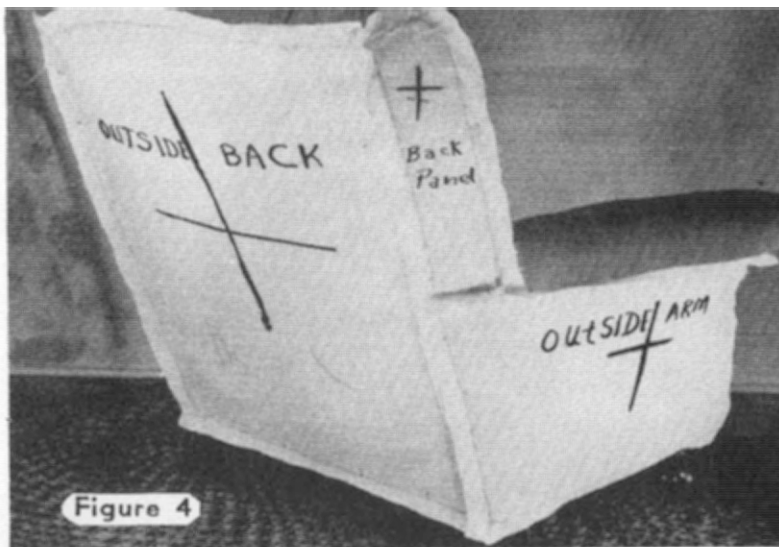


Figure 4

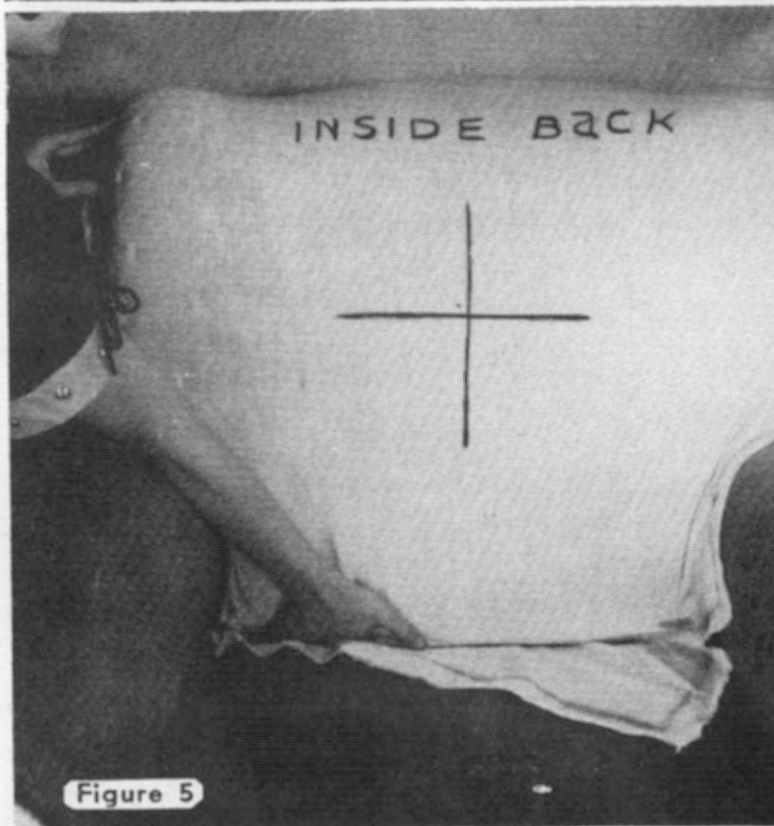


Figure 5

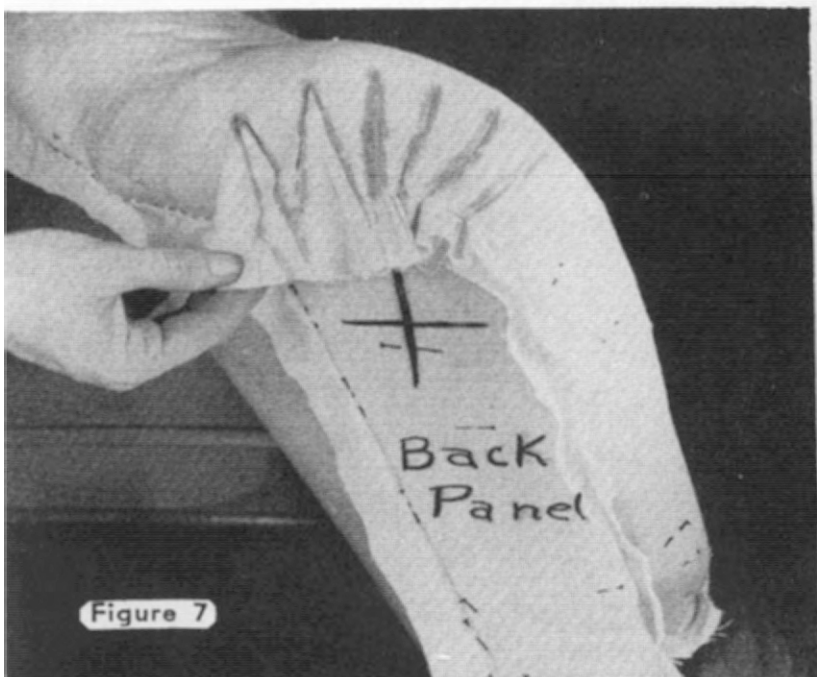


Figure 7



Figure 6

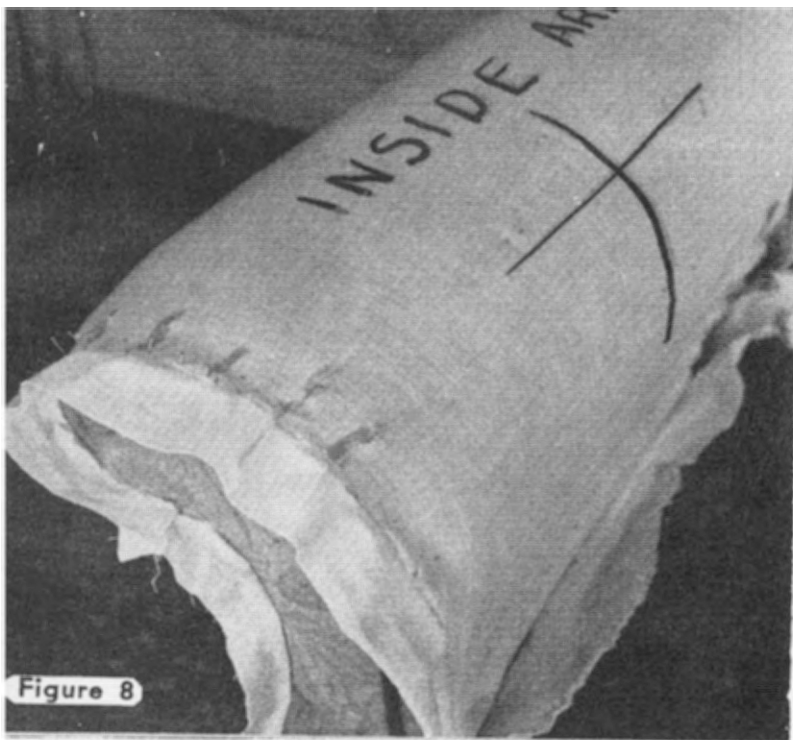


Figure 8



Figure 9

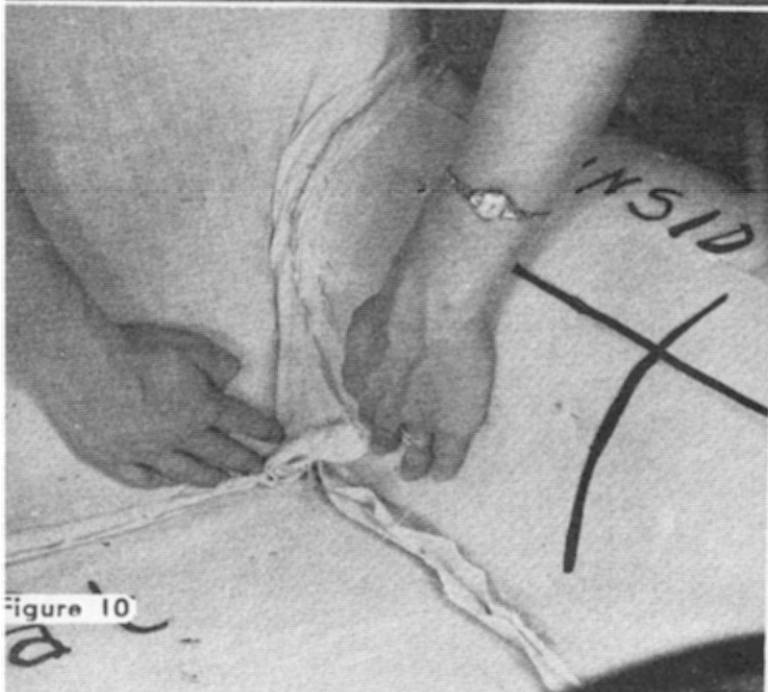


Figure 10

leased the full dart is marked on the pattern as illustrated (figure 7).

Draft inside arm (figure 8). Take special care to keep the grain line straight along the curved edges, then mark carefully. Extra fullness may be adjusted around the front of the arm by carefully spacing between perpendicular (straight up and down) pins or by laying darts. Allow for needed tuck-in between seat and inside arm. Make the rest of the pocket between the inside arm and inside back (figure 9). Detail of pocket formed between the inside arm and inside back. This fits above the brace in the back of the chair (figure 10).

The fullness is eased in evenly along the edge of the inside arm piece before it is attached to the outside arm piece. It should fit the outside arm curve without any puckers (figure 11).

Draft the top, middle and lower front panel pieces (figure 12).

Draft the front arm panel. Keep the grain line straight at all points (figure 13).

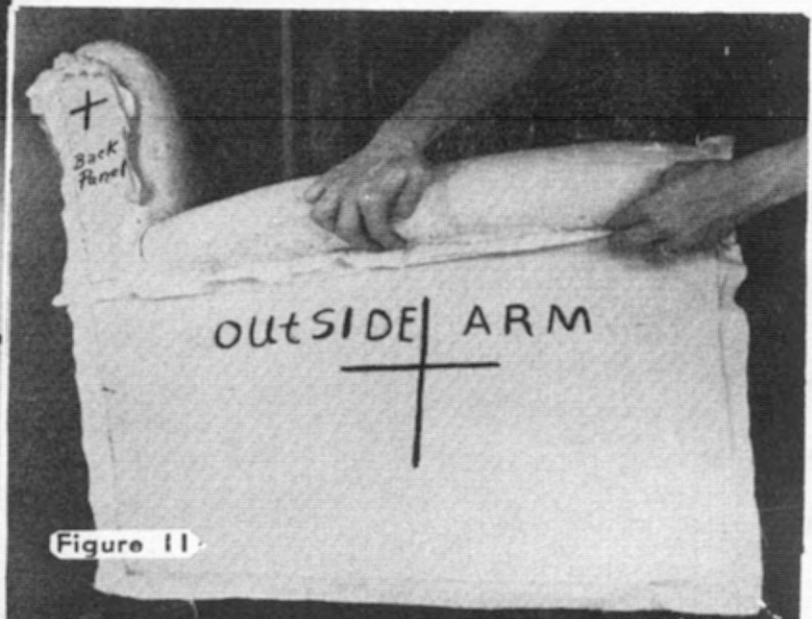


Figure 11

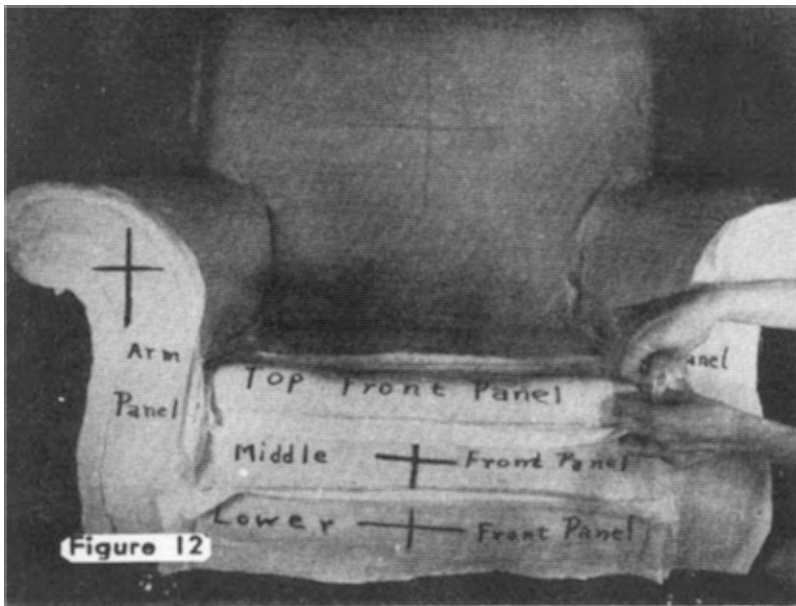


Figure 12

Form a pocket over the spring edge. Stitch the inside arm tuck-in to the front panel piece (figure 14).

Draft the seat to fit the bottom of the chair. The top front panel extends from 3 to 5 inches into the front of the seat. The seat piece fits along this edge (figure 15).

The completely drafted slip cover pattern has all pieces correctly marked. The name of each piece, grain line each way, seam lines, and all darts are carefully marked. One inch seam allowances are made throughout (figure 16).

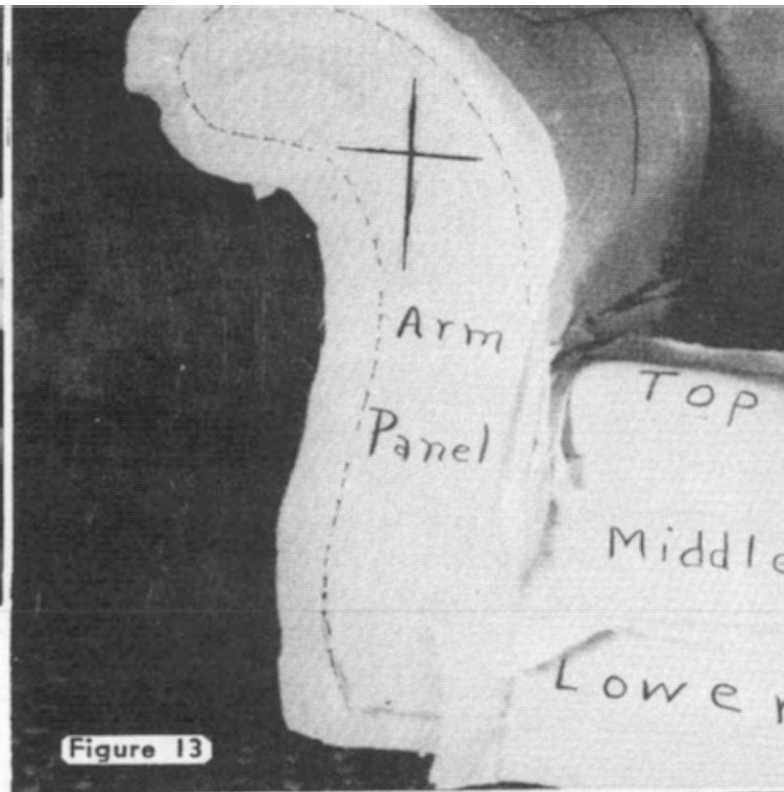


Figure 13

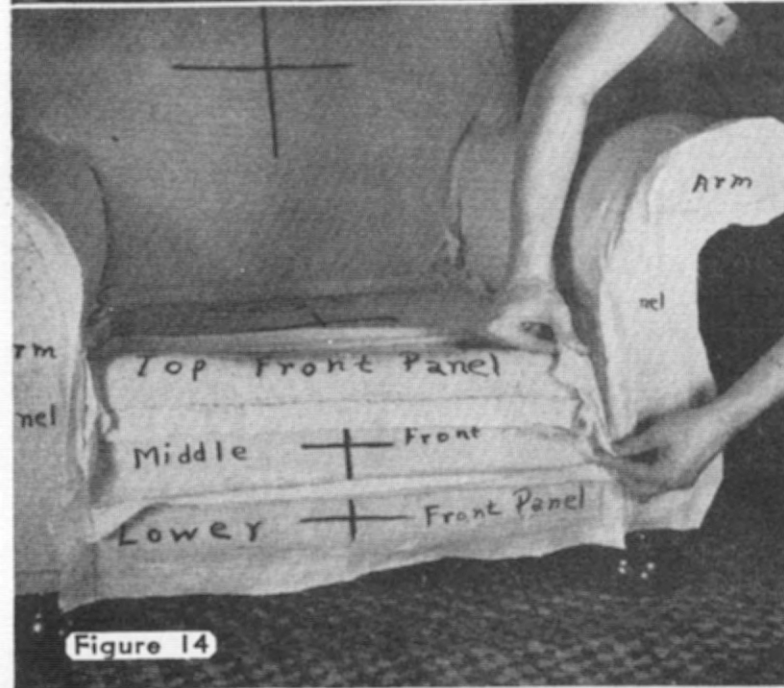


Figure 14

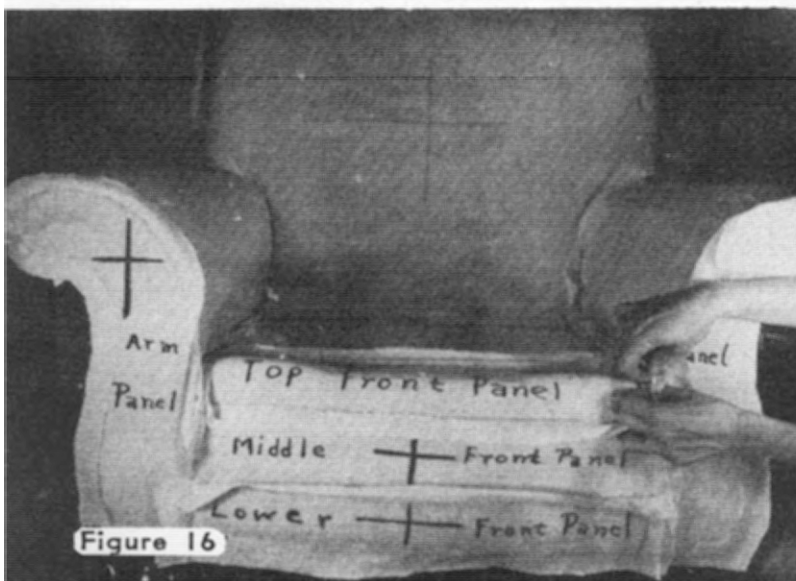


Figure 16

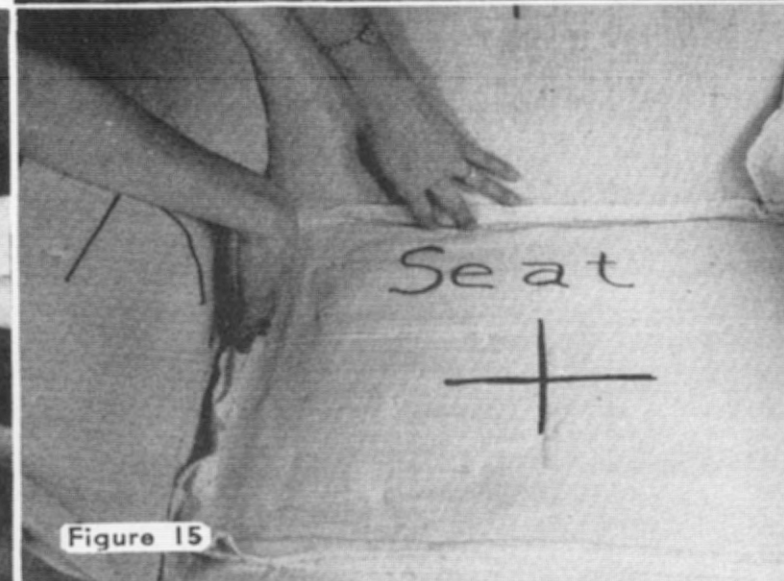


Figure 15

COVERING THE CUSHION

Cutting and fitting slip cover material for loose cushions is simple. Draft the pattern by laying the cloth over the top of the cushion and pin securely and make sure the grain line is straight. Outline the material around the outside edge of the cushion with tailor's chalk (figure 17). Allow one inch for the seams around the cushion.

Draft the top and bottom of the cushion separately as they may vary in size. Measure the height or thickness of the cushion and the distance around the cushion. The height is called "boxing". One inch should be allowed for the seams.

Join the top of the cushion to the boxing. Sew completely around the top of the cushion, then join the bottom of the boxing.

Make the back opening for the cushion cover by dividing lengthwise the back portion of the boxing into two equal pieces (figure 18). Turn a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch hem along the inner lengthwise edges of the two pieces.

If you use heavy duty snaps let the top half overlap the bottom the width of the hems.

If you use a zipper let the hemmed edges come together and insert the zipper.

Let this divided section extend around the back corners of the cushion three to five inches. Then join the divided section to the front part of the boxing with a plain seam.

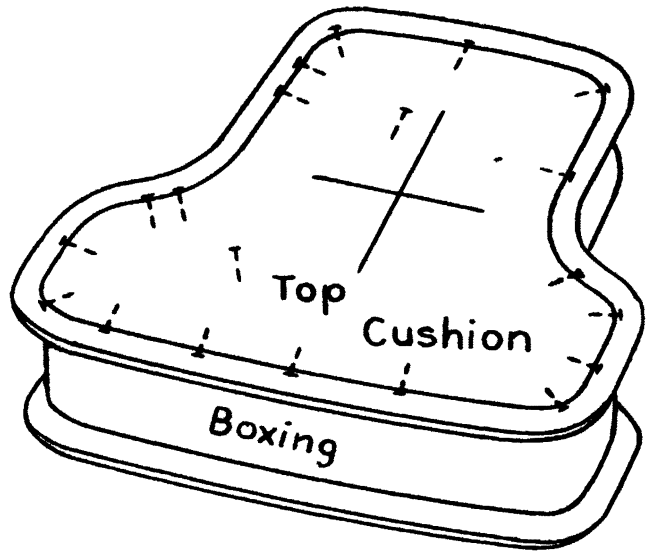


Figure 17

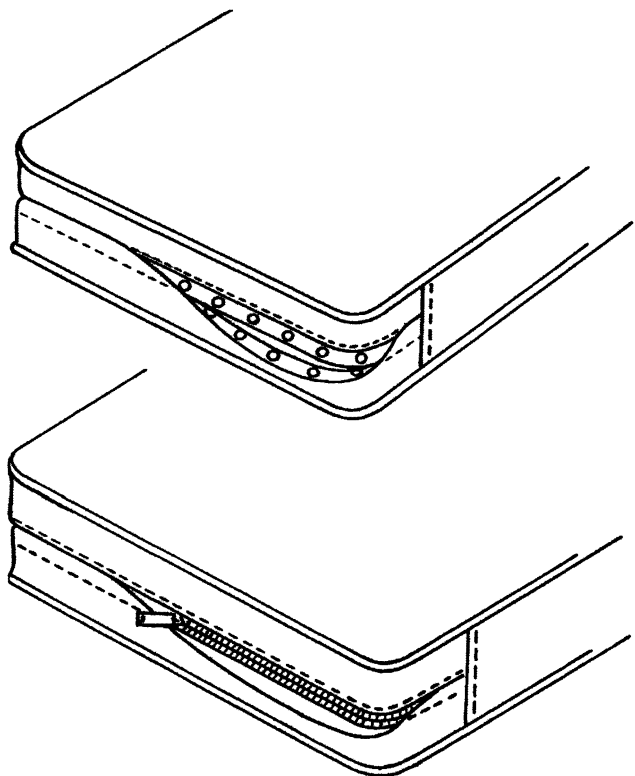


Figure 18

ESTIMATING YARDAGE NEEDED

When buying material for the slip covers you must know the correct amount needed for the chair, or divan to be covered.

Each slip cover will have a seat, an inside and outside back, and sometimes inside and outside arms, wings, a loose cushion, borders and flounce. Measure each part separately at the widest and longest points. Allow one inch for all seams. If the chair has a soft seat or spring edge seat, you must allow on the seat, inside arms and inside back pieces for tuck-ins. When the seat is depressed this tuck-in keeps it from tearing away from the arms and back sections. The amount of material to tuck-in varies with the chair. The tuck-in should be as deep as the shallowest part of the open space between the inside arm and seat and inside back and seat. The depth is five to ten inches. Allow this amount on both inside arms and inside back.

HOW TO MEASURE THE CHAIR

To decide the width of material you should measure the widest place on the chair. Then you can decide whether 36 inches or wider material will cut to the best advantage (figure 19).

Allow extra material for making cording. One yard of material 36 inches wide will cut 24 yards of bias strips $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. If the material is figured add from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 yards of material for matching and correctly placing designs.

If the pattern is large or the stripes are wide and the pattern runs only one way, more material will be needed than if the pattern is small or it has an all over design.

The following is a general guide for determining the amount of material needed. This should only be used to check your own measurements:

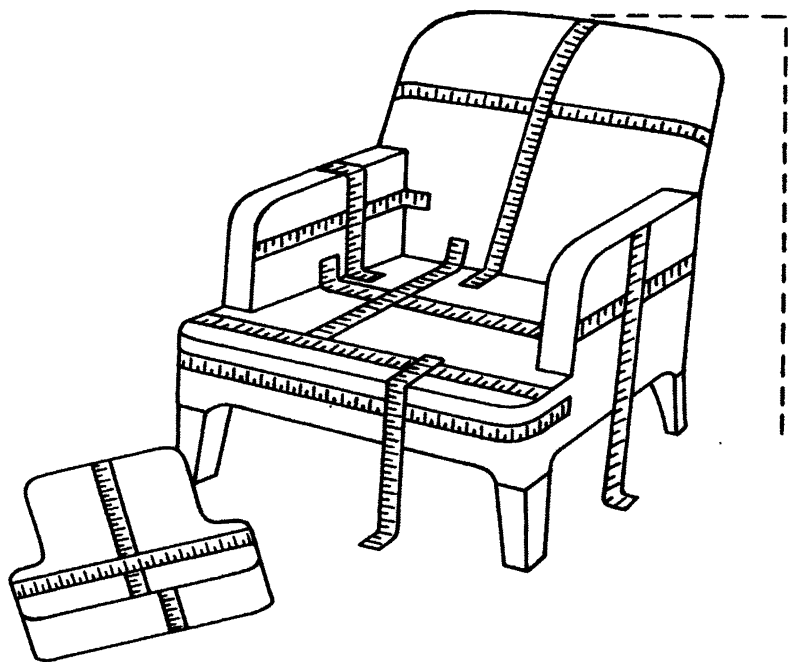


Figure 19

RE-UPHOLSTERING

Type	50-in. Yardage	36-in. Yardage
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Sofas:

Lawson _____	10 ³ / ₄ yards
Club _____	10 ³ / ₄ yards
Large (Charles of London) _____	13-14 yards
Period sofas _____	9 ³ / ₄ yards
Love seats _____	7 yards

Chairs:

Wing (large) _____	5 ¹ / ₂ -6 ¹ / ₂ yards	_____	11 yards
Wing (small) _____	3 ¹ / ₂ -4 yards	_____	8 yards
Club _____	5 ¹ / ₂ -6 ¹ / ₂ yards	_____	11 yards
Arm (loose cushion) _____	5-5 ¹ / ₂ yards	_____	9-11 yards
Cogswell _____	4 ¹ / ₂ -5 yards	_____	9 yards
Boudoir (small)			
Tight cushion _____	3-3 ¹ / ₂ yards	_____	5 yards
Loose cushion _____	3 ¹ / ₂ -4 yards	_____	8 yards
Slipper chair _____	2 ¹ / ₂ yards	_____	3 ¹ / ₂ yards

Chaise Lounge:

- Tight cushion _____	3 ¹ / ₂ -4 yards	_____	7 yards
Loose cushion _____	5 ¹ / ₂ -6 yards	_____	11 ¹ / ₂ yards

The most accurate way to buy material is to measure each piece of the pattern and plot the pieces on graph paper, considering the width of fabric to be used. This can also serve as a layout guide when you are ready to place the pattern on the fabric for cutting.

CUTTING THE SLIP COVER

When the drafted pattern is finished and checked, take the pieces apart. Place the pattern on the slip cover material right side up. By placing the pattern right side up each piece is cut for the side of the chair on which the pattern was drafted.

In using materials with a large design place the center of the back, seat and arm pattern near the center of the design. Place the pattern on the designs to get a pleasing arrangement. Pin the pieces securely in place and cut.

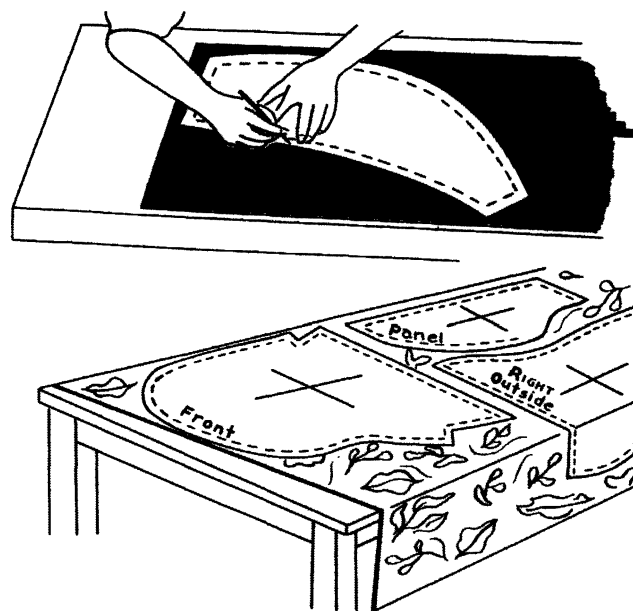


Figure 20

To transfer the seam allowance from the pattern to the slip cover material, lay the pattern, which is still pinned to the material on a tracing board and mark all seams and notches with a pencil or use tailor's tacks.

A tracing board may be made by attaching a sheet of carbon paper, carbon side up, to a piece of cardboard with tape or paste. Then each piece is laid on the board and the seam allowances and darts marked (figure 20). The tailor's tacks may be made three to four inches apart along the seam allowance.

SLIP COVER CONSTRUCTION

Seam Finishes

Many kinds of seams may be used in making slip covers. The more common ones are:

1. Plain Seam—The plain seam is used in joining pieces of the slip cover together where the seams are not to be decorated. Plain seams are generally used to join together the seat section and the tuck-in allowance (figure 21), and also the arm and back sections.

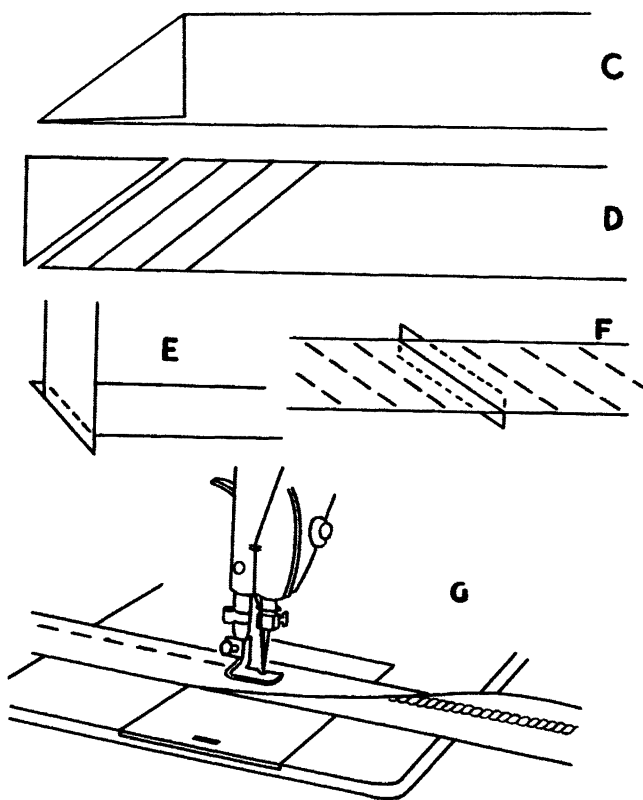


Figure 22 and 23

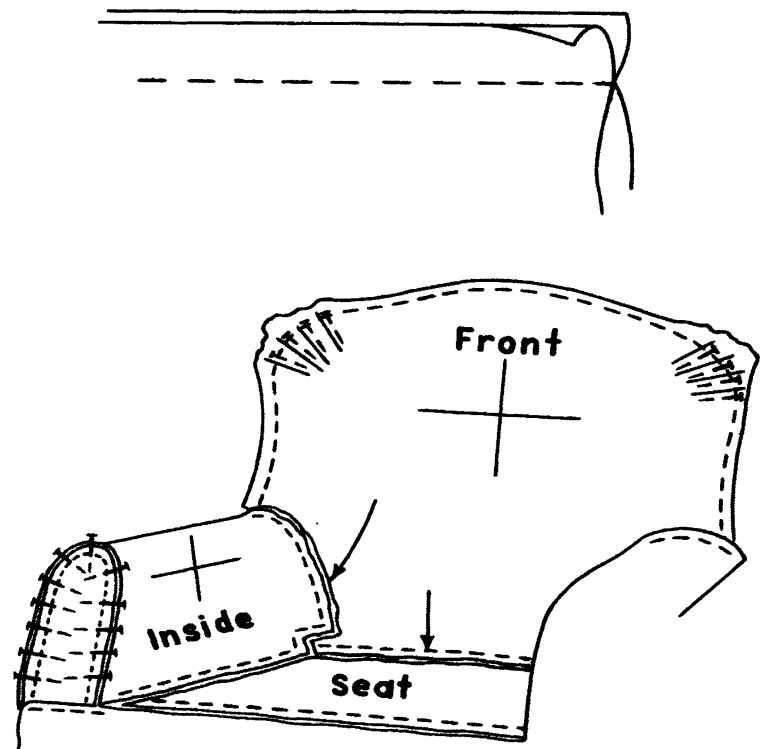
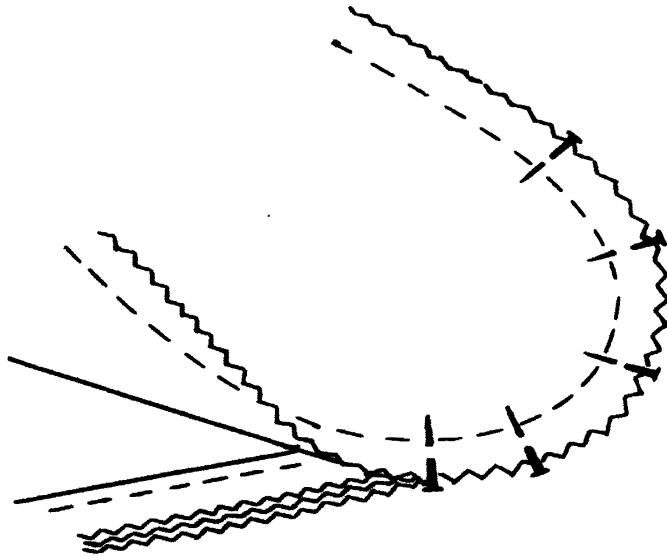


Figure 21

2. Corded Seam—The corded seam is the most commonly used finish for decorated seams. The cording is made by covering cotton cable cord with bias strips of material. Cut the bias strips $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide, depending upon the size of the cord to be used. The bias for the cording may be the same as the slip cover material or of another pleasing color.

To cut a true bias (figure 22 top), fold the material with straight edges at right angle to each other. Crease along this fold and cut. Measure for the desired width and cut into strips. Bias strips are joined with the straight of the material. The corners are clipped and the seams are pressed open.

Place cord in the center of bias strip. Fold strip over cord, bringing edges together. Baste the material close to the cord and stitch with a cording or zipper foot (figure 23 bottom).



Let the open edges of the bias covering extend outward. Place the line of stitching on the cording directly over the marked seam allowance of one piece. Pin, baste, and stitch the cording in place. To attach the adjoining piece; notch the marked seam allowance; pin, baste and stitch to the other section.

Place the line of stitching on the cording directly over the marked seam allowance of the material and pin in place. Let the edges of the bias covering extend outward. Cut the edge of the slip cover (figure 24). Never attempt to join sections and insert cording or fringe in one step. Double stitching keeps the seams from ripping.

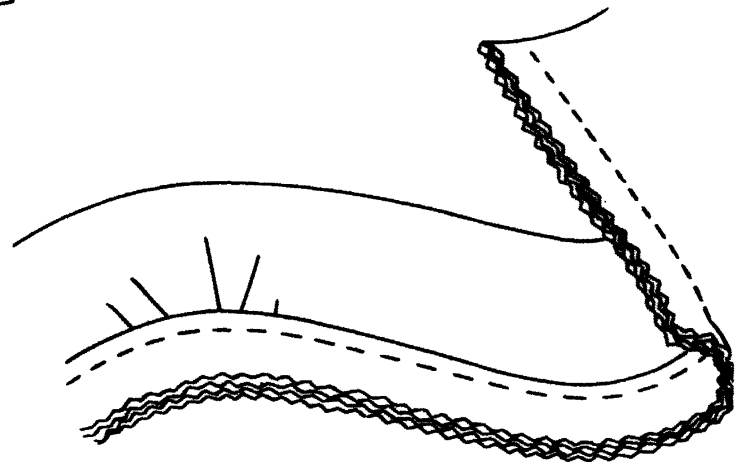


Figure 24

3. Mock French Seam—Where a cording foot is not available a mock French seam may be used to give a corded effect. The raw edges of the seam are turned toward each other and stitched near the edge. The stitching is usually $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$ inches wide, depending upon the thickness of the material (figure 25).

4. Double Stitched Lap Seam—This seam is used most commonly to join the skirt to the slip cover if cording is not used. The double stitching holds the seams together and makes the skirt lay flat against the chair. Turn the seam allowance

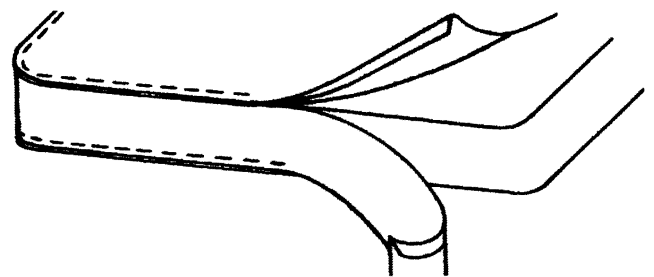
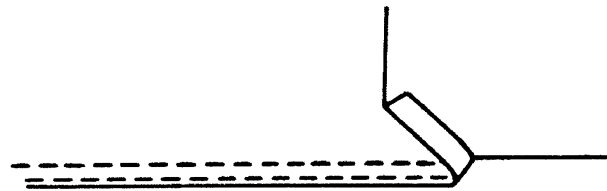


Figure 25

to the wrong side of the upper piece. Place the fold over the lower seam allowance and baste and stitch close to the folded edge. A second row of stitching may be added $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the first row (figure 26).



SEAM FINISHES

Pinked seams may be used on slip cover material that does not ravel. Overcast seams on material that is loosely woven (figure 27).

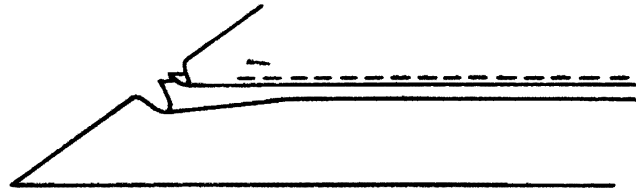


Figure 26

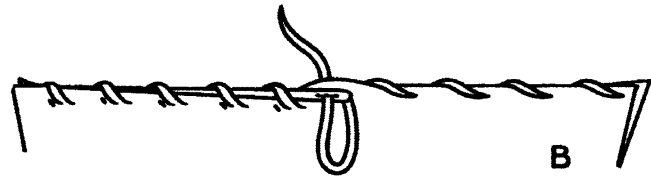
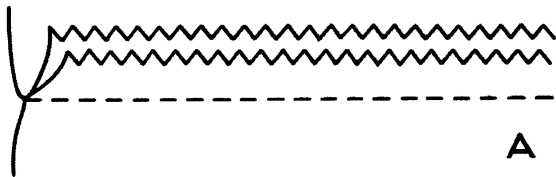


Figure 27

BOTTOM FINISHES

Determine the depth of skirt by measuring from the floor to the bottom of the chair (figure 28). The skirt on an average chair is 4 to 7 inches deep and should clear the floor about 1 or $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Allow one inch for the hem and one inch for the seam.

The amount of material needed for a skirt will depend upon the pleating arrangement you choose. It may vary from two to three times the measurement of the distance around the bottom of the chair or divan.

Suggested skirt finishes are shown in (figure 29). If you use a light weight material a shirred finish is appropriate for a chair of light construction. On a chair of heavier

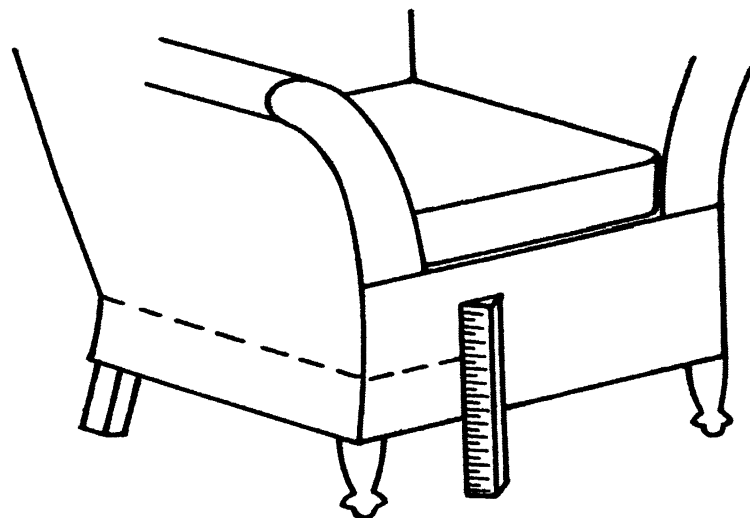


Figure 28

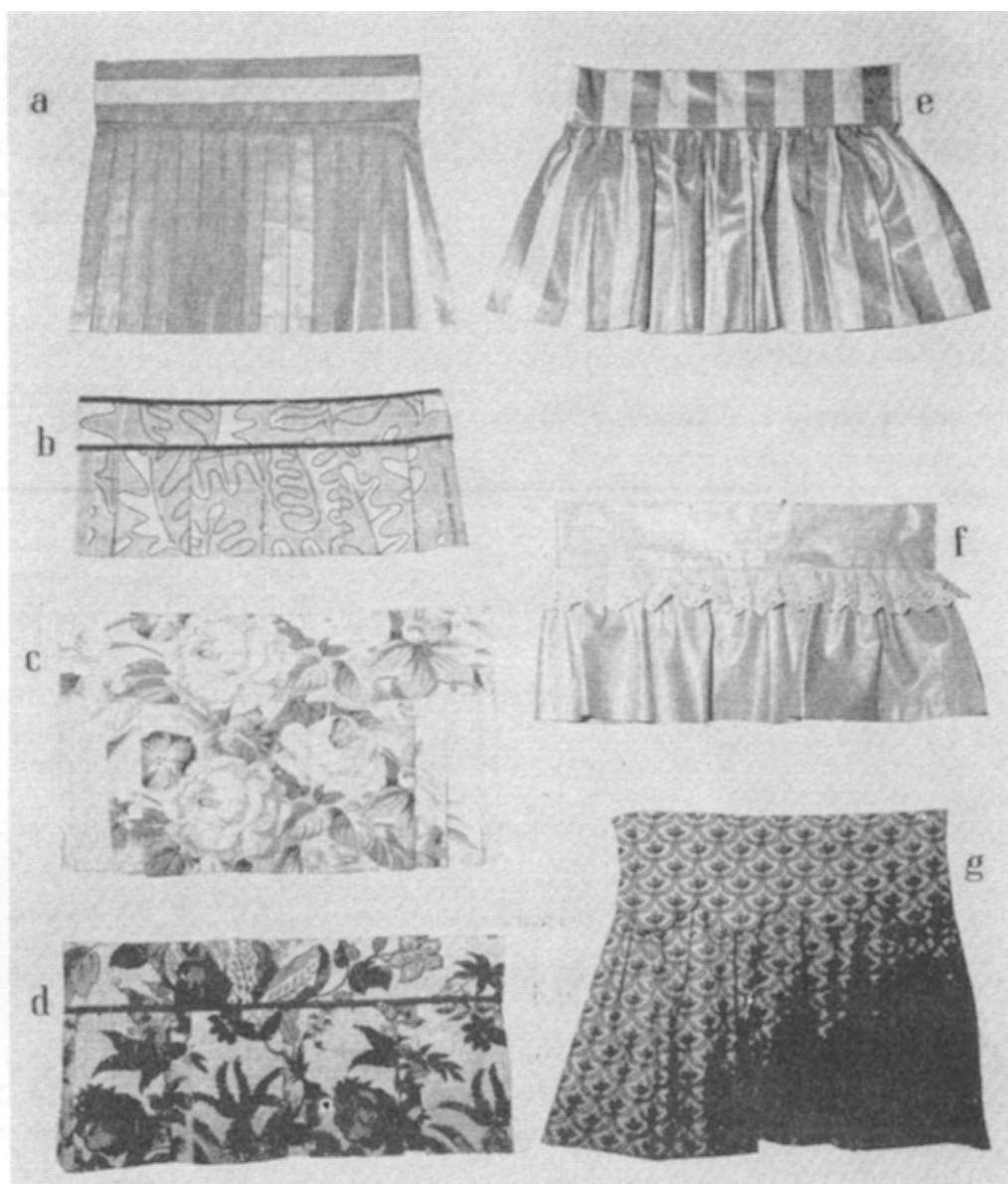


Figure 29

construction where coarser material is used, box pleating is better.

There are two methods of box pleating; you may arrange box pleats touching each other (figure 29b), or with a space between them (figure 29d). The pleats may be two or three inches apart on slip covers for heavier pieces of furniture, while on lighter pieces $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches are good widths between pleats.

Modern furniture with a box-like appearance may be more attractive when finished without a pleated flounce. A slip cover seldom looks complete on furniture with curved lines unless a skirt or flounce is added to the bottom. The skirt gives the chair a more finished appearance.

- A.** Knife pleated striped chintz with self cording.
- B.** Box pleated with contrasting cording.

- C. Center front motif plain with knife pleats on either side. Top stitching is used instead of cording.
- D. Open spaced box pleats, joined with contrasting cording.
- E. Gathered fabric with self cording. (Note, fabric same in A and E, different treatment).
- F. Gathered chintz with gathered eyelet trim.
- G. Shirred bottom flounce under scalloped edge. (Motif of fabric lends self to scalloped treatment).

BACK PLACKET OF SLIP COVER

The back placket of the slip cover may be fastened with a zipper, grip snapper, enlarged heavy duty snaps and hooks and eyes (figure 30). Whatever kind of fastener is used be sure it is rustproof.

Use an 18 to 20 inch opening, depending on the height of the chair. Place the opening end of the

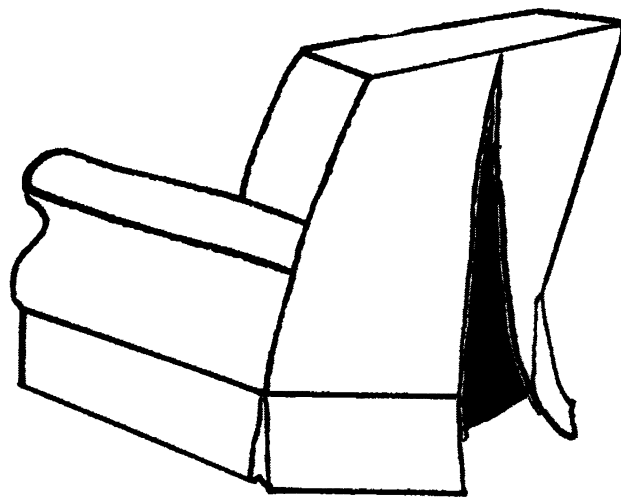
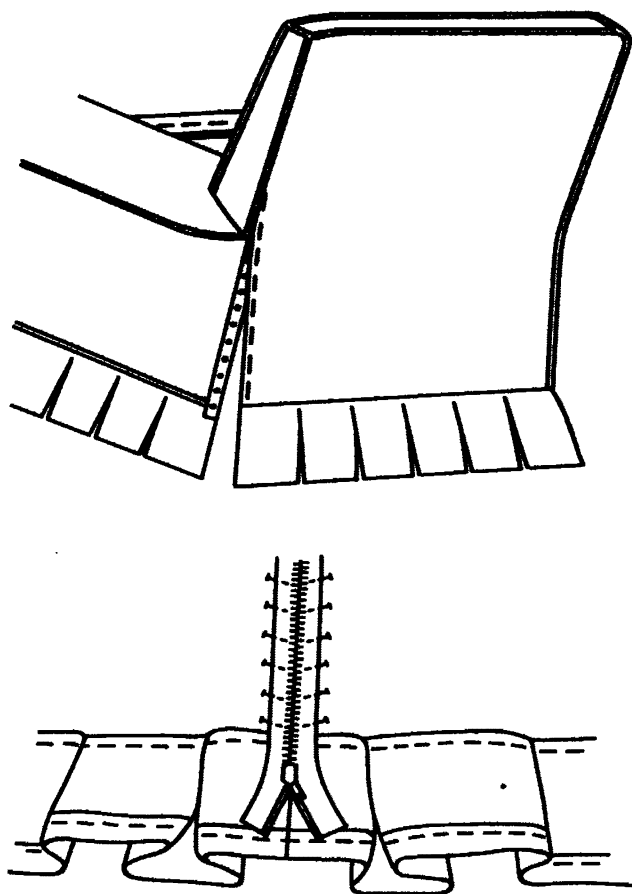


Figure 30

zipper about two inches below the seam joining the skirt to the slip cover. The grip snappers, hooks and eyes may be purchased on tape by the yard.

CARE OF SLIP COVERS

If your slip cover materials were marked "color fast" to washing and "pre-shrunk" you can feel relatively safe in washing them at home. Here are some suggestions that may give you more confidence in doing your slip cover laundry.

Take the cover from the chair and dust it thoroughly to remove loose dirt and lint. You may want to give spots or badly soiled areas some special rubbing with soap and a brush before putting the cover in the washing machine. Wash in lukewarm water and good suds from three to five minutes depending on the condition of the cover. Rinse in lukewarm water until the water is clear.

Loosen the tension on the wringer rolls and remove water after each rinse. If a spinner-type dryer is used remove the cover before wrinkles form in the fabric. Hanging indoors to dry will prevent sun fading. During the drying process a towel can be used to absorb moisture from seam and hems.

Take the slip cover from the line while it is slightly damp. Press the skirt section on the wrong side to avoid a shine. Also press the placket and zipper or snap tapes so it will fit smoothly when dry. Do not press the body of the cover.

Now cover the chair with an old sheet, feed sack, or place paper towels along the seam areas to protect the chair from the moisture in the damp cover. Slip the cover on the chair, smooth it into place and allow it to dry completely. Remove the cover from the chair, take off the sheet, sacks or paper towels and put the cover back on. This will result in a more perfect fit than if you had tried to iron the cover into shape.

The slip cover will look fresher and wear longer if it is not allowed to become badly soiled before washing.