

Types of Fabric: Names, Pictures and Uses from A to Z

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In one paragraph

Fabrics are classified in two ways: by construction, which is how the material is held together, and by fibre, which is what it is made of. By construction there are four groups. A woven fabric has two sets of yarns crossing at right angles. A knitted fabric is made of rows of interlocking loops. A nonwoven is a sheet of fibres bonded directly, with no yarn at all; felt is one. The fourth, smaller group covers everything else: lace, nets, braids and tufted fabrics. By fibre, a fabric is natural (cotton, linen, wool, silk), man-made from a natural polymer (viscose, lyocell, acetate), synthetic (polyester, nylon, acrylic, elastane), or a blend.

At a glance

Types of fabric from A to Z

Fabric	Construction	Typical fibre	Weight or hand	Typical uses
Aertex	Woven, cellular (leno-type)	Cotton	Light, open	Sports and school shirts
Aida cloth	Woven, even-weave grid	Cotton	Stiff, open grid	Cross-stitch embroidery
Baize	Woven, napped	Wool, cotton	Dense, felt-like nap	Card and gaming tables, notice boards
Batiste	Woven, plain, fine	Cotton, polyester-cotton	Sheer, very light, soft	Lingerie, nightwear, linings, handkerchiefs
Bird's eye	Woven dobby pattern, or a knit backing	Cotton, various	Light to medium	Nappies (historically); patterned knits
Bombazine	Woven, twill	Silk warp, worsted weft	Medium, dull	Historic dress and mourning wear
Broadcloth	Woven, plain, fine crosswise rib	Cotton, polyester-cotton	Light to medium, lustrous	Shirts
Brocade	Woven, Jacquard, raised figures	Silk, metallic yarn, synthetics	Medium to heavy	Saris, evening wear, upholstery
Buckram	Woven, open, stiffened	Cotton, linen	Stiff	Interlinings, hats, bookbinding
Cable knit	Weft knit, loops crossed	Wool, acrylic	Heavy, bulky	Sweaters
Calico	Woven, plain	Cotton	Medium	Dresses, quilts, toiles, bags
Cambric	Woven, plain, calendered	Cotton, linen	Light, smooth, slight gloss	Handkerchiefs, shirts, linings
Canvas and duck	Woven, plain, compact	Cotton, linen, synthetics	Heavy: about 200 to 1,700 g/m ² (6 to 50 oz/yd ²)	Tents, bags, shoes, sails, artists' canvas
Casement	A use: curtain cloth	Cotton, blends	Sheer to medium	Curtains
Chambray	Woven, plain, coloured warp, white weft	Cotton	Light; nearly square, e.g. 80 × 76 threads per inch	Shirts, dresses; heavier grades for workwear
Charmeuse	Woven, satin	Silk, polyester	Light, fluid; silk from about 12 momme	Lingerie, blouses, evening wear

Fabric	Construction	Typical fibre	Weight or hand	Typical uses
Cheesecloth	Woven, low-count plain	Cotton	Very light, loose	Kitchen and dairy use, summer clothes
Chenille	Woven or knitted from chenille yarn	Cotton, viscose, acrylic, polyester	Soft, fuzzy pile	Upholstery, throws, bathrobes
Cheviot	Woven, twill (a tweed)	Wool	Medium to heavy, harsh	Suits, coats
Chiffon	Woven, plain, highly twisted yarns	Silk, polyester, nylon	Sheer; silk about 6 to 10 momme	Evening wear, scarves, overlays
Chino	Woven, twill	Cotton, cotton blends	Medium, smooth	Trousers, summer uniforms
Chintz	Woven, plain, printed and glazed	Cotton	Medium, glazed	Curtains, upholstery
Corduroy	Woven, cut weft pile in lengthwise cords	Cotton	Medium to heavy; 5 to 16 cords per inch	Trousers, jackets
Crepe	Woven or knitted; twisted yarns, crepe weave or finish	Silk, wool, viscose, polyester	Light, pebbly	Dresses, blouses
Crepe de chine	Woven, plain, crepe-twisted weft	Silk, polyester	Light, soft	Blouses, dresses, scarves
Crewel	Wool embroidery on a woven ground	Wool on cotton or linen	Medium to heavy	Curtains, cushions, bedcovers
Damask	Woven, Jacquard, reversible satin figure	Linen, cotton, silk	Medium, flat, glossy	Table linen, furnishings
Denim	Woven, 2/1 or 3/1 twill, coloured warp	Cotton, cotton-elastane	Medium to heavy	Jeans, jackets, workwear
Dimity	Woven, plain, often corded stripes	Cotton	Sheer, thin	Summer dresses, babywear, curtains
Double knit	Weft knit, two needle beds	Polyester, wool, cotton	Medium, stable	Dresses, trousers
Drill	Woven, 2/1 twill	Cotton	Medium to heavy, firm	Uniforms, workwear, pocketing
Felt	Nonwoven (matted or needled); also fulled woven wool	Wool, synthetics	Varies; no grain	Hats, crafts, insulation
Flannel	Woven, plain or twill, napped	Wool, cotton	Medium, soft	Suits, shirts, nightwear, sheets
Fleece	Knitted (sometimes woven), napped or pile	Polyester, cotton	Light to heavy; polar fleece in 100, 200 and 300 weights	Sweatshirts, jackets
Foulard	Woven, 2/2 twill, printed	Silk, polyester, acetate	Light, lustrous	Ties, scarves
French terry	Weft knit, loops on the back	Cotton, cotton-polyester	Medium, soft	Sweatshirts, joggers
Fustian	Woven, heavy, often cut weft pile	Cotton (historically linen warp)	Heavy	Workwear
Gabardine	Woven, warp-faced twill (45° or 63°)	Worsted wool, cotton, polyester	Medium, firm	Suits, trousers, raincoats
Gauze	Woven, gauze (leno) or loose plain	Cotton, silk, synthetics	Very light, open	Dressings, curtains

Fabric	Construction	Typical fibre	Weight or hand	Typical uses
Georgette	Woven, plain, crepe yarns both ways	Silk, polyester	Sheer, grainy	Saris, blouses, dresses
Gingham	Woven, plain, yarn-dyed checks	Cotton, cotton blends	Light to medium	Shirts, dresses, tablecloths
Glass fabric	Woven from glass filament yarn	Glass	Medium to heavy	Fire blankets, insulation, composites
Intarsia	Weft knit, colour blocks	Wool, acrylic	Medium	Sweaters, socks
Interlock	Weft knit, double (crossed 1×1 rib)	Cotton	Medium, smooth both sides	T-shirts, polo shirts, babywear
Jacquard knit	Weft knit, needle-selected pattern	Wool, acrylic, cotton	Medium	Sweaters
Jersey (single)	Weft knit, plain stitch	Cotton, viscose, polyester, elastane	Light; two common T-shirts use 145 and about 180 g/m ²	T-shirts, underwear, dresses
Kashmir silk	Woven, plain, embroidered or printed	Silk	Light	Saris, shirts, stoles
Khadi	Hand-woven from hand-spun yarn	Cotton, silk, wool	Varies, slightly uneven	Shirts, kurtas, furnishings
Khaki	A colour; usually drill or twill	Cotton, wool, blends	Medium	Uniforms, workwear
Lace	Openwork, by hand or machine	Cotton, nylon, polyester	Light, open	Lingerie, bridal wear, trims
Lamé	Woven (or knitted) with flat metallic threads	Metallic yarn with silk or synthetics	Light to medium, metallic	Evening wear, costumes
Lawn	Woven, plain, fine	Cotton, linen	Light, crisp	Blouses, handkerchiefs, nightwear
Leno	Woven, paired twisting warp ends	Cotton, synthetics	Open, stable	Curtains, nets, produce sacks
Linsey-woolsey	Woven	Linen warp, wool weft	Coarse, sturdy	Historic clothing and bed covers
Madras	Woven, plain, yarn-dyed checks and plaids	Cotton	Light	Summer shirts, shorts
Madras muslin	Woven gauze with cut extra-weft figures	Cotton	Sheer	Curtains
Moleskin	Woven, heavy sateen, napped and sheared	Cotton	Heavy, suede-like	Trousers, workwear
Mousseline	Woven, plain, very fine	Silk, wool, cotton	Sheer, light	Dresses, scarves
Muslin	Woven, plain	Cotton, polyester-cotton	Sheer to medium	Dresses, toiles, kitchen use
Net and tulle	Knotted or machine-made mesh; tulle has a hexagonal mesh	Nylon, polyester, silk, cotton	Very light, open	Veils, ballet costumes, curtains
Organdy	Woven, plain, chemically stiffened	Cotton	Sheer, stiff, wiry	Collars, trims, curtains
Organza	Woven, plain, filament	Silk, polyester, nylon	Sheer, stiff; silk about 5 to 7.5 momme	Bridal and evening wear, overlays
Oxford	Woven, modified basket	Cotton, polyester-cotton	Medium, soft	Shirts

Fabric	Construction	Typical fibre	Weight or hand	Typical uses
Percale	Woven, plain, close	Cotton, polyester-cotton	Crisp, matt; 80 × 80 threads per inch or more	Sheets, dresses
Pointelle	Weft knit with transferred-loop eyelets	Cotton, viscose	Light, lacy	Tops, babywear
Poplin	Woven, plain, more ends than picks	Cotton, polyester-cotton	Light to medium, fine rib	Shirts, dresses
Purl	Weft knit, courses alternate face and back	Wool, acrylic	Thick	Sweaters, children's wear
Raschel	Warp knit	Nylon, polyester, cotton	Light to heavy, often open	Lace, power mesh, nets
Rib	Weft knit, wales alternate face and back	Cotton, cotton-elastane, wool	Very elastic across the width	Cuffs, collars, waistbands, fitted tops
Sateen	Woven, satin weave	Cotton	Smooth, lustrous	Sheets
Satin	Woven, satin weave	Silk, acetate, polyester	Smooth, lustrous	Evening wear, linings
Seersucker	Woven, plain; slack and tight warp stripes	Cotton, synthetics	Light, crinkled stripes	Summer suits, shirts, dresses
Serge	Woven, 2/2 twill, smooth face	Worsted wool	Medium, firm	Suits, uniforms
Shantung	Woven, plain, slubbed yarn	Silk	Medium, crisp	Bridal and evening wear, furnishings
Sheeting	A use: wide plain or twill cloth	Cotton, polyester-cotton, linen	Medium	Bed sheets
Sliver knit	Weft knit with a fibre-sliver pile	Acrylic, modacrylic	Heavy, long pile	Imitation fur, linings
Taffeta	Woven, plain, fine crosswise rib	Silk, acetate, nylon, polyester	Crisp, rustling	Evening wear, linings
Tartan	Woven, usually 2/2 twill, coloured sett	Wool	Medium	Kilts, scarves, skirts
Terry	Woven, uncut loop pile	Cotton, cotton blends	Medium to heavy, absorbent	Towels, bathrobes
Ticking	Woven, close (plain, twill or satin)	Cotton, linen	Heavy, dense	Mattress and pillow covers
Tissue	Woven, plain, with zari	Silk, synthetics, metallic yarn	Light, metallic sheen	Saris
Tricot	Warp knit	Nylon, polyester, acetate	Light, smooth	Lingerie, linings, sportswear
Tweed	Woven, 2/2 twill, woollen yarns	Wool, wool blends	Heavy, rough	Jackets, coats, suits
Velour	Woven or knitted, short thick pile	Cotton, wool, polyester	Soft, plush	Coats, upholstery, leisurewear
Velvet	Woven, cut warp pile	Silk, viscose, cotton, polyester	Medium, dense pile	Evening wear, upholstery
Velveteen	Woven, short cut weft pile	Cotton	Medium, low pile	Jackets, trousers, dresses
Voile	Woven, plain	Cotton, polyester	Sheer, light, soft	Blouses, sheer curtains
Whipcord	Woven, very steep twill with cords	Worsted, wool blends, cotton	Heavy, firm	Uniforms, riding breeches

Test yourself

Ten questions on this topic. Answer them without looking, then check on the last page.

1. What is a nonwoven fabric?
2. Why do most fabric names, such as chiffon or jersey, not tell you the fibre?
3. What is the momme, used to sell silk, equal to?
4. How does a twill weave produce diagonal lines across the face of the cloth?
5. What shares of all fibre produced in 2024 did polyester and cotton have, according to Textile Exchange?
6. How many grams per square metre is 1 oz/yd²?
7. In Peirce's cover factor in English units, what value means the yarns touch?
8. Why is the inside of a pair of denim jeans paler than the outside?
9. Velvet is a warp-pile fabric; what kind of pile does velveteen have?
10. What does grey (greige) fabric mean?

Answers

Each answer is stated in the article; the section to read again is named after it.

1. **A sheet of fibres bonded directly, with no yarn at all; felt is one.**
See: Opening
2. **Most fabric names describe a construction and a finish, not a fibre.**
See: Opening
3. **A Japanese unit equal to about 4.3 g/m².**
See: Types of fabric from A to Z
4. **It steps the interlacing along by one thread on each pick.**
See: How to tell woven, knitted and nonwoven fabric apart › Woven fabrics
5. **Polyester 59% and cotton 19%.**
See: Types of fabric by fibre
6. **33.906 g/m².**
See: Measuring a fabric: weight, threads and cover › Fabric weight: GSM and ounces
7. **28.**
See: Measuring a fabric: weight, threads and cover › Cover factor: how closely a cloth is woven
8. **Denim has a coloured (traditionally indigo) warp and a white weft.**
See: Pictures of fabric types, A to Z › Denim
9. **A weft pile.**
See: Pictures of fabric types, A to Z › Velvet
10. **Any fabric as it comes off the loom or knitting machine, before scouring, bleaching, dyeing or finishing.**
See: Names for a use, a finish or a state, not a type › Grey (greige) fabric

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