

FAST AND EASY HOME DECORATING

An A to Z Guide to Creating a Beautiful Home
with a Minimum of Time and Money



ELIZABETH J. MUSHENO

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◦INTRODUCTION◦

Fast and Easy Home Decorating: An A to Z Guide to Creating a Beautiful Home with a Minimum of Time and Money, presents a new approach to decorating that will help you breeze through your next project. This alphabetized handbook offers quick ways to create new looks for every room in your home, using fabric in simplified sewn, tied-on, stapled, or glued procedures that are time-saving and economical—allowing you to assert your individual preference in interior design; eliminate the hazards of amateurish workmanship; and make decorating an enjoyable leisure-time hobby.

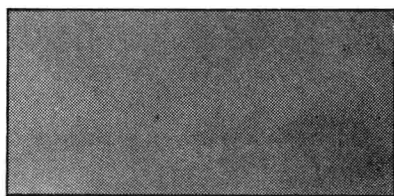
This book includes a commonsense approach to sewing for the home with many machine-sewn finishes that will appeal to the creative decorator who has little time for classic hand-sewn techniques. Simplified decorating is much in demand

for those who want to make quick or seasonal changes. By selecting durable fabric that requires low maintenance and easy finishes that will withstand frequent cleanings, these goals may be achieved with a minimum of effort with the help of *Fast and Easy Home Decorating*.

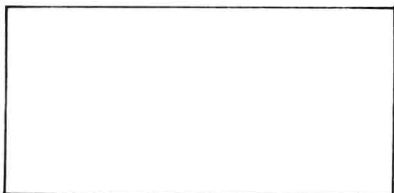
Those who enjoy fabric crafts and who want to do their own decorating will find the step-by-step illustrated shortcuts easy to follow and foolproof. As you turn the pages of this book, you will find simple and straightforward techniques that will aid you in creating new decorative items for your home. Each technique requires a minimum amount of time and is designed to place a minimum amount of strain on your budget. With the help of this book, it will be easy to create a home with an artistic touch and pizzazz that is uniquely yours.

HOW • TO • USE • THIS • BOOK •

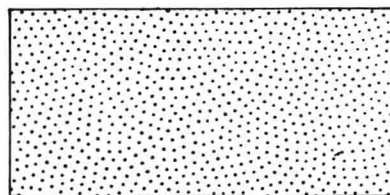
Before starting any decorating project, first read the next two chapters: "Full Speed Ahead," and "You, the Decorator," and then browse through the alphabetized section to become familiar with the many procedures and terms. You will find sewing shortcuts, hints, and easy-to-make items that will help to improve your decorating skills and save you time. Use this handbook as a quick reference guide throughout each project. Study the following fabric key to understand the shading used on most of the line drawings throughout the book. Highlighted are the right side of the fabric, the wrong side of the fabric, stiffening, lining, and batting.



Right side of fabric



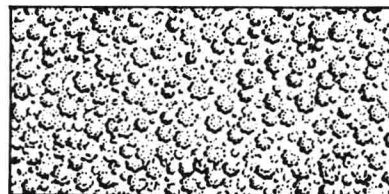
Wrong side of fabric



Stiffening



Lining



Batting

Speedy decorating procedures are highlighted with a hairline-rule box throughout the alphabetized section.

Pertinent suggestions appear throughout the alphabetized section to give special information. These are set off by lines and are preceded by the word "HINT."

FULL ◦ SPEED ◦ AHEAD

To get off to a fast start when decorating, take time to consider the following: time, money, capability, lifestyle, fabric, tools, notions, and procedures.

Be honest about your skills and the time it will take to mark, cut, and construct. If you need to work in a confined area or use “make-do” tools or work against a deadline, allow for the time needed to restore your work area to the family’s needs, or for interruptions. The ideal is to have a space where your project can be left undisturbed until completed, but most people do not have that luxury. Beautiful decorating has been created in a one-room studio apartment where everything must be stored in order to open a couch for sleeping. Busy people who like to decorate always devise a way to pursue their hobby in as many steps as needed when a project cannot be completed in one day.

Step 1: Have a Plan

To move at full speed, you need a plan to save time and energy. Decorating is a very logical art form that is done with the aid of specific measurements worked out on the fabric, then cut to the requirements, without a pattern. These cut lengths of fabric are draped, shaped, and tied into beautiful masterpieces using basic tools.

Review the section on pages 9–12—a four-step evaluation list for developing a personality for your home; creating a color scheme; what to consider in each room; and how to develop a plan of action. To make an impact with your decorating skills, you will need a plan, even for the simple addition of pillows for accent or a reupholstered *chair cushion* to create a harmonious color scheme in a room that reflects your lifestyle.

Know the exact measurements of pillow forms, chair seats, windows, bed, couch, or wall—guesswork can be costly.

Careful selection of fabric, supplies, and notions will speed up construction. Having an organized work space and the appropriate tools and equipment will save time. Use the telephone Yellow Pages to locate suppliers under such listings as Draperies & Curtains (retail and custom-made), Drapery & Curtain Fixtures, Fabric Shops (retail, foam and sponge rubber), Hardware (retail), Lumber (retail), Upholsterer’s Supplies, and Upholstery Fabrics (retail). Select shops in your area and plan to visit the appropriate ones personally. Phoning will not give you an overall view of the wide variety of supplies that are available for do-it-yourself decorators.

Step 2: Fast-and-Easy Fabrics

Choose an easy-to-handle fabric to speed up your decorating project. Select fabrics in solid colors, with vertical stripes, or with an all-over pattern that does not require matching. These types of fabrics will require less time during the marking, cutting, and construction steps. Prints with a predominant *pattern repeat*, plaids, checks, and horizontal stripes will require more marking and construction time. Some great designer fabrics do not require matching, and many solid-color fabrics such as gabardine, ten-ounce canvas, cobble cord or wale corduroy, petaldown, chino, denim, wool flannel, chintz, cottons or blends with all-over woven designs, and some open-weave or semisheer fabrics are easy to cut and sew. Most designer fabrics with a predominant pattern repeat and glorious English floral chintz are easy to sew after the correct lengths are cut.

Step 3: Notions

Choose notions that can save you time, speed up construction, add to the beauty of the finished project, and are serviceable.

Covered cording and piping. Available in decorator colors, these trims will save you time when you do not cut fabric strips and make your own. They can be purchased by the yard or in precut packages.

Fabric glue. Available in most shops, fabric glue is designed to work well on fabric crafts. Choose a white glue—Elmer's, Sobo, or Tacky—that dries clear. Use according to instructions on the bottle.

Fusible adhesives. The best known is Stitch Witchery. Use it instead of hand or machine stitching to bond an *appliqué*, *hem*, or *trim* in place. These meshlike fibers are available in 18" widths by the yard, or in precut packages in ¾" to 3" widths. Fuse layers together according to product instructions.

Hammer-on snaps. Sold in packages with a tool to apply them to your fabric, hammer-on snaps may have a plain round ring or a decorative head. Use

them to close the opening in a *duvet*, *pillow*, or any other loose opening that does not have a lot of strain exerted on it.

Iron-on mending fabric. Available in prepackaged patches or strips. Cut into the desired shape for *appliqué* or band *trim*. Adhere to foundation fabric according to package instructions.

Pleater tape with corresponding hooks. Add to unlined, lined, or sheer draperies for fast and easy *pinch pleats*. See *Draperies* procedures #1, #2, and #5.

Shirr-tape. Available by the yard in 1-cord, 2-cord, or 4-cord widths, these tapes have a heavy cord that is woven into the fabric in such a way that the cord pulls easily to form shirring or gathers. Shirr-tapes save time and eliminate the aggravation of broken threads when long edges need to be gathered to fit smaller areas. Use the 1-cord to make gathered rows to form scalloped edges on a *tablecloth* or an *Austrian shade* type of *valance*. The 2-cord type helps to make an easily gathered *dust ruffle*. The 4-cord shirr-tape is recommended for stationary draperies (see *Draperies* procedure #10) and a cloud shade (see *Roman shade* procedure #11).

Tape fasteners. These closures are jam-proof fabric strips that are stitched to each side of the opening. Nylon hook-and-loop tape fasteners, such as Velcro, are pressed together to close the opening. Snap or hook-and-eye tape fasteners are soft, flexible, and less bulky than the nylon hook-and-loop type. Tape fasteners are available by the yard or prepackaged. They may be glued or stitched in place.

Step 4: Get Organized

Organization is a key factor in speedy completion of each decorating project. Take the time to study the procedures you have selected and to collect all items needed. Decide whether you have the time to complete the project at one time, or need to plan for several segments. Either way, you will need a work space with a large flat surface for cutting; a

sewing machine; iron; ironing board; measuring, marking, cutting, and sewing tools; and pressing aids.

Work space. When making bedspreads, floor-length curtains, draperies, or tablecloths, you will be using considerable yardage and may need a cutting board if you do not have the space to spread out the fabric on the floor. A ½"-thick sheet of plywood or composition board 4' × 6' or 4' × 8' on 36" to 38" high supports could serve as a cutting table. Use two ironing boards (purchased at a thrift shop), two sets of easy-to-dismantle sawhorse brackets with 2" × 4"s cut to the appropriate lengths and widths, or four chairs with backs of the same height. In some cases the cutting board must be placed over a major piece of furniture in order to have a convenient place to cut.

You may want to pad the plywood with an old blanket to prevent slippage or to protect your fabric from splinters. *Batting* and a decorative fabric could transform your cutting board into a piece of art that could be placed behind a bed or couch when not in use. Make blanket or batting 3"–4" wider and longer than the plywood and the decorative fabric 2" bigger on all edges than the padding. Staple padding to the back of the plywood along the ends and then the long side edges, leaving the corners free. Make smooth folds at the corners and cut out the excess bulk on the underside if you are covering it with fabric. Center fabric over padded plywood. On the underside, turn in the raw edges of the fabric ½" and staple in place along ends and then the long side edges. Make smooth folds at corners and staple to plywood. Think self-help and develop your own time-savers to speed up each decorating project. For example, when stitching long lengths of fabric together, support the additional weight with a card table or chair backs to eliminate extra handling and strain on the fabric that may result in crooked stitching.

Step 5: Tools and Equipment

Great decorating projects have been created with a minimum of tools and equipment, so don't purchase unnecessary gadgets. Add the required tools

and equipment for each job as your skills develop. Be sure to store everything in a convenient place so you won't spend valuable time searching for misplaced items.

Measuring and marking tools. A notebook and a pen are necessary to write down all measurements that will be used to determine the amount of fabric needed.

To measure windows and large areas accurately, a 12' retractable steel tape measure will speed up the process.

A yardstick and a 60"-long nonstretchable tape measure work best when measuring for cutting.

A carpenter's L-square will speed up marking solid-color fabrics.

A 6" metal sewing gauge is needed when measuring, marking, and pressing smaller pieces of fabric.

Masking tape is an excellent tool for making notes on fabric and for marking areas that you want to emphasize when cutting out fabric with a design motif.

Tailor's chalk or a chalk pencil may be used to draw lines and marks across the fabric. A soft lead pencil also works on the wrong side of some fabrics and will not rub off as quickly as chalk. Number off the *pattern repeats* along the selvage for accurate cut lengths.

Cutting tools. A sharp pair of bent-handled shears with 7"–8" blades will make cutting fabric easier.

Four-inch embroidery scissors or thread clips will save time when cutting threads at the sewing machine.

Sewing tools. A sewing machine in excellent condition is a necessity for many decorating projects. Thread and sewing machine needles should be selected according to the weight and type of fabric. A hinged presser foot and hinged zipper foot will expedite sewing over several layers of thick fabric. Hand-sewing needles and a thimble may be needed for some projects.

Pins come in many sizes and lengths and play an important part in decorating. Use ones that are

rustproof, matching their length and thickness to the fabric. Some pins have ball points to prevent damage to delicate fabrics. Size 17 pins are about $1\frac{1}{16}$ " long and are available in fine wires for silk and delicate fabric, or in a weight called "dressmaker pins" for all-purpose use. Size 24 pins are $1\frac{1}{2}$ " long and thicker and are used for heavy fabrics such as corduroy and upholstery fabrics. Size 32 pins are about 2" long with plastic heads (sometimes called corsage pins) and work well when making *comforters* or when *quilting*. T-pins and pushpins are often used to hold trims or other items in place during a basting, stapling, or glueing process.

Pressing aids. Use specific pressing aids to speed up progress and obtain professional-looking results. DO NOT overpress. Use a lift-and-touch method instead of sliding the iron over the fabric. To avoid shine or ridges from the seam allowances on the right side of the fabric, do not exert pressure on the iron.

The ironing board should have a clean, smooth cover and the steam iron should be in excellent working condition.

Use a presscloth to prevent shine or iron marks on the right side of the fabric. Use a purchased presscloth or devise your own from self-fabric or muslin. If you do not have a *needleboard* for corduroy, velvet, or other napped or pile fabrics, use scraps of the self-fabric. Place the pile side of the presscloth on the right side of the fabric. Never place the iron on the right side of the pile. To press

thick upholstery fabric you may need a smooth Turkish towel or washcloth for a presscloth. Be sure to test a scrap of fabric to make sure the fabric will not shrink when pressed with a dampened cloth. Press fabrics with a raised or embroidered surface over a folded Turkish towel. Place the right side down on the towel, protecting any loose threads on the wrong side with a thin presscloth.

A commercially available seam roll or wooden point presser with pounding block will help to prevent the imprint of seam allowances on the right side of the fabric. Substitute two 4"-wide strips cut from a brown paper bag (without printing); slip strips under the seam allowances before pressing the seam open.

A tailor's ham or press mitt will help shape curves and add fullness. Substitute a tightly rolled Turkish towel to get the same results.

Spank edges into the desired shape, and pleats and gathers into soft creases or folds, with a ruler or pounding block after steaming the fabric lightly or spritzing the fabric with a spray bottle of water to avoid shine on the right side of the fabric.

Specialized tools. If you don't already have the following tools, you will need to purchase some of them for specific projects such as reupholstering chair seats or doing upholstered walls: a staple gun and staples recommended for decorating; a hot glue gun and glue sticks; pliers; narrow-nosed screwdriver; and a mat knife.

YOU, ° THE ° DECORATOR

Decorating makes special demands on both time and finances, so it is important to acquaint yourself with the how-to and basic principles before plunging ahead. With an overall plan and budget in hand, and by taking time to master the required techniques, you can turn each room of your home into a pleasant, harmonious, and functional environment to complement your lifestyle.

Having worked in a large decorator fabric firm, I know firsthand some of the pitfalls that beset do-it-yourselfers. The most serious pitfall is to be a spur-of-the-moment, a no-plan, or a last-minute shopper. The spur-of-the-moment shopper first sees a fabric and then purchases it for a project without considering the rest of the room, the fabric design, color harmony, or the correct yardage. The no-plan shopper buys a sale-priced or an inexpensive fabric without considering the wear it will receive. The last-minute shopper is the person having unexpected guests who wants to spruce up the place in hours when it should take days to do the job correctly.

It's easy to make these mistakes, but it's also easy to avoid them. Before starting any home decorating project, take these four important steps and you will save yourself time, money, and heartache.

Step 1: Develop a Personality for Your Home.

To be a pleasant, functional part of your home, each room should have an element that unifies it with the rest of the house—such as harmonizing floor covering and walls. These may reflect the preference of each room's occupant.

A family room usually requires the facilities not only for relaxing but also for informal entertaining. It may have couches or futons that will accommodate overnight guests. Bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms, and large kitchens can have quiet areas with comfortable chairs for reading, relaxing, and chatting, or they can have an area for your favorite hobby. A guest room could double (or triple) as a teenager's hideaway or as an office for the workaholic. Take time to consider your family's needs and all available options before starting a project. In every room, try to create an atmosphere that expresses your own or your family's taste. The decorator who has a home with individuality will have a feeling of satisfaction every time she enters it and her family and friends will share the enjoyment as well.

A home created for contented living requires thoughtful planning, time for shopping, and a desire to select the right item for each decorating

project—at the same time staying within your budget. Many projects require only logic and limited skills while others need more research and attention to detail before starting—as well as some experience. Patience is needed when enough time has not been allowed to complete each step in decorating. If you think you can do something in five hours, you need to allow for interruptions and emergencies, so it is a good idea to double that estimate. Be realistic about your time and your skills and you will achieve the results you were aiming for.

You will achieve the best results if you do your homework and know every aspect of each room in your home, and how your latest project will visually complement the total look of your home. To develop a personality for your home, you need to establish harmonious color guidelines, working with your present furnishings.

Step 2: Create a Color Scheme.

Use an area rug, a picture, an unusual piece of furniture, wallpaper, or a length of fabric with colors that are pleasing to you to create a color scheme—and plan carefully. A good rule is to select one predominant color and then use another color or two to soften the total look. Contrasting colors should complement each other. Blends of the same color may be used for the rug, upholstery, window treatments, and walls for a monochromatic color scheme. *Accent colors* may have a more intense hue of the same color or be a sharp contrast.

Learn to analyze each color to be used, as it must contribute to a harmonious whole. Consider any new color with the color of the existing pieces—rug, draperies, bedspread, and/or upholstered furniture to make sure that the color scheme will be pleasing. For example, all hunter greens are not mixed the same way (even dye-lots vary) and some may be too yellow or too blue. Remember the *primary colors* are red, blue, and yellow, the *secondary colors* are orange, green, and purple and are made by mixing equal parts of the primary colors. The *tertiary colors* are formed by mixing equal parts of the first six colors to create six more colors. Using these twelve basic colors, each *shade*, *tint*, *value*, or *hue* is made by mixing colors and then adding the neutral-

izing colors black and gray (which appears white to the layman's eye). Colors can be made bright by retaining the original color mix, made dull by adding black, or lightened by adding gray.

Blue, green, and purple and their many shades and tints are considered *cool colors*. Red, yellow, and orange with the vast spectrum of shades are called *warm colors*.

Colors can have a physiological effect on your emotions and the way your guests feel about your home, for example:

- *Red* is stimulating and cheering and will encourage conversation and activity. It has been used in factories to increase production. Use sparingly in areas for sleeping, reading, or relaxing.
- *Blue* has an intellectual appeal and navy connotes security. It is relaxing to the nerves and has a cool, calming effect.
- *Yellow* exemplifies cheerfulness, warmth, relaxation, and has soothing qualities for the brain. Use where the room is dark.
- *Orange* can stimulate and make you feel energetic. Never use in an area where you dine—it can activate the saliva glands and cause you to overeat. Most fast-food restaurants use an abundance of orange in their color scheme.
- *Green* has a cooling effect and connotes serenity and an expression of hope.
- *Purple* has a hushing effect and is associated with valor, mystery, and passion.
- *Pinks* can have a tranquilizing effect on a hyperactive child. Painting the cell walls in bubble gum-pink paint has been used successfully in some penal institutions to help control anti-social behavior of certain inmates.
- *Blue/green* combinations can create cool, spacious surroundings that are passive.
- *Plum, mauve, orchid, and violet* have the same qualities as purple but in a more subdued way.
- *Brown, tan, and beige* may be depressing when used alone, but can exude warmth when used with other colors.
- *Black, white, and gray* are used to intensify other colors.