



## Interior decorating tips

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Decorating your home can be very expensive. Acquiring basics such as furniture, curtains, soft furnishings, lamps and rugs can require a large capital outlay, but it is possible to create a beautiful home without breaking the bank.

When planning a room, choosing the correct basics is vital. A mistake could be costly. Make a point of researching as best you can. Get ideas from books and magazines to establish the look you would like to create and shop around for quotes before purchasing. When in doubt, think "neutral". Buying a lounge suite, for example, is a long term investment. Checks, florals, and stripes can be striking but can also date. Unless you are prepared to re-upholster as the trends change, keep your expensive items like couches and curtains, plain. Bring the beautiful florals and colours into your scatter cushions, table runners and lamp shades. These items are relatively inexpensive and can be changed easily to update your decor and give the room a fresh look.

Curtains are often difficult to find ready-made as window sizes (particularly old farm houses) are seldom standard size. The quality of the fabric of bought curtains is mostly inferior and the colours are limited. While it is a cumbersome job, making curtains is not difficult. It is the best, most cost effective option and anyone who owns a sewing machine can create professional, beautiful curtains.

### Making curtains

You will need: a sewing machine, fabric, lining, ruflette tape, and cotton thread to match your fabric, pins, a tape measure and sharp sewing scissors.

#### • Buying fabric

Most reputable material shops have a large selection of curtaining fabrics and assistants are usually quite knowledgeable if you need advice. You should first calculate how many metres of material you need. Good quality material can be bought at a reasonable price and unbleached calico is an adequate lining fabric which is inexpensive. Ruflette tape which gathers your curtains at the top, and into which your hooks are placed to hang curtains, comes in different widths. The broader the tape, the more formal the look you will create.

#### • Measure and Calculate

*Curtain length:* Measure from the top of the curtain rail to the floor, or the required length. Add 10cm to this measurement to allow for hems. This length is called your "drop". (eg: 2m 20cm)

*Curtain width:* Measure the length of the curtain rail. (eg: 2m) The fuller your curtains are gathered, the better they will hang and look. The minimum width of a curtain should be 2x the width of the actual area it must cover, but up to 3x the width is preferable. Most fabrics are 1.50m wide. For a 2m rail, 4 drops of material of 1.50m in width, would create lovely, full curtains. You would therefore need  $2.20 \times 4 = 8.80\text{m}$  of fabric. Buy 9m of curtain material and the same of lining fabric.



The Ruflette tape must be as long as the width of the curtains:  $1.50 \times 4 = 6\text{m}$ .

If the fabric width differs from the norm, an assistant will help you recalculate.

• **Cutting the drops**

A friend's help here is a good idea! Lay the fabric flat in a clear area (passage) and make sure the material is cut straight at the top edge. With a builders tape measure, working very accurately, measure from the raw edge, 2.20m every 20cm or so across the material and mark with a koki pen. Draw a line joining your dots and cut your 1st drop. Cut the next 3 exactly the same. Then cut 4 lining drops. These should be 10cm shorter than your curtain drops.

• **Making up the curtains**

- Take 2 drops and place them right sides together. Pin them together from top to bottom and sew your seam 1.5cm from the edge. Iron the seam open.
- Hem the 2 sides of the curtain by folding the raw edge over to the wrong side of the fabric by 3cm. Pin along the folded edge. Now fold the raw edge in again by 1cm to create a neat edge. Pin carefully and sew, pulling your material taut. Any tiny fold will cause the curtain to hang badly.
- To hem the bottom of the curtain, measure and fold over 8cm. Pin close to the folded edge. Now fold the raw edge in again by 1cm to create a neat edge. Sew keeping the material taut and flat. Iron all the hems.
- Fold the top, raw edge of the curtain over by 2cm, to the wrong side. Place your ruflette tape along the folded edge, about half a cm from the folded edge. Make sure the pockets into which the curtain hooks will be placed, is exposed. The raw edges of the tape must be neatly folded in. Pull the tape firmly as you sew it on and avoid sewing tucks. The bottom edge of the tape is not yet attached.
- Now sew your 1st lining up in the same way as you have just made the curtain. Make sure that the lining is 10cm shorter and about 5cm narrower than the finished curtain. Iron it.
- Lay your curtain flat with the wrong side up. Place your finished lining, right side up, on the curtain. Lift the bottom edge of the Ruflette tape and place the top edge of the lining 2 cm under the tape. Pin securely and sew.

Your 1st curtain is finished! Repeat with the second one.

**Hanging your curtains**

Tie the threads of your Ruflette tape into a secure knot at one end. Pull the threads of the tape at the other end until the top of your curtain measures half the length of the curtain rail. Make a secure slip knot in the threads. Neaten and move the pleats created by the tape until they are evenly spaced. Place your curtain hooks evenly into the pockets of the tape and your curtains may now be hung.

**Easy scatter cushions**

Cushion inners are very inexpensive and available at most Home stores. Choose material which will brighten and complement your decor. Material shops often have cut-off bins where lovely fabrics are placed at discount prices simply because they are smaller pieces. As you don't need much, these are often good choices.

- Measure your cushion inner. (eg: 40 x 40cm)
- Cut the front part of the cushion cover 1cm wider to allow for seams. (eg 41 x 41cm). If your material is plain, you can decorate this square by sewing braid, lace or ribbon onto it.
- The back of your cushion cover must open. Cut 2 pieces of the material the same width as the front, but 10 to 15cm shorter. (eg: 41cm x 28cm)
- Hem the 41cm side of both pieces by folding the raw edge over by 1cm twice to form a neat, folded edge.
- Place the front cover, right side up on a flat surface. Place 1 of your back pieces, right side down onto the front, edges together, with the hemmed side across the middle of the cover. Place the other half of the back on the opposite edge, also right side down. Pin round the entire cushion cover 1cm from the edge. Sew right the way round.
- Trim the seams neatly, cutting across the corners about 2mm from the stitching.
- Turn your cover right side out. Iron and place the inner inside the cover at the opening flap you have created.

Enjoy creating a beautiful, cosy home!

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