



Textiles:

Soft Furnishings Make a Big Impact

By Sandra Nash

Photograph courtesy of Making-A-Scene Designs

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Textiles and fabrics, also known as “soft furnishings,” such as draperies and window coverings, carpets, pillows and bedding are essential elements that are often overlooked or skimped on. Today’s residential interiors take their cues from commercial settings, restaurants or hotels with fashionable cement floors, open ceilings, hard seating and unadorned walls. These spaces are often stripped down, so all that’s left are hard finishes. This creates a clinical or industrial vibe, making the space feel cold, unpleasant and very loud because sound echoes and bounces off those hard surfaces.

As a designer, I believe that a home is supposed to be a sanctuary, our place to be soothed, calmed and restored. Now more than ever, we are bombarded with media, cellphones and interruption 24 hours a day. We are desperate to escape our busy, over-stimulated lives. Textiles give a room personality by adding function and decoration. On design projects, one of my favourite features of textiles is their sound-absorbent qualities. Regardless of how they’re introduced into a space, (through draperies, rugs, bedding or upholstery), they have a huge impact on creating peace and tranquility.

Window coverings (also called draperies or curtains) have two purposes—function and fashion. As functional elements, they provide light control, privacy and energy savings (by warding off heat and insulating glass to keep out cold). They also prevent harmful UV rays from damaging surfaces, boost security and block external sounds and even dust from entering the home. Our design team likes to view décor similar to fashion; for example, textiles are like jewellery is to a dress—they are the must-have accessory that finishes the look. Window coverings don’t need to be elaborate, but they do need to be multifunctional.



Rugs or carpets not only make the room warm and cozy; they also absorb noise, protect the floor and visually anchor a space. And they prevent slips and falls on otherwise hard floors.

Upholstered goods (sofas, chairs, chaises longues, ottomans and benches) affect the overall comfort and look of a room, especially if the piece is large. These pieces are an investment and should be considered carefully. There are several points to consider: durability and the environment in which the furniture will be used are especially important considerations for high-traffic areas of the space.

Don't forget **bedding**. It isn't just decorative. It also provides warmth and protects the mattress. Items such as sheets, blankets, duvets, throws and pillows are indispensable. They are available in many natural and synthetic textures and provide a splash of colour, warmth, beauty and style.

Tips

- Introduce textiles to soften and create a cozy retreat by using window coverings, rugs, bedding and upholstery.
- These textural pieces set the tone for the space because they are usually the largest pieces in the room, becoming the focal point.
- Furniture and window coverings can last a lifetime, so choose well, and choose once.
- Layer window coverings by using a combination of folding roman shades for privacy and light control.
- Install drapery panels above the window casings to add height while framing the windows and softening the hard surfaces.

