Workroom Threads

carolina custom draperies
Workroom to the Trade

Pattern repeats, repeats, repeats . . .

For the past couple months I've been writing about calculating drapery yardage with solid fabrics. Now that you have mastered those concepts let's move on to calculating yardage with a vertical pattern repeat.

Frequently I find that designers nod in agreement when I'm estimating yardage for them, yet I get the sense that they are blindly trusting me to get it right. Too often I've estimated yardage with one repeat and received the planned amount of fabric only to discover that another fabric was chosen with a slightly different size repeat. If the yardage amount isn't based on the specific pattern repeat there can be a significant shortage or costly overage.

Get your calculator and let's go!

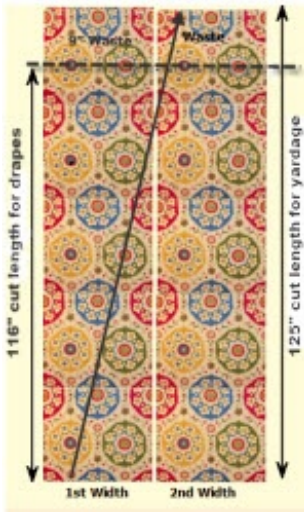[Click here to read past newsletters!](#)

What is a Vertical Repeat?

Most fabric samples identify the size of the vertical repeat. If not, you can find the vertical repeat by picking an element in the design and measuring from that point until you get to that element again. The distance between those two elements is the vertical repeat.

All cuts need to be made in a multiple of that repeat. Think back to your elementary school math when you counted 10, 20, 30 etc. This is what will be done with the drapery fabric. If the repeat is 25" the cuts would have to be a multiple of 25. In other words, the cut lengths must be

divisible by 25.

Do you remember how we calculated the yardage for a fabric without a repeat? Click here for my newsletter archive You will do the same steps for a fabric with a repeat. The only extra step is that you now round that number up to the next multiple of the repeat you are using.

For our example Jane's drapes need to finish at 100"FL. Remember that we add 16" to that for the top & bottom hems = 116". That would be our cut length if we were using a solid fabric. However, Jane's fabric has a 25" vertical repeat. 116" is not a multiple of 25". Therefore, the next repeat of 25 would be 125" (5 repeats of 25") which will be our cut length with this fabric. There will be 9" of waste on each cut, but this is unavoidable. Once you know the cut length you multiply that by the number of widths you will be using (lesson #1) and divide by 36" = yards needed.

Don't assume that a smaller repeat means less fabric.
Let's say that Jane selects a fabric with a 14" repeat. The minimum cut length for a solid fabric would still be 116", but that is not a multiple of 14". Therefore, we must round up to the next number that would be a multiple of 14 which is 126" (9 repeats of 14"). That would be our cut length.

Drapery Yardage 101

I'm confident that many of you are comfortable calculating yardage with some measure of accuracy. For those of you who are still shaking your head in confusion it's time to jump in, try some sample exercises, and await the "AHA!" moment.   Drapery calculations are the straight forward formulas that I've been sharing with you. Once you understand these formulas you will boldly confront your yardage estimates and client quotes with the assurance of the professional that you are.

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."   Benjamin Franklin

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www.carolinacustomdraperies.com
336.945.5190
info@carolinacustomdraperies.com

Winston-Salem, NC