

# FABRIC GUIDE

# How To Start Choosing The Right Fabric?

Choosing the right fabric may seem like an arduous process. This is understandable considering all of the fabric types, colour and design that are available. *How do you choose the one which is right for you?*

Before you pick the colour and design of your new upholstery fabric, read on to find out what you should consider for budget, durability, and care! This way you can make the right fabric choice you are happy to live with for years to come. The upholstery fabric you choose for your furniture is a big investment. Before you select a fabric, here's a few things you need to know...

## Who Will Be Using Your Furniture - How Much Wear And Tear Will Your Furniture Have?

Let your practical needs lead part of the decision when choosing the upholstery fabric for your furniture. Consider how you live and who will use the piece. This will help the selection process on the type of material to choose.



When it comes to durability, there's a universal way of measuring this called the Martindale test. It's a system designed to assess the abrasion - or amount of rubbing - a fabric can withstand before there's a noticeable change in its condition. It's then categorised with a score to show how hardwearing it is.



Every expert will differ on what level they will look at when choosing a fabric. As a guideline I look for Martindale measurements of 15,000-25,000 for light domestic use; for heavier use furniture or in a busy household, I would use 40,000 upwards; with 70,000 and higher ratings more suited to seriously high traffic areas and commercial purposes.

Pieces of furniture in high-traffic areas, like dining chairs, sofas or barstools in a kitchen, will need more durable fabrics possibly with stain-resistant finishes or have the ability to clean. If you're simply using it as decorative or occasional piece this opens up a wider variety of decorative fabrics for your furniture. There are many fabric options available it's about you thinking of your needs and uses ahead of making a decision. You don't want to make the wrong decision and find you are battling snags and stains on fabric which will be costly in the long term.

### **How Easy Is It To Care For Your Fabric?**

Upholstery fabrics have different care and maintenance needs. Some fabrics are treated with stain guards, others are machine washable, some are dry clean or professional upholstery cleaning only.

Consider how much maintenance you are prepared to do before you make your selection.



### **Colour fastness**

Fade-resistance is a hugely important part of your fabric selection process. Fabrics will fade over time but more so if they are in direct sunlight. Thankfully, some fabrics are more resilient when it comes to fading. Silk, for instance, is known for fading faster and will start to fray in direct sunlight, while fabric blended with polyester is often more resistant to discolouration. Flipping loose cushions over routinely can help, but with fixed covers, it's sometimes worthwhile protecting your upholstery with a throw or blanket when it's especially sunny.

## How Much Do You Want To Spend?

Setting a budget for how much you want to spend on your furniture is one place to start as this will determine part of your fabric choice. Fabric prices range drastically from tens of pounds to hundreds of per meter.

Now you've considered the practical stuff- how do you decide on the colour and pattern?

## How To Start Choosing The Right Colour?

A good place to start understanding this is using the colour wheel. The colour wheel shows how they naturally combine, blend and contrast. There are 12 colours and three categories: primary, secondary and tertiary. The primary colours are red, yellow and blue. All other colours are a combination of these three.



## How Do You Choose Colours That Complement Each Other?

Complimentary colours are colours that are opposite each other on the colour wheel. Examples would be blue and orange, red and green, yellow and purple, etc. Complementary colour schemes create a high amount of contrast. The fabric choice on these chairs and bench show how contrasting colours like orange and blue, or green and pink work well together.

## Do You Want Your Piece Of Furniture To Stand Out Or Blend In?

Do you want your furniture to make a dramatic difference to a room? You can create a bold accent by choosing upholstery fabric in a bright colour. One possible downside to choosing a bold colour is it will be more difficult to redesign a room scheme in the future around it.



## Fire & safety regulations

This guide explains the fabric fire and safety regulations as well as fire retardancy ratings. There are laws in the UK about the safe use of fabrics for upholstery. For upholstery that was originally made after 1950, you must abide by the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations when re-covering upholstered furniture, including nursery furniture and headboards. Upholstery fabric that is used on furniture for domestic use must meet 'Match tested' fire safety regulations. Below is a guide to the types of upholstery fabric and how they comply. If you need any advice before you purchase the fabric for your furniture please email [hello@shupholstery.co.uk](mailto:hello@shupholstery.co.uk)



### **NOT RATED**

The fabric has not been tested for its ability to withstand fire. Fabrics that are not rated can only be used for upholstery if they are first chemically treated with a fire retardant treatment. Chemical treatment consists of either soaking the fabric in a fire retardant chemical or back-coating it with fire retardant. These treatments are quite straightforward but are not suitable for every fabric (particularly very fine fabrics, voiles, polyesters, acetates and some velvets).

### **REQUIRES SCHEDULE 3 BARRIER CLOTH**

Cigarette tested fabrics (a laboratory test simulating a smouldering cigarette) that are made of at least 75% natural fibres (cotton, linen, viscose, modal, silk, wool) will comply with the regulations if the upholstery item is first covered with a barrier cloth (schedule 3 interliner).

## MATCH TESTED

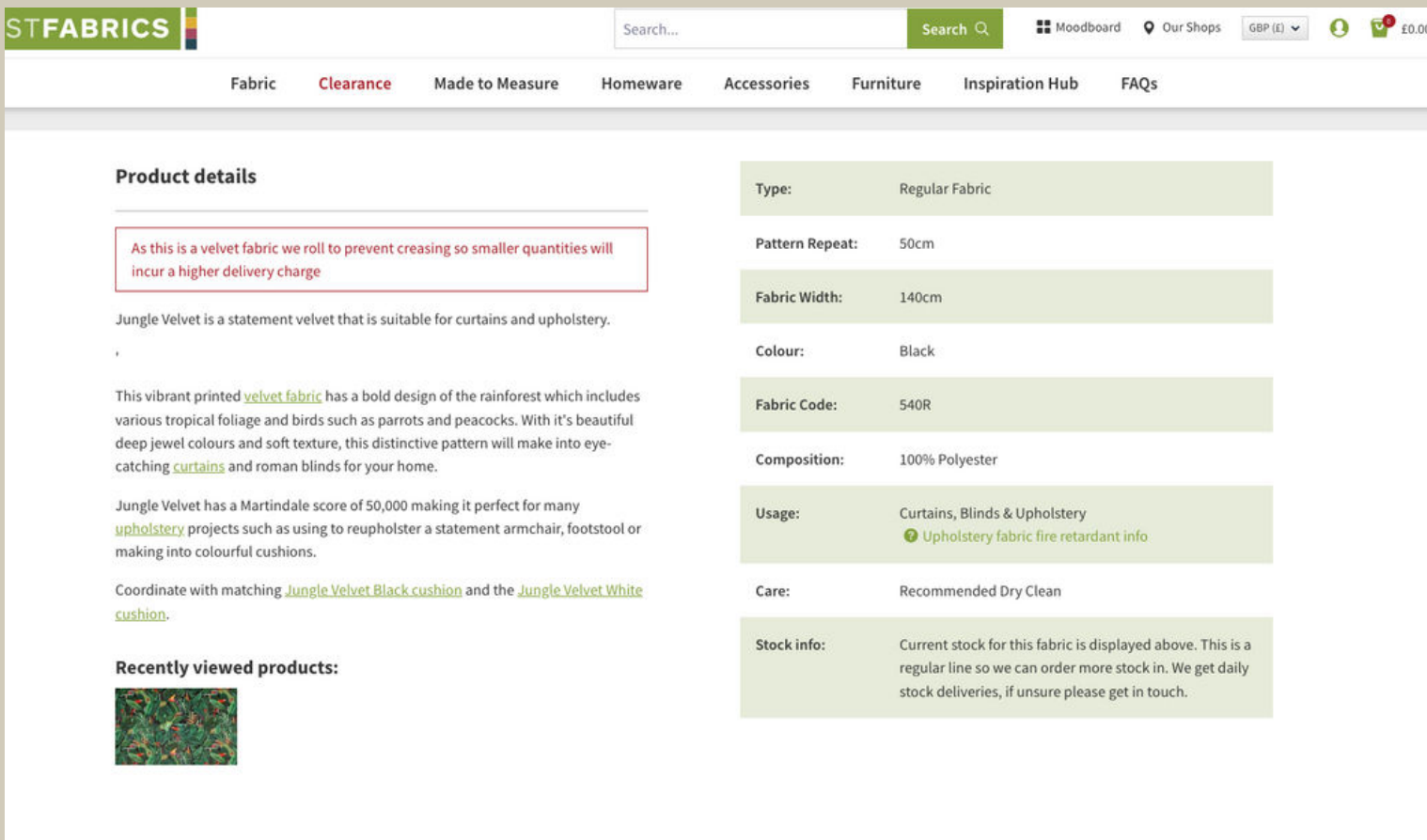
The fabric can withstand a naked flame test. Match tested fabrics meet the regulations for normal domestic upholstery.

## CRIB 5A

More stringent laboratory test that certifies the fabric's fire retardant properties as suitable for all upholstery and particularly in areas of risk such as public buildings or commercial use.

You can find a full detailed guide on fire regulations at [FIRA](#)

Here's an example of how all the specification information would be displayed on a fabric [suppliers](#) website.



The screenshot shows the STFABRICS website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the STFABRICS logo, a search bar, and links for Moodboard, Our Shops, and currency selection (GBP (£)). Below the navigation bar, there are menu items: Fabric, Clearance, Made to Measure, Homeware, Accessories, Furniture, Inspiration Hub, and FAQs.

The main content area is titled "Product details" and features a red-bordered warning box: "As this is a velvet fabric we roll to prevent creasing so smaller quantities will incur a higher delivery charge". Below this, the text describes "Jungle Velvet" as a statement velvet suitable for curtains and upholstery. It mentions a vibrant printed velvet fabric with a bold design of the rainforest, including tropical foliage and birds like parrots and peacocks. The fabric has a Martindale score of 50,000, making it suitable for upholstery projects. It also suggests coordinating with matching Jungle Velvet Black cushion and Jungle Velvet White cushion.

On the right side, there is a specifications table:

Type:	Regular Fabric
Pattern Repeat:	50cm
Fabric Width:	140cm
Colour:	Black
Fabric Code:	540R
Composition:	100% Polyester
Usage:	Curtains, Blinds & Upholstery Upholstery fabric fire retardant info
Care:	Recommended Dry Clean
Stock info:	Current stock for this fabric is displayed above. This is a regular line so we can order more stock in. We get daily stock deliveries, if unsure please get in touch.

At the bottom left, there is a section for "Recently viewed products" with a small image of the fabric pattern.

*We hope these questions and tips will give you a guide on how to start choosing the right fabric for your upholstery project. It's easy to get carried away and fall in love with a fabric before you've done the technical research.*

Here's a few places you can buy fabric online.

[Just Fabrics](#)

[The Mill Shop Online](#)

[Jane Clayton Fabric](#)

<https://shupholstery.co.uk/>