



# FOAM & FIBER

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JOANN'S FIELD GUIDE

NAME

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## A. INTRODUCTION

## B. WORDS TO KNOW

## C. FOAM

Types of Foam

How to Work with Foam

## D. FIBERFILL

Types of Fiberfill

How to Stuff Fiberfill

## E. CARE INSTRUCTIONS

# Introduction

Hi there! Welcome to JOANN's Field Guide to Foam and Fiber.

If you picked this up, you must be interested in how to give new life to well-loved furniture, make pillows, or stuff dolls and animals. Just getting started? Lucky for you, we've got lots of tips!

For specific projects and inspiration, make sure to visit [joann.com/projects](https://joann.com/projects). But if you need some basic information to get started, you've got the right guide in your hands. After reading through this information, you'll be able to select the right filling for your pillows, chair cushions, patio furniture, boat seats, bar stools, RV seats and more.

Have more questions? Stop by the cut bar for some friendly advice! As always, we can hardly wait to see what you make. Share with us! #handmadewithjoann

## Words to Know

**Density** -- the most important consideration when choosing foam, and it's key to determining the foam's firmness and durability. Density refers to how little air is in the foam. It's measured by the mass per unit volume, expressed in pounds per cubic foot or kilograms per cubic meter. A higher density rating generally means it has more cushioning, is longer-lasting and is a better grade of foam.

**Down** -- feathers of a goose or duck to fill pillows, cushions and upholstery for fluffiness and warmth. Non-hypoallergenic.

**Durability** -- how well flexible polyurethane foam maintains its firmness, shape and support with use.

**Fiberfill** -- the materials used in cushions, pillows or upholstered furniture to add comfort, insulation, strength and durability.

**Firmness** -- measured by Indentation Force Deflection.

**Foam** -- the most common kind of filling for upholstery work. Generally made from polyurethane, foam gives seats and cushions padding while adding shape to the arms, side and back of a couch or chair.

**Foam usage** -- a measure of how frequently the finished product will be used. Occasional use projects include seasonal patio seating or formal living room furniture. Frequent use projects include furniture used on a daily basis like kitchen chairs or a family room couch.

**Hand** -- how the foam feels against your hand. Common descriptors of the hand include rough, smooth, velvety, springy or silky.

**Indentation force deflection (IFD)** -- a measurement of the foam's load-bearing capacity. It refers to the pounds of force required to compress a piece of foam to 25% of its original thickness. Standard ranges are from 5 pounds (softest) to 80 pounds (hardest).

**Pieced** -- two or more smaller foam pieces that have been glued together, common for small pieces produced during fabrication or to make special cushion shapes.

**Resilience** -- the elasticity or springiness of foam. Measured by dropping a standard steel ball onto the cushion from a given height to find the percentage of ball rebounds.

**Reticulated** -- a process that creates an open cell structure so air and water can easily flow through the fiber for breathability and water drainage.

**Tear strength** -- a measure, expressed in pounds per inch, of the force required to continue a tear in foam after a split or break.

# Foam

## TYPES OF FOAM

Foam types vary and should be chosen based on how and what the finished project will be used for. Generally, the softer the foam, the more comfortable it is. However, foam that is too soft will not be as supportive and may cause soreness. The foam must be able to support the weight put on it. Foam must balance comfort and support appropriate to its use. Foam thickness of 1 to 5 inches is considered firm and 6 to 8 inches is considered extremely firm.

### **Polyurethane foam**

Medium firm foam. Can be used for cushions, chairs, benches, mattresses, upholstered headboards and crafts. Recommended for occasional use. Longevity is typically 1 to 2 years.

### **High-density foam**

Good foam for heavy or everyday use. Higher density foams have a greater resistance to compressing, collapsing or bottoming out. Suggested for mattresses, sofas, chairs, cushions, benches, boats and camping pads. Longevity is approximately 4 years.

### **High resilience foam**

Excellent foam for mattresses and expensive furniture, including yachting and boating. Very buoyant and resilient. Longevity is approximately 12 years.

### **Poly-Fil NuFoam**

NuFoam is an alternative to traditional polyurethane foam made from compressed layers of 100% polyester batting. The foam is mildew resistant, non-allergenic and won't yellow or disintegrate. NuFoam is ideal for occasional

use on patio cushions, crib bumpers or playpens. Foam thicknesses range from 1 to 4 inches. It's recommended to use NuFoam that's 1 inch thicker than intended cushion to allow for compression.

### **Mattress topper**

A mattress topper is a thick, removable cover that sits on top of the mattress. The topper adds an extra layer of comfort with 4 to 8 inches of polyurethane foam. There are many different kinds of mattress toppers that offer benefits such as moisture control, dust mite, bacteria and allergen protection.

### **Shredded foam**

Fill cushions, floor and throw pillows, patio furniture, pet beds, toys and more with shredded foam, a lightweight blend of regular and high-density foam. Shredded foam doesn't form a crust, so stuffed cushions and pillows will be smooth, comfortable and free of bumps.

## **HOW TO WORK WITH FOAM**

### **TAKING MEASUREMENTS**

- Measure the cushion's length, width and thickness. Take the greatest length and width across the center of the cover. For square or rectangular cushions, this will produce the cushion's full dimensions. For L- or T-shaped cushions, you will need to trim the cutouts later.
  - Round up to the next whole inch.
  - For foam-only cushions, round every measurement up to the nearest  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch, then add  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch.
  - For cushions wrapped in fiberfill, round every measurement up to the nearest  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch.
- Take the empty cushion cover. Holding the cover taut, measure each individual side of the cushion, including the ears on any L- or T-shaped cushion.

## CUTTING FOAM

- Prepare a flat and stable work surface. With the edge of the foam facing you, mark the shape of your foam cushion dimensions using a straight edge such as a yardstick or T-square tool.
- Make sure the blade of your electric knife, carving knife or box knife is longer than the foam is thick to ensure you make complete cuts.
- Cut slowly. Do not make quick cuts or compress the foam. The less the foam is compressed during cutting, the cleaner and flusher the edges.
- If using a carving knife, work in a gentle back-and-forth sawing motion.
- If using an electric knife, do not force the blade through the foam. Start cutting from an outside edge of the sheet.
- Cut slowly to maintain more control. Work through layer by layer as you go. If you feel pulling or resistance, use shorter cuts and slide along in short motions.

## GLUING FOAM TOGETHER

- For custom-sized cushions or shapes, you may need to cut two pieces of foam and adhere with spray adhesive.
- Stack the pieces on top of each other with the adhered sides facing outward.
- Liberally coat both pieces with spray adhesive. Wait about 10 seconds for the glue to become tacky.
- Align the pieces to be glued. Starting at one end, compress the pieces together using firm pressure. Hold each piece for a few seconds. Repeat the length of the attached edge.
- Wait about 5 minutes for the glue to dry.

## ADDING BATTING (OPTIONAL)

Not all foam projects need batting. If you are adding batting, wrap it around the foam so it covers at least the top and bottom of the cushion. Batting can be glued or stapled, depending on the fabric weight and project.

## STUFFING YOUR CUSHION

- Fold the sides of the foam together facing up. Slide the foam into the cushion cover to the edge and release.
- Smooth out the edges and even out wrinkles, like you would while changing a pillowcase. The foam cushion should slightly bulge out of the zipper opening. This means the cover won't be loose, and the cushion will have a full appearance.
- Press the foam down to zip up the cover, then admire your handiwork!

# Fiberfill

## TYPES OF FIBERFILL

Fiberfill is a polyester or polyester blend that has been combed and fluffed like a cotton ball. It can be used to stuff dolls, pincushions, stuffed animals, pillow forms, pet beds and other craft projects.

Fiberfill insulates without weighing garments down, so it is used in quilting and other fabric-based projects. Fiberfill is non-allergenic and can be washed without its form distorting. It may need occasional readjustment or hand smoothing to avoid clumping.

### “Dry” Polyester Fiberfill

This polyester fiberfill has a coarse dry fiber that stays in place and is easy to pack in small spaces. Dry fiberfill is ideal for stuffing collectible dolls and bears, as it has not been treated with silicone.



## **Batting**

Batting is 100% bonded polyester. Used to insulate quilts as well as some foam upholstery projects. Batting creates a tighter fit in the cushion cover and prevents the foam from slipping. It also gives cushions a smooth, rounded and fuller appearance. Batting also helps pieced seams from showing through the cover. The higher the loft, the fuller the appearance of the finished product.

## **Pillow Forms**

Pillow forms are made from a thin woven or non-woven material with a polyester fiberfill interior. Great for stuffing pillow coverings made with zippers or envelope backs to allow for easy washing or decor changes. They are available in a variety of square, round, rectangular and neck roll sizes with an easy to handle and non-allergenic polyester fiberfill interior.

## **Micro Beads / Poly Beads / Bean Bag Filler**

Resilient polystyrene filler beads conform to—and fill—your shape. Great for beanbags, pillows, stuffed animals, stress balls, sensory balls, therapy pillows, draft blockers or other craft projects. Weighted stuffing beads are great for stuffed animals, dolls, toys, corn hole bags and hacky sacks. Note: Do not wash beads. Place inside a removable bladder so the outer shell can be washed.

## **HOW TO STUFF FIBERFILL**

- Prepare the area by removing loose threads and excess fabric from seams and corners.
- Use small amounts of stuffing for smaller areas and large amounts of stuffing for larger areas.
- To avoid a lumpy appearance, don't clump fiberfill into a ball. Keep fiberfill loose and layer, don't pack, for a fluffy finished project.
- Add the fiberfill by hand or with a tool. Push

into place and massage or smooth to lay flat. Continue adding fiberfill until full.

- Stitch the seam, then add additional fiberfill underneath seam for a smooth finish.
- For added weight or to create a posed appearance in stuffed toys, use poly pellets, a weighted stuffing material.

## Care Instructions

In general, most items made from polyester can be machine washed and dried. Refer to package for specific care instructions.

A best practice is to embroider or craft on a covering that can be removed and washed separately as fiberfill may shift or bunch while laundering. If that happens, gently massage the fiberfill with fingertips to move back into place.

First try to spot clean the fabric with mild soap and water. For stubborn stains, machine wash on gentle cycle with warm water and mild detergent. Toss in a towel to help the machine stay balanced. Lay flat or tumble dry on low heat setting. Add dryer balls to help fluff. Remove promptly. If ironing is desired, use moderate heat.

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