

My Favorite Faux Linen—Dropcloth!

What is a dropcloth?

Dropcloth is a material that is used to protect the floor and furniture when you paint. You can find it in the paint department of any home improvement store. It comes in 8 oz or 10 oz weight (I can't really tell the difference between the two) and costs about \$16.98 for a 6' x 9' piece or \$11.48 for a 4' x 5' piece. For the amount of fabric you get, it is incredibly inexpensive. Dropcloth resembles home décor weight linen in hand and appearance.

Are there any special tricks to sewing with dropcloth?

You must machine wash and dry dropcloth. Straight out of the package it is very stiff and smelly. As if that weren't reason enough to wash and dry it, it will shrink if not pre-washed and dried. You must also iron it. Obviously, it is difficult to iron such a big piece of fabric so unless you are making something large such as curtains or a duvet cover, you will want to cut the dropcloth into a more manageable size.

Once you cut dropcloth, you must finish the edges. You can serge it, zigzag it, or use the overlock foot on your sewing machine. This may seem like a lot of prep work, but dropcloth is so versatile and inexpensive that it is worth the effort. After you have prepared dropcloth for sewing, use ordinary thread, an all-purpose needle and the default stitch length on your sewing machine.

Since dropcloth was not meant to be used for sewing projects, it sometimes has small slubs, knots, or seams. You can work around these areas, such as putting an area with a slub on the back of a pillow cover. If you are cutting two layers of dropcloth for project, be sure to check each piece so that any flaw will not be in a prominent area of your work.

What can you make with dropcloth?

Lots of stuff! If you go to Pinterest and type in *Dropcloth Décor*, you will find many projects to inspire you. But here is one thing not to do. One set of instructions advised putting dropcloth in a bathtub full of water, adding bleach, letting it set for a while, then rinsing it in order to lighten the color of dropcloth. I did this and while the dropcloth did lighten in color after a long soak, it was not worth the trouble. If you want truly white home dec fabric, just buy cotton duck.

The natural color of dropcloth makes it a good backdrop for home dec projects with embellishment or applique. I have made placemats, pillow covers, Christmas tree skirts, table runners, an ottoman slipcover, and a tablecloth from dropcloth. I have machine washed many of these items on delicate setting and machine-dried them on low heat. They may be fine with higher heat, but I am overly cautious. I would hate to ruin my items by overzealous cleaning.

I have also used a fabric pen to simulate the look of a vintage grain sack. I have seen projects that use fabric paint to letter dropcloth, but I have not tried any fabric paint.

You can use dropcloth's tendency to fray to your advantage. Cut strips of dropcloth, stitch about ½" from the edge, and pick our threads to create a fringed edge. I did this for the Union Jack pillow cover. You can also cut out a "picture frame" inside a piece of dropcloth, stitch ½" from the cut edge and fray. Place any fabric or patchwork piece in the opening as I did for the "Love" pillow or flag pillow cover. If you are making a pillow cover from a piece of patchwork, dropcloth makes a sturdy back for your cover. Just use an envelope closure and you are all set.

What do you do when someone compliments you on the beautiful linen items decorating your home?

Just smile and say "thank you". No need to tell them all this beauty is courtesy of your expertise with humble dropcloth!

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