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EC60-1144 Characteristics of Good Terry Towels

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C H A R A C T E R I S T I C S O F G O O D T E R R Y T O W E L S

FIBER:

Long fibers are especially desirable. To absorb moisture readily the yarn should be spun softly and twisted only slightly. Cotton is commonly used.

CONSTRUCTION:

Weaves

(1) These towels are made mostly in what is known as terry, or pile weave. In addition to the ground or foundation warp and filling yarns, an extra set of warp yarns at a loose tension is woven into the fabric in such a way as to form loops on both sides of the surface. These may be "single loop" or "double loop," depending on whether one or two strands are woven together to form loop. These loops, known as the "pile," increase the surface area and determine the rate and amount of water absorption. Double loop towels tend to be more absorbent, though not necessarily stronger, than the single loop towels.

(2) In a Dobby weave the body of the towel is a plain weave, but there is a fancy border, made of small designs which run parallel to the length and width of the towel. Usually more expensive than plain weave.

(3) A Jacquard weave gives a towel with an elaborate over-all pattern made with a high and low pile weave. This is the most expensive weave.

Whatever the weave, the loops should be dense, even, and about 1/8 inch long. Longer ones are likely to be caught and pulled; shorter ones do not add much to the drying power. The foundation warp yarns are of either one-ply or two-ply construction. The latter gives added strength lengthwise, the direction in which there is greatest strain. The looseness or tightness of the weave of the towel, the closeness of the loops--determine the quality. Different weaves or thread counts create different qualities of towels.

The underweave of a terry towel is its strength and backbone and gives the best indication of how the towel will wear. In a durable towel, these ground warp and fillings yarns, particularly the warp, are twisted somewhat more than the warp that forms the loops. The picks or filling yarns, bind the loops into the towel, so that the more picks used to the inch, the more firmly the pile will be held. Towels that form loose 'blisters' as the first signs of wear probably have too few picks and a weak foundation warp. Most terry towels are "three pick"--that is, there are three filling yarns binding in one row of warp loops. A very firmly woven towel may have more than three. Some light-weight, cheap towels have only two picks. The underweave can be most readily seen in the plain portion of the towel, usually near the hem or in the border where there is an area without loops. It is hard to examine the underweave in any other part because the surface loops hide it. Hold the towel to the light. If light shows through in tiny and regular pin-points, the weave is uniform and good. An uneven weave shows weak, open spots.

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Thread Count Thread count is not given on labels for terry towels. However, the more yarn in the inch, the more picks there will be, which increases the amount of moisture that can be absorbed.

If well made, you can pluck at the loops gently without dislodging them from the underweave.

Selvage

Strong selvages mean durability. Examine edges to be sure they are thickly and strongly woven. There are several types of selvages: (1) A fast selvage--a closely woven edge. The edge will be stronger if every filling thread wraps around the last warp thread. (2) An over-edged selvage--a sort of V-shaped machine-made blanket stitch over a cut edge. For satisfactory wear, the thread for this stitching should be firm and stitches rather close together. (3) A hemmed selvage--turned hem on one or both lengthwise edges of towel.

Towels with over-edged or hemmed selvages have been woven in double width and cut in two. The hemmed edges are less durable and are likely to shrink more than the main part of the towel, causing the sides to pucker.

Hems

The end hems should be neatly turned and firmly stitched with small, even stitches and strong thread. All thread ends should be securely fastened. The side edges should be back-stitched at the corners, or turned and continued across the width of the hem.

Size

While actual measurements vary somewhat from the established sizes, the greater number of those now on the market fall into one or another of these groups:

Small (Hand or Face)	Medium (Bath)	Large (Bath)	Beach Size (Bathsheet)
16 x 26 in.	20 x 40 in.	24 x 46 in.	36 x 68 in.
18 x 36 in.	22 x 44 in.	25 x 48 in.	38 x 72 in.
		27 x 54 in.	

When considering the size of the towels, think also of the amount of looped surface. Fancy towels with wide borders or ends of plain fabric reduce the area of drying surface.

Shrinkage

When deciding on the size, remember that terry cloth towels, because of the method of weaving, shrink somewhat during the first few times they are washed.

Buying by Use Most men prefer large size towels. A big person naturally requires a big towel, large enough to use comfortably and with plenty of drying surface. The so-called "standard" towel is 22 x 44 inches, but the slightly smaller bath towel, 20 x 40 inches is a convenient all purpose size, preferred by many women for their own use and for children. The hand or face size has become extremely popular because it is light, easy to handle, readily laundered, and it saves the use of larger sizes.

Good towels may feel soft, medium soft, or rough and hard. In buying it is important to consider the preference of the user. Soft towels, made of fine-spun yarn have a gently, luxurious texture and often are preferred by many women and children with tender, delicate skins. Many persons like and choose towels of hard, rough texture because they enjoy the tingling stimulation of a brisk rub-down.