

# Guide to Textile Specification

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Specifying textiles for interior furnishings is an exciting creative endeavor that allows designers to make their mark on a project. However, with a seemingly endless array of textiles, selecting an appropriate one for a particular intended end-use can be complex. Although aesthetics and budget will naturally influence your selections, there are many other important considerations. ACT has created the following guide to help you make successful decisions.

## Setting or Facility

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Performance of a textile greatly depends on the setting in which it is being used. Initial considerations:

### Geographic Location

- Climate
- Regional code requirements (including fire codes)

### Physical Impacts

- Usage frequency
- Traffic patterns
- UV light exposure
- Abusive behavior
- Soil/stain potential

## End-Use Applications

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Many textiles are engineered to perform for different purposes and should be selected according to their recommended end-uses. Textiles that meet the ACT Voluntary Performance Guidelines have been tested to specific requirements based on the type of application. Check for this information on the textile sample.

- Upholstery
- Direct Glue Wallcoverings and Adhered Panels
- Wrapped Panels and Upholstered Walls
- Drapery/Cubical Curtains

If you have a different end-use in mind, here are some questions you should ask the textile supplier.

- Is the textile approved for this purpose?
- Has it ever been used for this purpose?
- What is the textile's performance history?
- Is its fiber content suitable for this use?
- Is additional finishing or backing needed and available for this use?
  - Will this finish or backing have any negative impacts on the textile's performance?
- Does this textile meet applicable flammability codes for this use?
  - If not, can it be treated and certified?

## Durability Requirements

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ACT Voluntary Performance Guidelines use symbols to convey information related to a textile's lightfastness, physical properties, colorfastness, and surface abrasion resistance – four components of upholstery durability. Results are classified into two levels of usage: *Low Traffic / Private Spaces* and *High Traffic / Public Spaces*. Note: vertical surfaces have similar durability requirements; however, surface abrasion resistance is not applicable.

### Low Traffic / Private Spaces Upholstery



#### Examples of situations that call for Low Traffic Upholstery:

- Executive and private offices
- Corporate boardrooms
- Luxury hotel lobbies, suites and guest rooms

### High Traffic / Public Spaces Upholstery



#### Examples of situations that require High Traffic Upholstery:

- Single-shift corporate offices
- Multi-purpose conference rooms
- Professional service and medical waiting rooms
- High-traffic hotel lobbies and guest rooms
- Fine dining areas
- Assisted living/retirement facilities

### Exceptions

*Constant Traffic / Demanding Spaces* may require certain performance characteristics that exceed ACT Voluntary Performance Guidelines. Work with your textile supplier to identify appropriate product that will meet the site's demands. Also, check to see whether or not a warranty is provided.

#### Examples of Demanding Sites

- 24-hour office facilities
- Transportation terminals
- Institutional public spaces
- Emergency rooms
- Casino gambling areas
- College dorm rooms
- Student unions/libraries/lounges
- Public gathering places
- Theatres/lecture halls
- Stadiums
- Fast-food restaurants
- Pool and spa areas

#### Examples of Extreme Demands

- Intense UV light exposure
- Outdoor conditions
- Chlorine and moisture exposure
- Multi-shift/continual use
- Abusive behavior
- Unavoidable soils/stains
- Bleach/disinfectant cleaners

## Maintenance/Cleaning Protocols

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Maintenance and cleaning have a significant impact on the longevity of textiles. Find out the maintenance capabilities and cleaning regime of the facility, and select products accordingly.

- How frequently will the installation be cleaned?
- What types of typical stains can be expected?
- Does the facility use any type of aggressive cleaning products that may wear down a textile?
- Can maintenance needs be aided by adding finishes to the textile?

When in doubt, request extra yardage or memo samples for stain testing. After installation, provide facilities with the maintenance and cleaning instructions received from textile suppliers.

## Fire Codes

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Flammability is a life safety issue, and YOU are liable.

### What local fire codes does your site require?



Since flammability codes are not uniform throughout the United States, compliance with the ACT Voluntary Performance Guideline for flammability represents only the most commonly requested test for each end-use. Your project may require this/these test(s), others, or none. It is crucial for YOU to understand that fire codes and ordinances

dictate which flammability tests must be passed. This depends upon the textile's end-use, the site's geographic location and even the end-user's insurance carrier's requirements. Fire marshals are in charge of enforcing fire code, and it is YOUR responsibility to determine which codes must be met for a given installation.

## Manufacturing Aspects

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Since textiles are almost always applied to furniture or fabricated into a product such as drapery, you need to consider the manufacturing process itself, as well as the style and quality of the furniture. The manufacturing process impacts whether or not a textile is appropriate. Style and quality of the furniture can impact the lifespan of a textile. As an example, seat pans with a waterfall or hard edge, and upholstered arms of a chair, are common areas of wear.

Many furniture manufacturers have a pre-approval process for Customer's Own Material (COM). For upholstery and panels, contact the furniture manufacturer. For window treatments, contact the drapery workroom. If the manufacturer does not have a pre-approval process, here are some key considerations.

### Upholstery

- How is the textile applied to the furniture (cutting process, sewn cover, stapled, glued, molded)?
- Is the textile usable as is, or are additional finishes/backing required?
- Is there sufficient padding to support the upholstery?
- Is a lining required to avoid telegraphing/stress points?
- Does your manufacturer meet or exceed ASTM seam slippage test standards of ½" seam allowance with 7 stitches per inch? Does your application require extra reinforcement?
- Have you conveyed the pattern direction and placement you envision to the manufacturer/upholsterer?
- How will the pattern (e.g., horizontal stripes) align?

### Drapery

- What type of window treatment is considered?
- Does the drapery workroom have any specific application recommendations?
- Have you conveyed the pattern direction and placement you envision to the manufacturer/upholsterer?
- How will the pattern (e.g., horizontal stripes) align?

### Panel

- How will the textile be applied to the panel?
- Is an additional finish or backing needed?
- Have you submitted a sample in actual color to the manufacturer so they can check for transparency?
- Have you conveyed the pattern direction and placement you envision to the manufacturer/upholsterer?
- How will the pattern (e.g., horizontal stripes) align?
- How will panels be installed – do dye lots need to be considered?

### Wallcovering

- Will panels be seamed for proper alignment?
- Have you provided installation instructions to the wallcovering contractor?
- What are the critical steps during installation?
- Have you conveyed the pattern direction and placement you envision to the manufacturer/upholsterer?
- How will the pattern (e.g., horizontal stripes) align?

## Environmental Attributes

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Many projects are now being designed to meet various environmental certifications and codes.

### What certifications are requested?

- LEED Project Certification – does the textile contribute?
- Textile Certification
  - Single attribute (Greenguard, SCS, etc.)
  - Overall environmental impact of a product (NSF/ANSI 336, C2C, Life Cycle Assessment, etc.)

### Which sustainable qualities are important to your client?

- Content/materials
  - Recycled
  - Rapidly renewable
  - Regionally resourced
  - Low VOC
  - Heavy-metal free
- End-of-life issues
  - Recyclable/reclaimable
  - Designed for disassembly
  - Biodegradable

## Remember

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- ACT Voluntary Performance Guidelines are indicators for general and heavy use under normal conditions. Extreme situations require special consideration.
- A lack of cleaning reduces the life span of a textile, and improper cleaning can be just as detrimental.
- Finishes or backings applied to a textile may enhance its durability, but may in turn affect other performance characteristics.
- Textile suppliers may have additional information regarding textile testing standards, including flammability.
- COM approval, testing and any special handling may require extra time.

## Whom to Contact for What

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### Textile Supplier

- Information on textile end-use
- Information on textile test results
- Information on additional finishes available

### Furniture Manufacturer

- Textile's suitability for application on specific product
- Customer's Own Material (COM) approval
- California Technical Bulletin #133
- Underwriters Laboratories (UL) testing

### ACT – [www.contracttextiles.org](http://www.contracttextiles.org)

- ACT Voluntary Performance Guidelines
- Descriptions for test methods
- Videos of textile testing
- Technical white papers
- FAQs
- Glossaries