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Insulated Roman shades

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
A Roman shade is a fabric window treatment which folds up as a cord is pulled. Compared with draperies, it requires less fabric. If made with a fiberfill batting, a vapor barrier, and mounted to fit tightly at the sides, it provides insulation from heat and cold.

With one layer of bonded fiberfill, the R-value is about 1.56; with two layers 3.12; and with three layers 4.68. The higher the R-value, the better the insulating properties. See FS 776, Energy-efficient window treatments, for a fuller explanation.

It is possible to construct these shades at home. Tucks provide a place to attach rings on the back and the shade will "stack up" sharply, forming accordion pleats.

**Supplies**

2. Lining, fiberfill, and 4 mil plastic for vapor barrier, same width and length as above.
3. Thread to match fabric.
4. Plastic, bone, or metal rings, ½ inch diameter, to be placed about 10-12 inches apart horizontally and 12 inches apart lengthwise.
5. Cord, such as used in venetian blinds or nylon cord.
6. Decorative pull for cord.
7. Screw eyes for traverse cord, one large enough to hold four cords.
8. Awning cleat to fasten cords when pulled up.
9. Slat or rod for bottom of shade casing.
10. Board, a 1 x 2, cut to window width (to fit inside window frame).
11. Dressmaker's chalk.

**Directions for construction**

Directions are given for using two layers of fiberfill. If one layer of fiberfill is used, be sure that the plastic vapor barrier is next to the decorative outer fabric. If three layers are used, put the third next to the lining fabric.

2. Lay fiberfill batting on the table, then plastic and another layer of fiberfill. Lay decorative fabric right side up on fiberfill. Last, lay lining, wrongside up on top of decorative fabric (Fig 1). Pin outside edges first.

![Fig 1. Order of layers when constructing shade.](image)

3. Sew sides and bottom of all layers with large stitches. Start at the bottom edge, then stitch sides. Use 1-inch seam allowance. If an acrylic-backed lining is used, stitching may be difficult. Use tissue paper on top or have the batting on top for easier stitching.

4. Trim corners diagonally. Grade bottom and side seams by trimming fiberfill to ¼ inch, decorative fabric to ½, and plastic to ¼ inch.

5. Turn shade inside out so that decorative fabric and lining are right side out. Place fingers inside the shade and adjust seams so that the seam line is in the fold line. Pin in place.

6. On the outside of decorative side of fabric, top stitch 1/8-inch from fold, beginning on the bottom and continue on sides from bottom to top.

7. Fold and stitch 2 inches from bottom hem. This forms a casing for inserting a rod or slat for weight.

8. Mark horizontal lines on lining side with chalk, starting 6 inches from hem. Continue marking every 6 inches up the entire shade. You sew on chalk lines across the panel (Fig 2) to hold all layers in place.

9. Make the first tuck by folding on the stitched line, lining sides together, and stitching on the decorative side. Sew through all thickness, forming a narrow tuck about ¼ inch wide.

10. Next, turn the panel over and stitch the next tuck on the back by putting decorative sides together and stitching on the lining. Continue stitching, alternating front and back.

11. Hand sew rings to each tuck on the lining side, ½ inch from edge. Space two other rows of rings on lining side. If shade is very wide, three rows may be needed. Check the shade length at the window for accuracy.

12. Trim top edge of shade if necessary.

13. Stitch lining, batting, plastic, and decorative fabric together. Fold shade top over board and staple. The top may be installed with pressure backed tape or snap tape, or permanently nailed into the window frame.

14. Attach screw eye on back directly above each row of rings staggering each a little lower (Fig 3). At the top right corner of the board use large screw eye.

15. Fasten a cord to the first ring at the bottom of the shade and thread it through one row of
rings to top of shade, then through screw eye. Thread all cords in this way through all rows of rings.

16. Draw all cords through the larger screw eye on the end, with each the proper length to raise the shade evenly. Extend one of the four cords down 5 inches past the bottom of the shade. The other three cords should extend 4 inches beyond large end screw eye. Hand sew all cords together about 2 inches beyond corner screw eye.

17. Using the long cord, make a knot to cover stitching. Attach decorative pull on the end. Insert slat in bottom hem and hang.

**Variations**

There are many ways to adapt this very basic insulated Roman shade. A few ideas are listed below... but you might experiment, too!

1. For a softer, less tailored look, add 6 inches to the window width and 6 inches to the window length measurement. (You won’t need the slat or rod for the bottom edge, the chalk, or the side clamps.) Use slightly lighter weight plastic (2 or 3 mil). Follow the directions above for steps 1-6, skip steps 7-11.

   Use heavy thread or pearl cotton to make a “stitch” about 1/8 inch long through the shade to tie on each ring. The rings should be in vertical rows 6 to 8 inches apart with the side rows 3 inches from the edge of the shade.

   Next complete steps 12-17.

   Note: This shade will not stack up as crisply as the pleated style, but it is a better choice if your window isn’t quite the same width at the top and bottom because the shade can squeeze a little if needed to fit. Slightly softer fabrics also work for this style Roman shade.

2. If your window is wide, or if you want a washable fabric to coordinate with bedspreads, table cloths, etc., try using a bed sheet for the decorative fabric. Sheets may be the least expensive fabric for your needs.

3. If you want to make the “softer look” shade described above, or if you don’t want to topstitch the edge of any variation of the insulated Roman shade, you may have problems with the lining fabric showing. The two ideas illustrated below will help prevent this and may be easier for you to sew.

   a.1. Follow step 1 of the directions but cut the lining, fiberfill batting, and plastic to the desired finished width, being sure to allow for some fullness—but no seam allowance. Cut the facing fabric 2 inches wider than the other layers.

   a.2. Follow step 2, but pin only one side edge.

   a.3. Stitch seam using ½-inch seam allowance.

   a.4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 above.

   a.5. Turn the shade right side out, press.

   a.6. Turn up and hem bottom edge by machine.

   a.7. Proceed with original directions to complete shade.

   b. Use bias tape (or cut strips of your facing fabric on the bias) to bind the edges and bottom of the shade rather than actually sewing a seam and turning the shade. This method may be easier if your sewing machine is not designed to take bulky layers.

   For more information, contact Grace Backman, Extension housing specialist, SDSU. This fact sheet prepared by Mary Ann Sward, former housing specialist, from material supplied by Kathleen Parrott, University of Nebraska housing specialist.

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