

## Bed Skirts and Pillow Shams

By Sydney Schwartz Hardiman

Bed skirts and pillow shams can be decorated in a thousand different ways, but there are several basic types of both. This article will lay out the basic bed skirt styles and methods for attaching them. Later in the article we will review the basics of pillow shams, sizes, and closure styles.

### BED SKIRTS

Bed skirts or “dust ruffles” add a beautiful decorative touch to a bed frame, while hiding dust bunnies and under-the-bed storage. The three basic styles are: ruffled, box-pleated, and traditional, sometimes called tailored.



*This bed skirt is interlined with micro cording on the bottom edge in stripe and inset picot braid. (Designer: Marilyn Warner, Austin-Warner Interiors; Workroom: Susan Schurz, Tavern Hill)*

### RUFFLED

A ruffled bed skirt is just that, a ruffle that goes around all three sides of the bed. When calculating fabric for this treatment, I find two or 2 1/2-times the basic measurements gives a beautiful full look. The ruffle can be made using a ruffler attachment to your machine, a Johnson Ruffler, clear elastic, or the traditional “sewing over a string and pulling” method. For the last method many workrooms swear by dental floss. My favorite is the 1/4" clear elastic (from Atlanta Thread and Supply.) Stretch the elastic out as far as it will go while you straight stitch over the top of it. (Zigzag stitches don't catch the 1/4".) The fabric pulls up into a beautiful and neat ruffle. No worries about it breaking either. The clear elastic is really strong.

### TRADITIONAL OR TAILORED

A tailored bed skirt is a straight width of fabric with five box pleats. The skirt

is fabricated by placing one box pleat in the center of each side of the skirt and one on each bottom corner of the bed. The pleats can be decorated by adding contrast fabric inside the pleats. Other options include closing the pleats with buttons, frog closures, bands, or even a rosette. This skirt takes the least amount of fabric and makes a good choice for the client on a budget.

### BOX PLEATED

A box-pleated bed skirt has box pleats going all the way around the three sides of the treatment. There are no rules guiding the size of the box pleats, but you will most likely need three-times fullness for this style.

### ATTACHING THE BED SKIRT

Traditionally, bed skirts are made by attaching the ruffle to a complete decking which is the exact size of the box spring, is made from white cotton lining or sheeting, and is placed between the box spring and the mattress pad.

In the last several years, many new methods for attaching bed skirts have arisen. They include banding held onto the bed with upholstery screws, hook and loop tape, and Grip Deck®. All three of these eliminate the need for a decking and make the bed skirt easy to put on and remove. Not only that, but these new methods allow the skirt to be made in three separate pieces.

### BANDING

Banding involves adding a 5" to 7" band to the top of the bed skirt. A nice extra touch is to add cording between the banding and the skirt. The band is then attached directly to the bed's box spring with twist screws.

### HOOK AND LOOP TAPE

A bed skirt that has hook and loop tape is finished on the bottom and the top with loop tape sewn to the top of the bed skirt. It is applied to self-adhesive hook tape that has been attached to the wood bed frame or the box spring.

### GRIP DECK®

Grip Deck® is a registered trademark product that consists of a non-skid deck pad that goes between the mattress and the box spring to prevent shifting. The deck has hook tape on three sides and the bed skirt is attached to that with a loop tape banding strip on the top of the bed skirt. Grip Deck is available at [www.gripdeck.com](http://www.gripdeck.com).

### PILLOW SHAMS

The pillow sham differs from a traditional pillow case, in that it is strictly for decorative use. They are not unlike decorative throw pillows, the main difference being the method of closing the sham. Pillow inserts used to decorate the top of a bed come in four different types and sizes. They include standard, queen, king, and Euro.

The standard is the smallest rectangular pillow and is 20" x 26" in size. The next largest is the queen at 20" x 30", and a king is the largest rectangle at 20" x 36". The euro is a large square and is typically 26" x 26". It is important to keep in mind that your pillow supplier may have slight variations in their pillow sizes, and it's best to choose your pillow insert or confirm dimensions with your designer before making the sham.

Pillow shams have six basic styles and several different methods of closure. The styles are knife-edge, corded, ruffled, flanged, flanged with contrast fabric, and box-pleat.

A knife edge is the most basic and is a simple pillow cover with nothing around the edges.

A corded cover is again a simple cover, but one that has regular or shirred cording around all four edges of the pillow.

Pillow shams that are ruffled or box-pleated have a flat face and a ruffle or box-pleat surrounding the four sides of the pillow.

A flanged pillow is made by cutting the face fabric approximately 3" larger than

the face of the pillow. After sewing the front and back of the sham together, the cover is top-stitched all the way around the inside 3" in from the edges. To stiffen up the flange, interlining, bump, or even dofix fabric stiffener can be added to the inside of the flange before stitching.

Contrast flanged pillow shams are the toughest shams to make and consist of a flange with a different fabric than the face fabric. Trim is often added between the face of the pillow and the contrast flange.

Pillow shams are made to be easily removed from the pillow form and typically are closed with a vertical

closure in the middle of the back of the sham. The main closures include envelope, zipper, and hook and loop tape.

When making an envelope closure, the back of the pillow will be cut into two separate pieces, one about 4" longer than the other. The edges of both pieces are finished and the longer piece will overlap the smaller one. The back will be sewn at the edges, but the lapped section remains open to get the pillow in and out.

Hook and loop tape can be added to the envelope closure to close it completely or the two pieces of the pillow back can be made with an overlap only as large as the hook and loop tape.

A zipper opening can be made in the middle of the back of the pillow or at the top edge where it will be more hidden, for a cleaner look.



*Sydney Schwartz Hardiman is the owner of The Silken Scissor, The Cutting Edge of Custom Treatments, a retail and wholesale workroom based in Pittsburgh, PA. Sydney designs and fabricates soft furnishings and is currently working on a book "The Business of Being Creative: How To Make Money and Be Successful as a Custom Fabrication Workroom." Sydney can be reached at 412-734-1364 or visit her website at [www.TheSilkenScissor.com](http://www.TheSilkenScissor.com).*