

upholstery



OUT OF SITE – NOT OUT OF MIND

Frames are the skeleton of the upholstered piece. Quality furniture will be made from kiln dried hardwood; double doweled, screwed and glued for strength and resistance to warping; reinforced with corner blocks, solid legs and rails are engineered into an interlocked assembly wherever design permits. Less expensive pieces will be made from everything from plywood to stapled frames from an assortment of wood varieties with screwed on legs.

CLUE: Try moving the piece. Lift the corner off the floor. Solid hardwood will have good heavy weight to it. Check the legs – are they solid or will stress ultimately loosen them.



Spring. Structure is the foundation for comfort and durability, providing support and overall strength. Quality furniture will be eight-point hand-tied coil springs set on a basket weave of jute webbing, known as web & coil construction. Substitutes include prefab metal coil spring units set in and clipped into the frame.

Less expensive furniture will be made with no-sag construction – that is single S-shaped springs running from front to back, clipped in equal spacing along the frame.

CLUE: Put your hand underneath and tap up into the “belly” of the furniture. You will immediately feel the jute webbing under the outer lining and hear the springs “ping”. The no-sag alternative is hollow between the seat and the bottom lining.

DEVELOP AN EYE FOR DETAIL

Padding. Ensures softness and comfort. Make sure backs and arms are soft and full with no hard edges in wear points (corners, etc.).

Cushions are critical to comfort, stability and performance. The quality of foam and/or cushion fill makes a significant difference. The higher the density the less filler in the foam. Quality cushions might use down or synthetic down fills or combinations of these wrapped around foam. Cushions should rise to a soft crown in the center and fit snugly with a slight overhang over the front edge of the piece. Your choice of firmness from soft to firm, depends upon the “compression” of the fill, and is a matter of comfort choice, but should support the body weight without sinking or being too hard.

CLUE: Check to make sure cushions have easy to open and close zippers. At the very least, there should be a dacron or terylene wrap around the foam. Squeeze it. Sit in it and make sure there is no gap at the back of the seat when sitting.

Covers should be skillfully crafted from pattern matching to sewing and finishing. Decks (under seat cushions) should be properly upholstered, cushion covers zippered and removable, piping smooth (bias cut), seams on cushions and arm caps properly finished. The best seat cushions are “boxed” with piped edges top and bottom, to ensure they hold their shape over time.

Skirts – or valances should be interfaced and hang straight with neatly tucked corners.

ALL BODIES ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

Suffice it to say for most of us, the “one size fits all” strategy doesn’t work with sofas.

Not only are body sizes important considerations when making choices, so is physical dexterity. The ability to ease in and rise from seat cushions and to sit comfortably with proper lombard support is essential. Arms that are too high to push oneself up with or to rest comfortably when seated should be avoided.

The average height of an upholstered sofa and/or chair is 17” to 18”. However, the depth of the frame can vary considerably. If you are long in the legs then you will want the seat depth to be slightly deeper than the average 21” -- say 22-23”. Back and seat comfort will come from the slope of the frame itself as well as the padding and the composition of the back and seat cushions. Trying to fill the “gap” of furniture that is not supporting or too large in the seat for a shorter person with a pillow stuffed at your back is usually not a comfortable solution.

COUCH POTATO – BOOK WORM – ENTERTAINER

Finally, when choosing your upholstered furniture, the function for which it is going to be used must be given full consideration. A multi-seat sofa that is comfortable for sitting in will not necessarily be a couch potato’s dream piece. However, they can both share from a dropped arm which will support the neck while lying down as well as comfortably rest the arm while sitting upright. The couch potato needs enough length and depth to stretch out without being pushed off.

HELPFUL HINT:

A deeper seat can be made more comfortable for a shorter person by inserting an upholstered flat board behind a loose back cushion on a sofa or chair. This will hold the cushion out from the back of the frame rather than trying to push the person forward with a pillow at their back. **OH**