



# UPHOLSTERY

## Fiber/Construction Identification

### INTRODUCTION

It is important to understand the fiber and construction type you are dealing with in order to prescribe the proper cleaning method, and to avoid problems for you and your customer.

### FIBER IDENTIFICATION

The most important part of fiber identification for upholstery is to determine if you are cleaning “natural” or “synthetic” fibers. As a general rule, natural fibers have to be cleaned with a lot more care. Upholstery fabrics often come in blends. When this occurs, be sure to clean the fabric as if it were completely made from the most sensitive fiber (usually natural). The most practical way of identifying fibers is to use the Burn Test procedure.

- **STEP 1**  
Acquire a fiber sample from an inconspicuous area.
- **STEP 2**  
Place the fiber in some tweezers, a paper clip or a Leatherman tool.
- **STEP 3**  
Light the fiber using a butane lighter (caution - some fibers may drip and burn you or your customers furnishings). Always use an ash tray.
- **STEP 4**  
Notice the smell of the burning fiber and the ash that is left behind.

### NATURAL

- WOOL – smells like burning hair, leaves a crumbly ash.
- RAYON – smells like burning paper, leaves no ash or bead.
- COTTON – smells like burning paper, leaves a gray, fluffy ash.
- JUTE – smells like burning paper, fiber is very coarse and brown.

### SYNTHETIC

- POLYESTER – smells sweet, leaves a shiny black bead. Very hard.

- NYLON – smells like celery, leaves a round, hard bead.
- OLEFIN (polypropylene) – Smells like asphalt, leaves a round, hard bead.

*Hint* - As a general rule, natural fibers will have a soft, crumbly ash or no ash at all. Synthetic fibers will have a hard bead or crust.

### CONSTRUCTION TYPES

**TUFTED FABRIC** - Fabric is manufactured on a broadloom. Fibers are tufted (sewn) into a primary backing material and then secured with a latex glue. High quality velvets are usually made in this manner. Tufted fabric is made up of the following components...

**FACE YARN** - Can be made of any fiber. This creates the pile (the part you see).

**PRIMARY BACKING** - Usually made of polypropylene. Fibers are tufted (sewn) into this material on the broadloom.

**LATEX GLUE** - This is applied to the back of the primary backing to hold the tufts in place and offer the fabric stability..

**FLOCKING** - Referred to as a “Flocked Velvet” which is recognizable by a printed pattern or scene and is made up of the following components...

**BACKING MATERIAL** - Usually woven goods made from synthetic fiber.

**LATEX ADHESIVE** - This adhesive is applied to the woven goods and then the fibers are imbedded into it before it dries.

**FACE YARN** - Usually synthetic but can be made from natural fibers. Creates the pile (the part you see).



**CAUTION** - Solvents will easily dissolve the glue on a “Flocked Velvet” and will cause permanent damage.

**WOVEN FABRICS** - By far the most common construction used in upholstery fabric. Fabric is manufactured on a loom and is made up of the following components...

**WARP YARN** - Runs the length of the loom.

**WEFT YARN** - Runs the width of the loom.

**PILE YARN** - Only used in a “Pile Weave”. Creates the pile (the part you see). (Velvet)

### WEAVE STYLES

**PLAIN WEAVE** - Most common weave.

**BASKET WEAVE** - Denoted by two-paired warp and weft yarns.

**SATIN WEAVE** - Requires care during agitation so as not to damage fabric. Agitate “with” the warp yarn – also known as the “Float” yarn.

**TWILL WEAVE** - Also known as the “Herring Bone” weave.

**JACQUARD WEAVE** - Creates a reverse pattern on the back of the weave.

**PILE WEAVE** - Includes a pile yarn woven in with the warp and weft yarns. (Velvet)

Quick Guide



### PROCEDURE

- 1 Acquire a fiber sample from an inconspicuous area.
- 2 Place the fiber in some tweezers, a paper clip or a Leatherman tool.
- 3 Using a butane lighter, burn the fiber (do this over an ash tray).
- 4 Observe the smell of the burning fiber and the ash that is left behind.

### PRODUCTS NEEDED

- Tweezers, Paperclip or Leatherman Tool
- Butane Lighter

## Other Resources

**Bridgepoint Upholstery Cleaning Manual**  
**Bridgepoint Fast Track Upholstery Manual**  
**Bridgepoint Catalog**  
**Bridgepoint Website • [www.bridgepoint.com](http://www.bridgepoint.com)**  
**Customer Service • 1-800-794-7425**