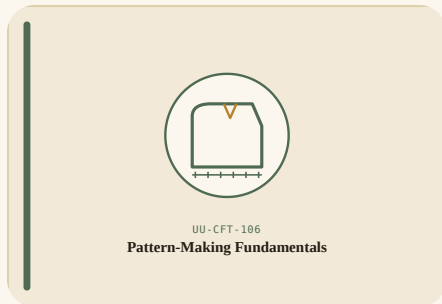


Pattern-Making Fundamentals: Measuring for a Clean Re-Cover

The measurement and patterning fundamentals that determine everything downstream in a re-cover job.



1. The measurement step that determines everything downstream

A clean re-cover starts with accurate measurement and patterning — get this step wrong and no amount of skill in the sewing or installation steps fully recovers from it. This guide covers the fundamentals of measuring an existing piece for a re-cover, whether patterning directly off the old cover or taking dimensions from the bare frame.

2. Two patterning approaches

APPROACH	WHEN TO USE IT
Pattern from the old cover	Fastest and most reliable when the existing cover fit well and the customer wants the same silhouette — carefully disassemble the old cover panel by panel and use each piece as a direct pattern, adjusting only for fabric differences (stretch, nap, pattern repeat)

APPROACH	WHEN TO USE IT
Pattern from the bare frame	Required when the old cover is too damaged to disassemble cleanly, when the silhouette is changing (e.g. adding a skirt, changing arm style), or on a frame being covered for the first time — measure and drape directly on the frame/muslin fit

3. Measuring fundamentals

- **Measure every panel independently** — seat, back, arms (inside and outside), skirt, cushions. Don't assume symmetry; frames settle and warp unevenly over years of use.
- **Add seam allowance consistently** to every panel — decide the shop-standard allowance and apply it the same way every time rather than eyeballing it per piece.
- **Account for fabric with nap or directional pattern** — every panel needs to run the same direction, which usually means more yardage than a non-directional fabric of the same piece.
- **Measure pattern repeat** before cutting on any patterned fabric, and plan panel layout so the pattern matches across visible seams — this is where yardage estimates most often come up short if it isn't planned before cutting begins.

4. Common measurement mistakes

- Measuring a cushion at rest instead of under slight compression — a cover cut to the relaxed size will look loose once the cushion is actually sat on and compressed.
- Forgetting tuck allowance — the extra fabric that tucks down into seat/back crevices, which is easy to under-measure and results in a cover that pulls tight and looks stretched.
- Not accounting for stretch/give in a knit or loosely-woven fabric — a pattern sized for a stable woven fabric will be oversized on a stretch fabric and undersized in reverse.
- Cutting before confirming total yardage against the actual pattern layout — a rough yardage estimate from a formula (see *Estimating & Bidding, UU-OPS-101*) should be confirmed against the real panel layout before fabric is cut, not just before it's ordered.

5. Building a reusable pattern library

For any frame style the shop sees repeatedly (a common recliner model, a standard dining chair, a boat seat base), save the pattern pieces (muslin or heavy paper, labeled with the frame model and date) rather than re-patterning from scratch every time. This is one of the highest-

leverage time investments a shop can make — it turns a repeat job into a much faster quote and build.

Sources

General trade reference reflecting standard upholstery patterning practice. Seam allowance, tuck allowance, and compression-fit adjustments vary by fabric and frame — calibrate to what your shop sees most often.

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