

The fibers that make up fabrics and rugs will either be natural (animal, plant, or insect) or synthetic (man-made). Fabrics and rugs will be labeled with the fiber content and the following information will help you understand that terminology.

Natural Fibers

Cotton (plant) – strong fiber; blends well with other fibers; versatile; affected by mildew and sun

Mercerized Cotton – a chemical treatment that permanently straightens cotton fibers by shrinking them and increasing their luster; mildew resistant

Hemp (plant) – long strong fiber; wrinkles easily; resists mildew

Jute (plant) – long coarse strong fiber; used for carpet backing, sacks, rope, and twine

Linen (plant) – very strong fiber; quality varies; wrinkles easily; weakened by mildew and sun

Ramie (plant) – medium strength fiber; resists stains and mildew

Silk (insect) – strong natural protein fiber; texture varies; resists mildew; weakened by sun

Wool (animal) – strong fiber; insulates well; attracts moths; weakened by sun

Worsted Wool – woolen fibers processed to run parallel to each other creating a smoother surface



Synthetic Fibers

Acetate – a form of rayon; weak fiber; blends well with other fibers to strengthen it; weakened by sun

Acrylic – medium strength fiber; tends to pill; resists mildew, moths, and sun damage

Nylon – very strong fiber; blends well with other fibers; weakened by sun

Olefin – strong fiber; blends well with other fibers; resists stains, abrasion, mildew, and sun damage

Polyester – strong fiber; blends well with other fibers; tends to pill; resists moths, mildew; weakened by sun

Rayon – weak fiber derived from spruce pulp; blends well with other fibers to strengthen it; weakened by sun

Viscose – a very strong version of rayon; blends well with other fibers