

Find the Perfect Towel

SOAK UP EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
BUYING AND CARING FOR THESE HOUSEHOLD STAPLES.

By Leslie Corona



SOFT STYLING BY MAI TRAN

Photographs by
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Thirst Things First

Pick your weave, which affects how absorbent the towel is and how fast it dries.

If you want something incredibly fluffy...
TERRY CLOTH

This fabric is a weave of tiny loops of thread. These little twists are what makes terry towels so absorbent, because each one creates more surface area to drink up water. A fluffy towel like this, though, is slower to dry than thinner options. For the most absorbency, get ones that are 100 percent cotton, or opt for a blend with at least 50 percent cotton.



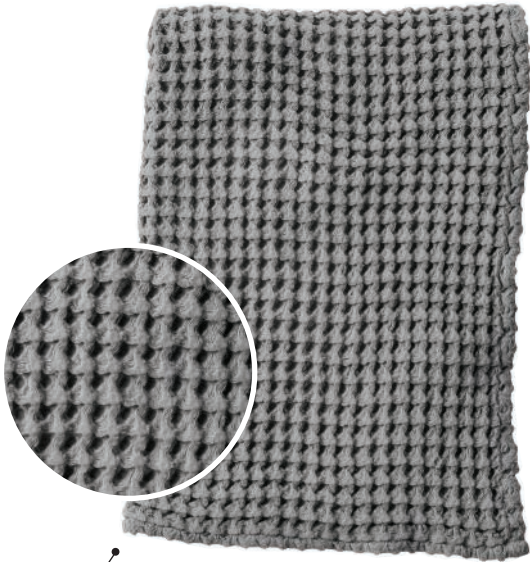
TO BUY: Plush Egyptian Cotton & Bamboo Bath Towel, \$39; garnethill.com.

TO BUY: Thea Towel, \$24; bonton-studio.com.



If you want something lightweight and quick-drying...
TURKISH TOWEL

This extremely thin bath sheet (a.k.a. fouta) has a tight weave, which means the fabric may be a little less absorbent than other styles. But it's lightweight and durable, and it dries quickly. These towels are perfect for vacation: They take up minimal space in bags, can double as blankets on chilly plane trips, and dry quickly when spread out in a hot car after a beach day.



Feels like a spa treatment but costs way less!

TO BUY: Waffle Bath Towel, \$39; parachutehome.com.

If you want a luxe spa look...
HONEYCOMB OR WAFFLE WEAVE

These towels have a variegated surface that offers an invigorating after-shower rubdown. They dry efficiently, thanks to a puckered texture allowing for airflow. That said, their gift is their curse: In the dryer, the towels are prone to shrinkage, which can cause the edges to ripple. Avoid washing in hot water, and line-dry or dry on low heat.

Location, Location, Location

Where you plan to stash your towel should determine the material you choose.

Cotton
BEST TO KEEP BY YOUR TUB

Cotton towels, especially if they're terry cloth, are sturdy, soft, and absorbent. Plus, they are incredibly easy to care for. Towels made of "long staple" cotton, like Egyptian and pima, are softer and have a longer lifespan than regular cotton.
GOOD TO KNOW: Cotton fibers may wear down and fray more quickly and dry more slowly than synthetic varieties.

Low-Pile Microfiber
BEST FOR THE GYM BAG

Synthetic microfiber is usually made from nylon, rayon, or polyester. It is lightweight, quick-drying, and—drumroll—can sometimes be antimicrobial, making it ideal for sweaty locales. Bring it to hot yoga or drape it over your bike's handles at spin class.
GOOD TO KNOW: Synthetic fibers aren't super absorbent, but they can last longer than natural fibers.

Bamboo
BEST FOR BATHROOMS WITH LIMITED VENTILATION

These fibers can be antimicrobial, which may help prevent them from smelling musty.
GOOD TO KNOW: Bamboo fabric is technically considered rayon because of the way it's processed; you may see that on the label instead. Bamboo towels are often a mix of linen or cotton. Bamboo grows like a weed, so it has an eco-friendly halo, but turning it into fabric involves a lot of processing. Look for a certification like Oeko-Tex, GOTS, or C2C on the label.



TO BUY: Air Weight Organic Cotton Bath Towel, \$48; coyuchi.com.



TO BUY: Orkney Linen Hand Towel, \$40; roughlinen.com.

Linen
BEST FOR THE POWDER ROOM

Made from the flax plant, linen is more absorbent than cotton and often used for hand towels. Decorative embroidery and trim look especially nice on this thin fabric. Linen towels feel a little rough when brand-new, but they soften the more they're washed.
GOOD TO KNOW: Linen wrinkles easily. Lean into it: Put away that iron and embrace the casual look.

10 Commandments of Towel Care

When you take good care of your towels, they should remain thirsty and plush for years. Follow these tips to keep them in the best shape.



1

Wash immediately.

As soon as you bring home new towels, toss them into the wash to remove any chemicals manufacturers may have used to make them look fluffy and feel soft in the store. This can also help reduce lint.

2

Don't overdo the detergent.

Laundry towels after a few uses in warm water with mild soap. For a full load in a high-efficiency machine, add no more than two tablespoons of detergent. Any more might cause a buildup that limits absorbency.

3

Give them a deep clean.

If your towels begin to feel stiff or less absorbent, add vinegar or borax to your machine every few washes to refresh them and remove detergent residue.

4

Shake out towels before drying.

If you throw them into the machine all bunched up, they may take longer to dry and could retain stubborn creases.

5

Dry on low heat.

To prevent overheating—which can tighten the fibers, making them stiffer and less absorbent—dry towels together on the low setting.

6

Skip the fabric softener.

It coats the fibers with a slick residue and inhibits water absorption. Instead, use wool dryer balls to increase air circulation and help fluff fibers.

7

Spread to dry.

After your shower or bath, hang your towel across a bar or shower rod so it can dry fully. This will help prevent bacterial growth and extend the time between washes. Avoid using hooks, which can cause moisture to get trapped within the fabric's folds.

8

Keep two per person.

Have at least two bath towels for each person in your household. When one is in the wash, the other can be in the bathroom. Keep four hand towels per person, since they're used (and therefore washed) more frequently.

9

Be careful with your body care routine.

If you use benzoyl peroxide creams or a whitening toothpaste, know that these could cause discoloration. Set aside special washcloths to use exclusively with these ingredients. (Some towels are marketed as stain-resistant, but they are not always effective.)

10

Use bleach sparingly.

It's great for getting stains out of white towels, but frequent use will break down fibers and shorten their lifespan.

OUR EXPERTS

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