



A well made
bed is a daily
(or nightly) delight



THE COMFORT OF THINGS

THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS IN YOUR HOME THAT ARE LIKE
GOOD FRIENDS: THEY ALWAYS CHEER YOU UP. THIS MONTH WE
FEEL THE LOVE FOR... A WELL MADE BED

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There comes a time when staying up late loses its appeal. Watching the sun rise may suit students, hedonists or anyone in thrall to notions of late-night excitement, but for the rest of us, the lure of going to bed has a far greater pull. The thought of crawling under a billowy duvet, laying a weary head on a crisp, cool pillow and drifting off to sleep outweighs any lingering desire to stay up and party.

The call of the duvet is even greater when the bed is made up with a variety of delicious linens. Replacing limp economy duvets and fitted polyester sheets with duck down and high-thread-count cotton versions is a sign of maturity. It not only marks the transition from youthful grubbiness to adult sophistication but it also acknowledges that as you get older, the need for a good night's sleep becomes greater – and harder to come by*. A well made bed may not deliver you from insomnia, but it certainly helps you along the way.

Take pillows. It's easy to pay scant attention to these as your head hits the same one night after night, but a good pillow is the gateway to an untroubled night's sleep. This is where you lay your head for a third of your life, so it pays to buy one that is supportive and

cossetting. (To see if your pillow is past it, drape it over your forearm: if it folds over like a saddlebag, it is.)

The same rules apply to all items of bedding: go for the best quality you can afford and don't forget to wash it. If you do forget, all manner of unattractive things build up and multiply. Hotels only use white bedlinen because it can be washed at high temperatures, thus killing anything nasty lurking within.

A bed takes up a lot of space and dominates the room, so dressing it can turn an indifferent room into a snug retreat. Once it is layered up with pillows, cushions and throws, cast your eyes around the surrounding space. A shaggy rug to ease the toes into in the morning, a task light to read by, and a posy vase of flowers on the bedside table all help create a place of ease, where sleep comes more easily. So much nicer than staying up late and feeling rubbish in the morning.

"The call of the duvet is even greater when the bed is made up with delicious linens"

LAYERING UP

A bed can have many layers, each of varying quality, cost and sophistication. Take your pick from the smorgasbord of tog ratings and thread counts and assemble yours to your own specification.

Mattress The foundation of a good night's sleep so worth investing in. The perceived wisdom is to change it every eight years, but this depends on the quality of the mattress.

Mattress protector A thin, often quilted, cover to keep the mattress unsullied.

Mattress topper An affordable option to changing your mattress. Padded with feathers or made from Memory Foam, it is an extra layer of support.

Electric blanket A necessity as the temperature drops, even when the central heating is on:

little makes you sigh with pleasure like getting into a toasty bed.

A sheet Flat sheets beat fitted in our book: you can fold them easily before putting into the airing cupboard, and you get to show off hospital corners. Thread count of 300 is ideal; it's high quality and launders well. Ironing sheets may be considered a waste of time, but slipping into a bed made with freshly laundered cotton sheet is a civilising thing.

A duvet There are too many choices of fillings and togs to go into here (the duvet, right, is from westelm.co.uk) but a tog of 10.5 suits most, reduced to 4.5 in summer.

Duvet cover Tempting though patterns and designs are, plain colours are more versatile, with white top of the heap.

Introduce texture and colour with throws and bedspreads.

Pillows A better-quality pillow really does mean a better night's sleep. Try a firmer pillow (mixture of down and feather) topped by a pure duck down pillow (expensive but dreamy) for a blissful combination.

Pillow cases Choose between the annoyingly named 'housewife' (simple and plain, fits snugly over pillow) and the Oxford (has a fabric border with a mitred corners). Ideally, they should match the duvet cover. A pillow protector

(a plain pillow case slipped inside) to prevent staining and ensure longevity of the pillow is a sensible addition.

Bedspread or quilt An extra layer of warmth and handy for covering up rumpled bedding and toast crumbs.



Throw Adds a touch of interior designer show-offiness and handy on chillier nights.

Cushions Can be changed at whim. Also useful for propping yourself up if reading in bed. Pile neatly on to an ottoman at night (see page 110). »



THREE TO MAKE, BUY OR CUSTOMISE: DUVET COVERS

MAKE

As a duvet cover is basically two large flat pieces of fabric stitched together, there is much to be said for making one yourself. Wash, dry and iron the fabric first to preshrink it. Stitch with right sides together, preferably with French seams to avoid fraying. Measure carefully, adding 3cm either side to the width, and 9cm to the length (you'll need extra fabric to close it up). Close with buttons or press studs – there are many Youtube videos to tell you how.

BUY

Many options to mention: for top-end, hotel standard, try Tielle Love Luxury (tielleloveluxury.co.uk), a 400tc bedlinen set costs from £117–£219. West Elm (westelm.co.uk) has a range of mid-priced cotton bedlinen, including a snug flannel duvet cover (£89 for a double; matching pillowcases, £24). H&M (hm.com) is the place for budget bedding, including a washed linen duvet cover set in a variety of soft colours (£79.99 for a double set).

CUSTOMISE

Options exist to transfer photographs on to pillowcases. If you must go down this route, try bagsoflove.com. For those with high-falutin' bedding ambitions, monogrammed bedding might appeal. monogrammedlinenshop.com will stitch your initials or a message onto a pillowcase.



Flannel
sheets,
[westelm.
co.uk](http://westelm.co.uk)



Beatnik bed,
£945, loaf.com

HOME QUANDARIES

No matter how I try, and how many cushions I add, I can't get my bed to look like those in department stores or magazine adverts. What is the secret?

Answer in brief: stack pillows and cushions upright and buy a generous bedspread.

There have been moments in all our lives when we have wandered into the bedding department of John Lewis, say, seen a bed made up with layers of throws and cushions, the duvet pulled back invitingly at one corner, and just wanted to climb in, drift off into peaceful slumber, and never leave.

The trouble arises when we get home and try to recreate this look – a look often replicated in adverts and in hotels, and one that involves a large number of pillows and cushions. The problem is that often the materials we have to work with – mismatched cushions gathered over the years, a couple of limp pillows, and an old blanket – just aren't up to scratch. This is a look that demands fully plumpable pillows, coordinated cushions and a lush throw, possibly with tassels or made from faux fur. Some may consider life to be too short to attend to such matters, but if you are set on mastering the art of 'pillowscaping', a couple of things will help you pull it off. First, always layer pillows and cushions upright, one in front of the other – do not lie them flat. This stacking will immediately bring them up to hotel standard. Second, the bed should be covered by a bedspread or quilt generous enough to reach the ground on either side, thus covering anything shoved underneath it. Top it off with a throw placed artfully over the end, and you're there. **S**

"Layer pillows and cushions upright, this will immediately bring them up to hotel standard"





NINE EASY PIECES

Your bedroom can be a lush and cosy sanctuary with the addition of a few carefully chosen layers



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

1 Herringbone throw, £59, thebritishblanketcompany.com 2 Faux fur throw, £150, tielleloveluxury.co.uk 3 Ashby double bed frame, £151.99; Seddon bedding, from £42.99 for a double set, argos.co.uk 4 Orme throw, £160; Florence cushion, £47; bed, £1,070, neptune.com 5 Kelis throw by Lene Bjerre, £128, sweetpeaandwillow.com 6 Somerset Star pillowcase, £16.50, pignut.co.uk 7 Coates pillowcase, £18 a pair, habitat.co.uk 8 Murmur bedding, from £19 for a pillowcase, bedeckhome.com 9 100% linen double duvet cover, £115, secretlinenstore.com

