

Outdoor Cushions Buying Guide

Adding cushions to your outdoor seating adds support and comfort so that outdoor living becomes even more enjoyable. Learn more about outdoor cushion construction, sizes, and care.



When outfitting your outdoor space, comfort is the most important element to consider. Outdoor cushions not only enhance the style of your patio, they provide support so that you can enjoy sitting and lounging in the open air for long hours. The addition of outdoor cushions to seating makes your outdoor space a true extension of your indoor home, adding coziness to outdoor spaces. While it is recommended to match your cushions by the options offered by your seating’s manufacturer, we outline the basic construction, general sizes, features, and care for most outdoor cushions available on the market.

Outdoor Cushion Construction

Outdoor cushions are constructed to withstand harsh outdoor elements. Quality outdoor cushions are weather and moisture resistant, so that they are quick-drying, and are resistant to mold, mildew, and fading. Filling and upholstery fabric will determine the durability and quality of your outdoor cushions.

Filling

Batting (Foam and Dacron)

Batting is used in combination with foam cushions to bring a smooth, streamlined appearance to cushions. Foam and Dacron cushions consist of a foam core with Dacron batting wrapped around the core. It is an economical option that carries a medium to firm density.

Foam

The most common filling material is foam which comes in a variety of densities. Density is the most important property to consider when choosing foam. Different applications will require different densities of foam. There are 4 important factors that determine the quality of foam used for cushions:

Density: Typically, the higher density the foam, the firmer the cushions will be. Density measures how much air is in the foam. A very high density is considered excessive for outdoor applications. The industry standard for outdoor cushions is between 1.5-1.8 lbs./cu. ft. for seats. Indoor applications require a much higher density for longevity.

Indentation Force Deflection (IFD): IFD is a measurement of a foam's softness. Indentation force deflection tests how many pounds foam takes to compress. 70 IFD is considered firm, 40-45 IFD is medium, and 33-35 IFD is rated as medium soft.

High Resilience (HR): High resilience foam refers to properties in foam that allow it to quickly regain its shape, or “bounce back” after pressures has been applied. HR foam is better suited for indoor applications, as moisture and exposure from an outdoor setting may compromise the properties of high resilience foam.

Biocide: A biocide treatment is recommended for foams used in outdoor cushions. Biocide is an additive that reduces fungus growth in foam.

The most common types of outdoor cushion foam include:

Type of Foam
Qualities
Compressed Polyester <ul style="list-style-type: none">Foam alternativeWill not degrade like traditional foam, but will compress over timeInexpensive option best used for cushions
Polyester Fiberfill <ul style="list-style-type: none">Foam alternativeNon-allergenic and resistant to mildewMachine-washable (fiber can bunch during laundering, use hand to smooth out)Common stuffing used for deep seating back cushions
Polyurethane Foam <ul style="list-style-type: none">Traditional foam option that often contains biocide treatmentMedium firmness well-suited for seating and mattress applicationsAvoid environments where polyurethane foam gets wet as cells will soak up water
Open Cell Foam <ul style="list-style-type: none">Open cell reticulated foam has open pores that allow water and air to flow easilyComfortable, extremely easy maintenanceDry Fast is a high-quality open cell foam formulated with an antimicrobial agent to prevent mold and mildew
Closed Cell <ul style="list-style-type: none">High-density foam known as flotation foamNo water absorption, 3x firmer than polyurethane foam, buoyantUsed for flotation applications, ideal for commercial boat seating



Upholstery Fabric

The upholstery fabric is the exterior material that surrounds and protects the cushion filling from outdoor elements. Because upholstery fabric is exposed to the elements, as well as, the component of the cushion that provides aesthetic value, look for fabric that is fade-resistant, as well as, waterproof. The following outlines the most common types of fabrics that are best-suited for outdoor use:

Type of Fabric
Qualities
Sunbrella <ul style="list-style-type: none">Designer fabric developed in the 1960sEngineered with high performance characteristics: water-resistant, fade-resistant, quick-dry, highly breathable, great textural appearance and feel, easy maintenance
Cotton Canvas <ul style="list-style-type: none">Plain woven, heavy duty fabricDurable, comfortable, dyes easily, available in many colors and prints
Duck Cloth <ul style="list-style-type: none">Similar to canvas, tighter weaveSmoother than cotton canvas
Textilene Fabric <ul style="list-style-type: none">Woven polyester with a PVC coatingWaterproof, fade resistant, mold-resistant, flame retardantUsed for sling seating and sun shades
Olefin Fiber <ul style="list-style-type: none">Synthetic fiber also known as polypropylene, often considered a plastic fabricExtremely hardy, durable against mold, heat, sun, and moistureIdeal for cushion inserts
Vinyl <ul style="list-style-type: none">Polyvinyl chloride, or PVC, was first used during the 1920s and is the second most popular plastic in productionDurable, easy to clean, recyclable

Outdoor Cushion Sizes

We recommend purchasing the cushions that have been specially made by the manufacturer of your seating. This ensures the perfect fit cushions that will best suit the designs of specific furniture. As a general guide sizing outdoor cushions, taking measurements will estimate the correct sized cushions for outdoor seating.

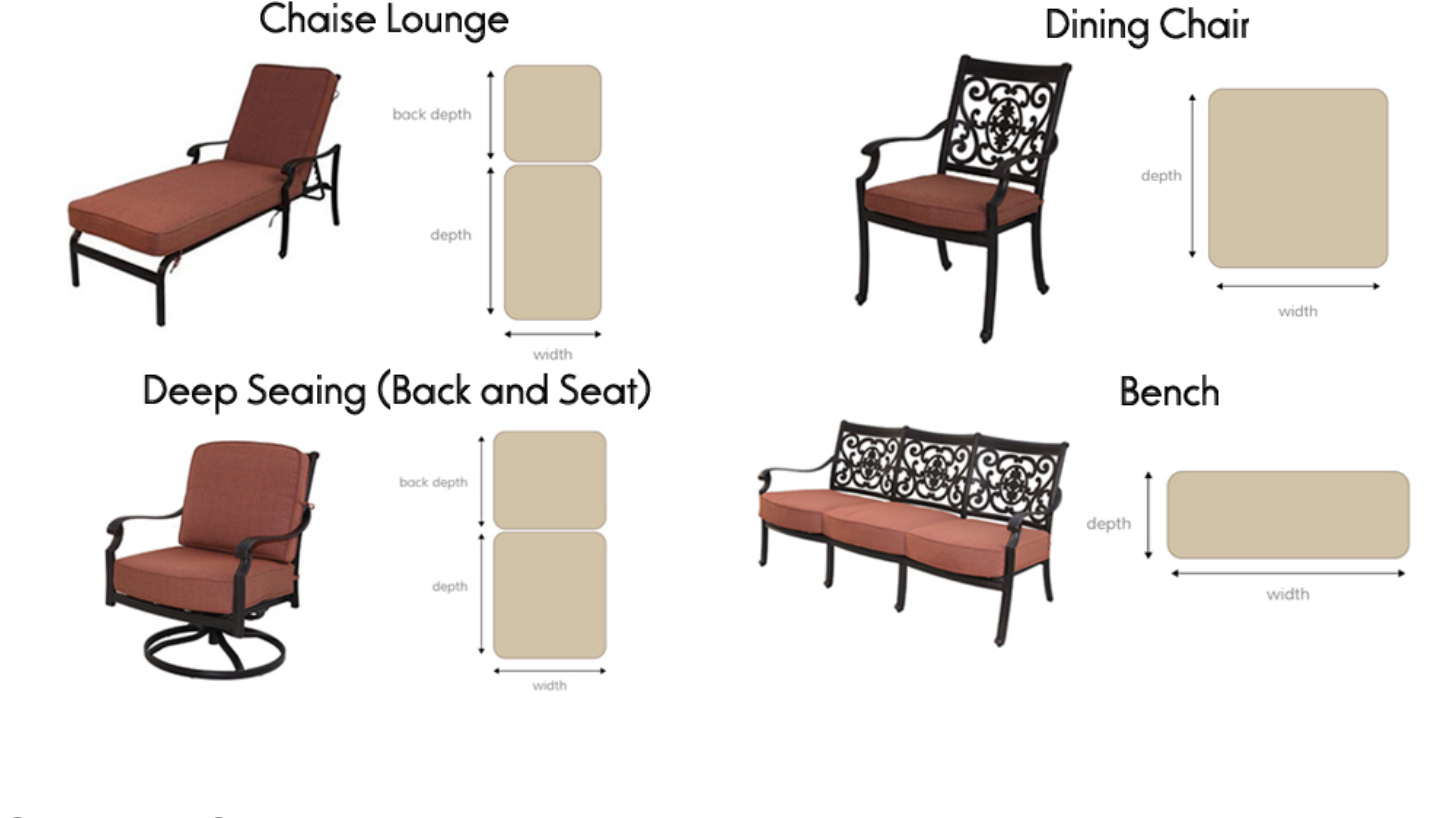
Measuring

Width: Measures left-to-right distance across seating surface. Use the widest measurement when measuring left-to-right (or arm-to-arm) to find the correct width.

Depth: Measures front-to-back distance across seating surface. Measure from the front edge of seat to the rear of the seat.

Back: Measures from the base of the seat to the top of the back.

Height: Height refers to the cushion’s thickness. You can estimate the height of ideal cushion by measuring the the base of the seat to the ideal height of where you’d like the cushion to land.



Outdoor Cushion Features

Ties

Some outdoor cushions feature ties that fasten directly on the frame and keep cushions in place.

Slip Cover

Some outdoor cushions are tailored with a matching slip cover which eliminates exposed frames. Instead of exposed straps or ties, the cushion is held in place to the slip cover with industrial grade Velcro and with a pocket flap to conceal the frame.

Foldable

Some outdoor cushions are constructed as a single piece with seams separating the back and seat cushions. This is a convenient option that makes storing cushions easy.

Reversible

Reversible cushions allow you to quickly change the look of your outdoor furniture with different options for colors and patterns.

Outdoor Cushion Care

- Regularly brush off dirt and debris to maintain your outdoor cushions.
- Vacuuming outdoor cushions is recommended to remove dirt and debris, especially in hard to reach places along seams and corners.
- Blot, never rub, when spot cleaning or removing stains for liquid spills.
- Oil-based stains from lotions and sunscreens must be removed as quickly as possible as they become more difficult to remove with time. For oil-based spills, apply an absorbent such as cornstarch to soak up the oil. Use a straight edge to remove the debris. Spray a mild cleaning solution and rinse fabric thoroughly. Air dry.
- To remove mildew from cushions upholstered in solution dyed acrylic fabrics (like Sunbrella), use a mix of 1 gallon distilled water + 1 cup chlorine bleach + ¼ cup gentle liquid soap. Spray entire surface. Rinse, and air dry.
- Limit exposure of cushions that have not been specifically treated with UV protection from the sun by placing them in the shade to retain their vibrancy.
- Saturated cushions should be placed seam side down to allow them to drain. Features such as zippers allow you to remove the cushion filling from the upholstery fabric so that you can allow the water from both filling and fabric to drain.
- When not in use, properly store cushions by cleaning and drying them thoroughly.