Do your own UPHOLSTERY with LATEX FOAM

WHAT IS LATEX FOAM?

Latex foam is a modern upholstery material which gives luxurious comfort to all types of chairs and seats. It keeps its shape, does not make or collect dust, does not harbour moths or germs and—even after years of wear—does not break down, sag or go lumpy.

It is manufactured from latex, the milky fluid which comes from the rubber tree. To form the foam the latex is frothed until it contains millions of interconnected air-cells.

LATEX FOAM IS WELL TESTED

During the last twenty-five years latex foam upholstery has been used to an ever-increasing extent in cinemas, theatres, buses, coaches, trains, aircraft and domestic furniture. It has proved to be hard wearing even under the most exacting conditions.

NOW YOU CAN DO IT YOURSELF

Latex foam has now become more readily available through retail stores, making it possible for many upholstery jobs to be done in the home.

Upholstering with latex foam can be done in the living room without any special tools and it makes very little mess. The stage-by-stage instructions given here should enable any amateur to tackle many upholstery and re-upholstery jobs with complete success. It is important to read this leaflet right through carefully before beginning work. **Particular attention should be paid to the section "Re-upholstering a Chair", in which are described certain operations which are basic to most of the upholstery jobs referred to later.**

For such items as deep armchairs, car seats and other more advanced upholstery work not covered in this leaflet it is recommended that the work should be put in the hands of a professional upholsterer.

HOW TO BUY LATEX FOAM

For all the upholstery work illustrated, sheet latex foam which is sold by the square foot, is used. **Make sure that *you buy it under one of the trade names given on the attached* sheet.** Latex foam of about an inch or more in thickness has either round or square cavities on its underside and known as "cavity sheet". Latex foam thinner than an inch is known as plain sheet and has no cavities. Latex foam is made in various densities—test it with the palm of your hand to see if it has the right degree of softness. Also consult the retailer on this point.

MATERIALS AND TOOLS REQUIRED

These are the materials you require: latex foam, either ordinary upholsterer's or rubber webbing, upholstery tacks, calico (which requires to be cut into strips or tapes of 2″ width), rubber adhesive, french chalk or talcum powder (advice on where these can be obtained is given on the separate sheet attached). In addition you will require: a ball-point pen (or tailor's chalk), hammer, scissors and pincers, or block of wood with a notch cut in one end for stretching the upholsterer's webbing. Alternatively, if rubber webbing is used no stretching implement is needed.

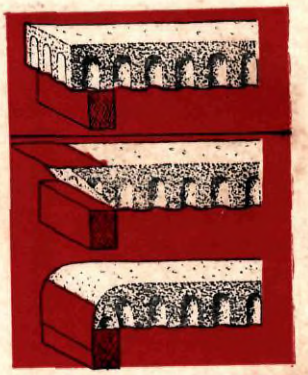
RE-UPHOLSTERING A CHAIR

1. These are the instructions for re-upholstering a dining chair similar to the one shown in the top sketch. Cavity sheet latex foam about 1½″ or 2″ thick is recommended for this chair. First strip off all the upholstery leaving the frame bare. Webbing which is in poor condition should be removed and replaced by new. Use a good quality black and white upholsterer's webbing, tacking it to the frame as shown in the sketch. Pull the webbing as tightly as possible with webbing strainers, pincers, or, as shown, with the wooden block. A piece of hessian or sacking should now be tacked down over the webbing to prevent the latex foam from being forced through the spaces between the webs.

2. Cut out a pattern of the seat in stiff paper or thin card, allowing ½″ extra all round. Lay the pattern on the smooth top surface of the latex foam for marking out with the ball-point pen or tailor's chalk.

3. Kitchen scissors with serrated blades will be found to cut latex foam very well, but ordinary scissors can be used. Scissors dipped in water will cut thick latex foam more easily. Cut the latex foam to shape, keeping the cut vertical and as smooth as possible.

4. Next taper back the sides of the latex foam at an angle of 45° to make the feathered or rounded edge (top sketch). Fit 2″ wide tapes of calico to the outside edges of the top surface of the latex foam (top sketch). Do this by spreading rubber adhesive along half the width of each piece of tape and also, with a 1″ wide band, round the outside edges of the top of the latex foam. Allow the adhesive to become tacky *before pressing the tapes into the latex foam.* (Two coats of adhesive may be necessary, where the instructions on the container so indicate.) Dust on french chalk or talcum powder to dry off surplus adhesive.



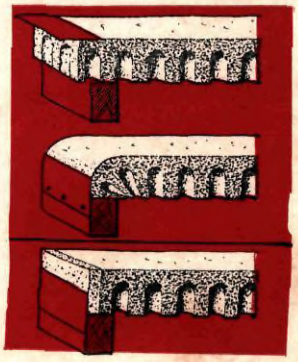
5. Lay the latex foam on to the chair frame so that there is a ½″ overhang all round. Now pull the tapes down and *tack them to the sides of the chair seat rails* (see sketch). Tack the tapes into position temporarily with tacks only partly driven in 2″ or 3″ apart before tacking down finally. See that the pull on the tapes is even when driving in the tacks so that the edge of the latex foam has a smooth contour.

6. Now put on the upholstery fabric, temporarily tacking first and then tacking finally as described in 5 (above). Pull the covering fabric tight enough to compress the latex foam slightly, but not so tight as to restrict its resilience. When the covering fabric has been adjusted to your satisfaction finally tack it down, removing temporary tacks as you go.

CUSHIONED EDGE AND SQUARE EDGE

Here are two alternative finishes: the cushioned edge and the square edge. The cushioned edge is similar to the feathered edge except that no tapering to the edge has to be done. It gives a rather firmer edge and is especially suitable with stiff covering materials such as leathercloth. Attach the tapes and tack to the frame in exactly the same way as for the feathered edge.

The square edge shown in the bottom sketch is most suitable when the cover is to have a piped border. Make this edge by applying a strip of ½″ plain sheet latex foam as shown. When making the paper or card pattern for cutting out the cavity latex foam remember that it should be ½″ smaller than the seat, *not* ½″ larger as for the feathered and cushioned edges. The position for the tapes is shown in the sketch.



UPHOLSTERING A LOOSE SEAT

Loose seats of dining chairs are very simple to re-upholster with latex foam. Remove all the upholstery down to the seat frame. Should the webbing need renewing there is the choice of rubber or alternatively upholsterer's webbing. Rubber webbing is particularly suited to the home handyman. It is easy to apply and gives a strong hard wearing support to the latex foam. If you intend to re-cover with a thicker fabric than the original, take care to test first to see if the chair seat will still fit into the frame.

For the upholstery of loose seats ¾″ or 1″ latex foam is most suitable. The seat frame can be used as the pattern for marking out. When cutting out allow a ½″ extra on the outside of the marked line. The edges of the latex foam are next taped—as for a feathered or square edge—and then tacked to the seat frame. The directions for applying the covering fabric are very similar to those described.

PALLET CUSHION FOR A WINDSOR CHAIR

1. The comfort and appearance of Windsor-type chairs can often be improved by fitting pallet cushions. These are simply and quickly made. Plain sheet latex foam of about 1″ thickness is most suitable. Cut the pattern in thick paper or thin card to the exact size of the chair seat.

2. Make up the cover so that it is very slightly smaller than the latex foam cushion both in length and breadth. The most effective way of making up the cover is shown in the inset sketch. It should be machined up with a piping at the seam between. Leave a short length of the seam at the back of the cover open for inserting the latex foam: this opening can be fitted with snap fasteners so that the cover can be removed for washing. Two cords should be sewn on so that the cushion can be tied into position.

MAKING A REVERSIBLE CUSHION

1. Although reversible cushion units can be bought in many different shapes and sizes it is sometimes necessary to make a special one. The cushion is constructed as a sandwich consisting of three layers of latex foam, as shown in the sketch. To make a cushion which is 4″ thick at the sides and 5″ in the centre two pieces of 2″ cavity latex foam and one piece of 1″ latex foam are used.

Cut the outside pieces of latex foam to the exact size required for the finished cushion and the inner 1″ thick piece cut 3″ smaller than this all round.

2. Fix the three pieces of latex foam lightly together with spots of rubber adhesive and dust with french chalk or talcum powder. Now cut 4″ wide strips of ½″ plain sheet latex foam to form the outside walls of the cushion. Attach these with rubber solution then dust over the joints.

3. You have now made the latex foam cushion unit ½″ larger all round than the size required and also of the cushion cover. It therefore has to be compressed slightly to get it into the cover and, as a result, the cover is held taut and free from wrinkles.

Sometimes a strip of calico is sewn into the back of the top front piping of a cover and then stuck to the top front edge of the latex foam unit; this is done to ensure that the cover does not get pushed out of position.

MORE ADVANCED UPHOLSTERY

Bench-Type Seating. Bench-type seating is simple for the handyman to erect and can be a convenient way of solving seating problems in a small dining room.

The sketch is almost self-explanatory. The supporting frame is of 2″ × 1″ battening plugged to the wall. The upholstered back and seat units are of latex foam on a plywood base. (The plywood should have ventilation holes bored into it as shown.) Use 2″ cavity sheet for the seat and rather thinner and softer latex foam for the back.

THREE TYPES OF CHAIR BACK

1. When upholstering backs a rather softer latex foam should be used than for the seat. The sketch shows how 2″ cavity sheet latex foam can be used for upholstering the back of an occasional chair in which the base is of upholsterer's webbing. There is no need for webbing to be as close together in the back as in the seat. Remember, therefore, to tack a piece of hessian or sacking over to stop the latex foam from being forced through the gaps.

2. In the sketch latex foam is shown supported on tension springs. The hessian screen between the latex foam and the springs is tacked to the top rail of the back but has in its bottom edge a pocket through which the lowest spring goes. In this way the hessian screen does not restrict the movements of the springs.

3. Chairs which are upholstered with coil springs can often be improved by removing the stuffing materials—such as cotton linters, fibre and hair—and replacing them with latex foam. Remove all the stuffing back to the hessian over the springs then check that the springs are in good enough condition to justify upholstering over with latex foam.

A FEW LAST WORDS

★ Always give a coat of rubber solution (or two coats where instructed on the container) to both surfaces which are being joined. After pressing the surfaces together, dust the joints with french chalk or talcum powder; a pepper pot will be found useful for this purpose.
★ Latex foam should never be smaller than the surface it has to cover. Never use it stretched.
★ Ventilation holes should always be made in a plywood base.
★ When latex foam is not covered, store it away from strong light.
★ Shredded-up odd pieces of latex foam make a good filling for soft toys.

WHERE TO OBTAIN MATERIALS

See the enclosed sheet or, if in difficulty, write to the Natural Rubber Development Board.