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4 Throw Pillow Tricks Designers Use to Make Any Couch Look Put Together

By SARAH LYON | Published on 10/31/25



Credit: Tracy Morris Design / Photo by Anice Hoachlander

KEY POINTS

- Use three to five throw pillows in varied sizes, shapes, and textures for a stylish and personalized look.
- Mixing materials and upsizing inserts by two inches makes pillows appear fuller and more luxurious.
- Thoughtful pillow styling acts like accessorizing—it adds personality and polish to your living space.

It turns out that there *is* a technique for expertly styling throw pillows on a couch, and if you're wondering how many to incorporate into your own space, we're here to help.

Here, interior designers comment on the main factors to consider when selecting throw pillows—including type, size, shape, and material—and also provide insights on the number of throw pillows to use on a couch, how to make pillows appear fluffier and fuller, and more.

MEET THE EXPERT

- Sydney Levy is a designer with Anthony Wilder Design/Build.
- Rebekah Zaveloff is the cofounder and creative director of Imparfait Design Studios and KitchenLab.
- Tracy Morris is the founder of Tracy Morris Design.

Consider the Type

There are many different pillow types to choose from when shopping for throw pillows.

Sydney Levy, a designer with Anthony Wilder Design/Build, explains how throw pillows are a great addition for creating a statement to any sofa or space.

"It's like accessorizing your clothes: when you add pillows, you are accessorizing your sofa and adding personality," Levy says.

With that, don't shy away from displaying a range of pillow types on your sofa for a collected look. Levy personally loves mixing prints or textures in the back and a playful solid color in the front.

Rebekah Zaveloff, cofounder and creative director of Imparfait Design Studios, agrees and also enjoys mixing and matching patterns since it adds tons of personality.

Get the Right Size



Credit: Anthony Wilder Design/Build / Photo by John Cole

Many designers consider 20 by 20 inches to be the standard throw pillow size. However, not all of the pillows on your sofa have to contain these measurements.

Tracy Morris, the founder of Tracy Morris Design, recommends opting for two 20-inch pillows—one for each corner—and an 18-inch pillow in front of 20-inch pillow at the furthest corner.

Note that it's more than okay to display an odd number of pillows on your sofa; in fact, many designers, including Morris, prefer this tactic.

"A sofa, for example, might have three on one end and two on the other, and a sectional would have three at one end, two in the corner, and two at the other end," Zaveloff says.

Vary the Shape

You should vary pillow shapes and sizes on your sofa. Designers usually opt for placing boxier, larger pillows on the far corners of your sofa and smaller pillows on the inside.

Mix and Match Material

Throw pillows vary in material, with cover options ranging from velvet to boucle to wool and beyond. Just as designers enjoy mixing together various sizes of pillows, they also like to pair together pillows made from a range of materials.

Zaveloff loves using pillows with different textures in the same colorways.

While some materials are naturally more plush than others, keep in mind that all types of pillows, regardless of material, will appear fuller if you size up two inches when selecting inserts. For example, a 20 by 20-inch pillow cover calls for a 22 by 22-inch insert. Quality pillow inserts will make a significant difference.

"Don't be afraid to replace the existing insert or replace the whole pillow as they are relatively inexpensive," Morris says.

She adds that a pillow's material will influence how full it appears. You will therefore want to consider your desired aesthetic and appearance when considering various fabrics.

"Make sure you are using a fabric that will hold its shape," Morris says. "For example, a velvety texture will stand up stronger than a linen."

FAQ

How many throw pillows should be on a couch?

Designers recommend placing an odd number of throw pillows on a couch—usually three to five in total.

What is the rule of thumb for couch pillows?

Designers recommend varying pillow shapes and sizes on the sofa and mixing together a range of materials and patterns for a collected look.

How do you make throw pillows look full?

To make throw pillows look fuller, purchase an insert that is two sizes larger than your pillow cover; a 20 by 20 inch pillow cover should have a 22 by 22 inch insert. Certain materials like velvet, as opposed to linen, will also make pillows appear more full.