

# Grille Cloth Installation and "Aging" Tips

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**Thank you very much for your purchase.**  
**All cloth is offered with a satisfaction or money back guarantee.**  
**If you are not satisfied, please send it back for a full refund.**

My cloths are made from rayon, polyester and/or cotton. The original cloths from the 1930's were all made from rayon and/or cotton. Rayon has two characteristics that you should be aware of:

- 1) It has luster, which makes it more 3 dimensional and lifelike. Of course after 60 years, the sheen on the original material has been greatly subdued by exposure to dirt and smoke.
- 2) Because it is made from cellulose (otherwise known as wood), it is very responsive to moisture.

You can use these properties to help you improve the installation. By gluing down a slightly moist cloth (which will expand the material) and then waiting for both the glue and moisture to dry, the cloth will contract by itself and form a nice tight fit.

Polyester is made from plastic and therefore not moisture sensitive. Once you glue it down it should stay in place without taking any special measures. The disadvantage of polyester is that it has no shine or 'body' and can look a bit flat and lifeless; however, some people find this very desirable.

## **Installation steps:**

- 1. Iron.** If you plan to use spray starch, then skip this step and go directly to step 2. Otherwise, use a household iron set for permanent press **with steam** for a wrinkle-free cloth. If you don't use steam, don't expect to get any wrinkles out. Then go to step 3
  
- 2a. Spray Starch - optional, but recommended.** This stuff is really great for two reasons: 1) it gives some stability to the material and 2) it dulls the shine. In most cases you may not need to do anything else. If you use this, do not additionally wet the cloth with steam. Set the iron for regular heat and iron it out. If the cloth is too wet, it will stick to the iron. Experiment on a scrap piece first to get the hang of it.
  
- or**
- 2b. Spritz.** To insure that your cloth is nice and tight when you are done, first wet it slightly with water using a spritzer before application. After application with the cloth still damp, the cloth will shrink as it dries and that will insure that it stays nice and tight. **Caution: If you install it dry on a humid day, you will never get the out the "baggies."**
  
- 3. Stretch.** A great way to stretch the cloth (if you don't use spray starch) before mounting is to use an embroidery hoop of appropriate size before mounting to the cabinet (or more commonly to the cardboard backing). Leave the hoop intact until the glue is dry and then remove. These hoops are available in plastic or wood and can be obtained at any craft shop. Wooden hoops sell for 50 cents each and come as large as 12 inches in diameter while plastic ones are around \$4 and only are available up to 10 inches in diameter.
  
- 4. Glue.** Spray adhesive works great for me. Use an industrial strength product, such as those made by 3M. **If you do use the 3M products, please wait until they get tacky before applying the cloth. Failure to do so will cause permanent discoloration of the cloth.**

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**NOTE: When poking holes through the cloth, first use an awl or a hot soldering iron with a pointed tip to spread the fabric. DO NOT use a screw or drill bit because this tends to grab the fibers and pull them out.**

**Need a backing board?** If your cardboard mounting board is hopelessly crumbling then go to an arts and crafts supply house and ask for illustration board. This is a thick and very stiff quality paperboard material that works wonders for this application. It comes in 2' x3' sizes and costs between \$3 to \$4. A professional art supply store has this in various thicknesses, while your chain stores, no matter how large, only carry this product in one thickness. If you are a serious restorer, the extra effort is worth it.

## Console application

Use a combination of staples and spray adhesive. First spray the board liberally with adhesive. Two or three coats may be required, waiting 30 seconds or so for each coat to dry, before it is ready to use to overcome absorption by the wood. By laying the cloth down and then stapling one side you can manually stretch the other side and repeatedly staple it in place tightly. You can also use a stick to wrap the unstapled side of the cloth to insure that it all stretches evenly and then staple it down. That trick can only be used for one side (i.e. stretching top to bottom or left to right). The remainder will have to be done by hand.

Another technique is to use a wood dowel wrapped around one edge to stretch the cloth evenly in one direction. Temporarily fasten the stick and then work from side to side. Stretch and staple the sides and finally staple the end with the stick.

## Optional Aging Tips

Here are two methods, in order of my preference, that may help you to alter the look of the cloth beyond what spray starch will do and perhaps make it look more weathered and worn. Obviously, you should do this prior to installation.

1. Use a strong solution of black coffee or tea or a mixture of both. It may appear that you are going to ruin a good grille cloth, I assure you that will not happen. The rayon/polyester will not take too readily to dyes and stains and once your cloth has dried out it will look much improved over the original. The shine will have been reduced and it will have a slight brown dullness to it. Whether you leave it in for 20 minutes or 8 hours, the effect is more or less the same. Rinse in warm water after removal to wash out the coffee smell.
2. Use a **very diluted** solution of shoe dye. I use Fiebings because it is soluble in alcohol. I start with a bottle of light brown, which costs around \$3, and dilute a small amount (somewhere between a thimble or a shot glass) in a ratio of 1 dye to 3 or more alcohol. You may want to start out very weak and work backwards to be sure not to ruin your cloth. The shoe dye is very potent and will permanently dye anything it touches including your hands, so be sure to use gloves. At a ratio of about 1:6 it approaches the mildness of the coffee/tea method.

**A big thank you to all those collectors who kindly submitted tips and tricks over the years.**