

How to Choose the Best Bath Towels Based on Size, Material, and Weave

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Bath towels are a \$10 billion market, and for good reason—we buy a lot of them in our lives. If you've ever had to deal with thin, rough towels, you know the importance of good bath towels. If you've ever stayed in a fancy hotel and used thick, expensive towels, you know how much better life is with really, really good towels.

But the right towel for you isn't just a matter of cost—there are a number of factors that influence your towel choice depending on your lifestyle and specific needs.

What is "GSM"?

Towels don't have a thread count like bed sheets, but they do have a "grams per square meter" (GSM) rating, which measures their weight and softness. GSM ranges from 300 to 900, and like thread count, it tells you the overall quality and best uses for the towel:

1. 300 to 400 GSM: Lightweight, dries very quickly, doesn't feel luxurious
2. 400 to 600 GSM: Heavier, ideal for the beach
3. 600 to 900 GSM: Thick and heavy, will feel nice on the skin, but will take longer to dry (although the weave will also affect drying time)

Good Housekeeping did some testing on towels a few years ago and determined that 500 to 700 GSM worked best. But whether you want a heavier or lighter towel is up to your preference.

Material

The next thing you need to consider is the material of the towel. You have a few options and while all of these materials can meet your needs, each has its own pros and cons:

Cotton: High-quality cotton is a natural fabric that is highly absorbent and feels soft against the skin. Cotton can take longer to dry, which can lead to mold or other moisture-related problems.

The process of making cotton can make a difference. Ringspun cotton uses a weaving process that twists longer and shorter fibers together, creating a towel that feels very soft and comfortable against the skin while remaining more durable than other cotton towels. Combed cotton is cotton that has been literally 'combed' before use, a process that removes impurities and short fibers that are more prone to breaking. The end result is a soft towel that is pill-free, giving it an elegant, high-end look.

Blends: Cotton/polyester blends combine the absorbency of cotton with the faster drying properties of synthetics. However, they won't feel as comfortable as other materials.

Microfiber: Made from very fine synthetic fibers, these towels dry quickly, but don't feel luxurious. You may have come across microfiber towels for cleaning purposes, but you can also find bath towels made from this material, so if you want a towel that dries quickly and doesn't care about luxury, this might be a good choice.

Bamboo: Bamboo towels are a great choice if you're concerned about the environment. Bamboo grows incredibly fast, making it one of the most renewable resources on the planet. Bamboo towels are soft and absorbent, but can sometimes feel "slippery" and take longer to dry.

Linen: Made from plant fibers, linen makes for lightweight towels that are absorbent and quick-drying. However, they don't feel as soft.

Modal Fabric: Made from wood pulp, this material is highly absorbent and dries quickly. Modal towels are soft but can feel slippery, so if you want the feel of a thick, comfortable towel, this may not be the right one.

Weave Type

In addition to the material used, scarves are made using different weaving techniques:

Terry : Terry cloth towels are usually made from cotton and have fabric "loops" (called bristles) that give the towel a soft, smooth feel and high absorbency.

Waffle: Waffle weave towels have a pattern that looks like a waffle. The result is a lighter towel that is as absorbent as a heavier towel but dries very quickly, but they can be thin.

Untwisted: Most towels are made using a process of twisting the fibers together because it makes them more durable. Untwisted towels are made from the best quality cotton and tend to have a premium feel, are very absorbent, and last a long time. These are usually your most expensive option.

Size

Finally, you will need to consider the size of your towel:

Standard: Standard towels are 27-30 inches by 54-56 inches. They are typically large enough for most people to dry off and relatively compact for hanging and storage.

Large Bath Towels/Towels: Bath towels are increasingly popular and typically range in size from 35-40 inches by 60-70 inches. These towels are ideal for larger bodies or anyone who wants a luxurious feel when drying off, but they can be a challenge to hang and store in a small bath.

Oversized: These large bath towels are often longer than bath towels (usually around 80 inches long) and are suitable for very tall people, but they actually take up a lot of space in your bathroom and closet.

It's important to keep the size of your bathroom and towel storage in mind when choosing - a giant bath towel may feel luxurious, but if you hang it properly but it never dries, it'll cause more problems than comfort.

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