

The Buyer's Guide to Duvet/Comforter Purchases

By Marlene Pearce

Maholi is a manufacturer of high end bedding under the brand names Royal Elite and Ambassador. When it comes to purchasing a new duvet for yourself or a loved one, the choices are endless and can sometimes be confusing. Your "best guess" can result in the purchase of an item that does not meet your needs or enhance comfort during rest. So how can you make certain that you are investing in a product that won't end up "sitting on the shelf"?

There are a number of things to consider when purchasing a duvet/comforter. We have created a brief check list of the questions you should consider before making your purchase.

Consider the following questions to help better understand your requirements, and therefore enabling you to find the perfect product for your specific needs.

Duvet Checklist

1. Price is/is not the deciding factor in my purchase.

If price is the deciding factor in determining what to buy, then it may come down to purchasing a synthetic fill duvet versus a natural fill duvet. Synthetic fills can include (but are not limited to) Polyester, Cotton, Microfiber Gel, Bamboo, etc. This is in the order of potential cost, but there are exceptions to the rule based on the manufacturer, and what fabric has been used to create the shell.

If price is not a factor in your choice, then you are free to consider all options.

The order of potential cost for natural fill is feather, feather/down combinations, duck down, and then goose down. This can also be affected by the type of goose down used such as Hutterite, Hungarian, Eider, etc.

2. I am looking for a synthetic or natural fill duvet?

This may be decided by your answer to Question #1. Natural fill duvets can include duck down, goose down, feathers with down, wool, and silk.

3. I prefer goose over duck down.

Duck down is less expensive than goose down but a duck down from a mature bird can be a better lofting down than one from a less mature goose.

4. What is fill power and why does it matter?

Fill power is the lofting ability of down. The higher the fill power, the more a down will loft, and the lighter it will be. Fill power can be affected by two factors.

One, it can be influenced by the amount of down versus feathers that are in the fill. In order for a product to be called down, it can possess 75% down clusters and 25% feathers and other sundry items. The only down that can carry the status of 100% down is Eider down. All other downs have varying combinations of down versus feathers.

To ensure you have a quality product, look for the Downmark label on your down-filled product. This label is supplied by the Down Association of Canada. A manufacturer must undergo testing and consistent compliance with the Association's standards in order to use this label on their products. The Down Association of Canada is the "watchdog" for quality down products, and members' products are randomly tested to ensure all products meet their stringent standards.

Secondly, fill power can be affected by the source/type of down used. Immature fowl can create a lower fill power down, and some types of down are known to be of better quality/fill power than others. Hutterite Duck and Goose down have a higher fill power because the birds are raised under a less technologically advanced system, and down is hand-washed, and hand sorted, to ensure a higher quality product.

5. *I have allergies and tend to get stuffy when using a natural fill pillow.*

While today's down is usually encased in a down-proof shell (which is determined by the weave of the fabric and not necessarily by the thread count), today's down undergoes a cleansing process that helps remove contaminants and allergens that can cause unpleasant reactions. Depending on your level of sensitivity, you may still be able to enjoy the comforts of a natural fill duvet.

Silk-filled duvets are noted for their hypoallergenic qualities. They contain a product known as Sericin that contains a natural antimicrobial property and helps prevent the addition of dust mites, mold, etc.

Wool is also treated to be hypoallergenic and with the addition of a tightly woven cotton shell, this product has a tendency to be hypoallergenic as well. Wool has the ability to wick and retain moisture to create a dryer environment for those who tend to perspire while sleeping. This moisture is released during the day and keeps a nice balance of comfort and warmth during the night.

6. *I only support products that are "Made in Canada".*

Along with the Downmark label, the location of manufacture may be an important consideration for you. The manufacturing location is labeled on each item.

7. *This is my first "duvet" purchase, or I am replacing an "existing duvet".*

If this is your first duvet/comforter purchase, follow this checklist to become better educated about the current product offerings, and what might be right for you.

If you are replacing an existing duvet you may have had this item in excess of 10 years. Production and quality may have changed since your last purchase, so a review of this checklist, or a brief discussion with a knowledgeable sales person may assist you also in making the best choice.

8. *The characteristics I like about my present duvet are _____, dislike _____*

Be certain to consider your "wish list" for a comfortable duvet. Duvets come in a range of types, weights, features and fills and there is one that will meet your specific needs. There is no need to settle for an inferior product that creates an uncomfortable sleeping environment.

9. *I need to be able to wash the duvet frequently (due to accidents caused by pets, children, etc.).*

If this is an important factor in considering a purchase, you may prefer to review synthetic fill duvets due to the wash ability of the fill. Natural fill duvets can last many years when properly cared for. Dry cleaning is usually recommended to ensure that any additional residue is removed from the clusters, and does not prevent the down from lofting after washing. Machine washing can leave soap residue and fabric softener can weigh down clusters and give a “flattened” appearance. The high heat from a clothes dryer can damage the shell or clusters and reduce the life of your investment.

10. I have a tendency to turn down the heat at night.

Some manufacturers produce different weights of fill for their duvets. The heavier the fill, the warmer the duvet. You can often be directed to the right weight by names such as Summer, Four Seasons, or Winter weight. Summer being a lighter fill and better for those who tend to be too warm when sleeping with a blanket and cover. Four Seasons is a weight that is recommended for year round use and for those that drop their evening temperature by 5 – 10 degrees F during sleeping hours. Winter is a weight for those that tend to be cold during rest, or for those that drop the temperature at night by greater than 10 degrees F.

11. I want a duvet that I can use all year round, or is heavy or light.

Try the Four Seasons’ weight. Most duvets, if they do not specify weight by using the word Summer, Four Seasons, or Winter, are usually a Four Season’s variety.

12. I will/will not need to consider the needs of a partner when choosing bedding?

If you do not have to consider the needs of a partner, then you are free to select the duvet/comforter that suits your needs alone. If you have a partner that tends to be cold during the night, and you tend to overheat, then a compromise may be in order.

Ask yourself these questions when determining the weight of fill for a duvet/comforter that you both will share.

If so, my partner tends to:

- a) enjoy the same level of warmth in a comforter/duvet that I do
- b) complains about being cold while I am fine
- c) complains about being hot while I am fine

13. I prefer a heavier or lightweight duvet?

This is always a personal preference. Some people prefer the substantial weight of a feather duvet, while others prefer the light weight of a high quality down. Natural fowl filled duvets usually include the weight specification of the duvet on the packaging; the higher the number, the heavier the duvet. Heavier does not necessarily mean warmer. Warmth can be affected by the maturity of the down clusters. A higher fill power down will require less down to create the air pockets necessary to provide warmth and the breathability that are treasured qualities of a natural fowl filled product.