Let Common Sense Guide Your Hope Chest Plans

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Let Common Sense Guide Your Hope Chest Plans

by Jo Ann Breckenridge

We think of brides and hope chests the way we think of salt and pepper. There's never one without the other. If it's only a short time until you'll be writing that wonderful new name for keeps, it's time to start a hope chest.

There's nothing that can transform a bare four walls into a warm, livable room more quickly than crisp ruffled curtains which invite sunlight. You'll also need soft wool blankets that are light, but warm, luxurious sheets that are sturdy as a college football player and a table set with a lace cloth and sterling for two.

Because you don't want yours to be a hopeless hope chest, plan before you purchase and heed a few simple rules.

Most stores now offer percale, fine count or muslin sheets. Percale is soft, light and luxurious to the touch. Fine count is very fine muslin which is not as sturdy as a standard muslin sheet. Sheets should be long enough so that there's plenty of room for tuck in and a deep fold over the blanket. The best length is 108 inch "torn size" or 96 inch "finished size." "Torn size" is the size before hemming. The width will depend upon the size of your bed. The usual widths are 63 inches for a single bed, 72 inches for a three-quarter size bed and 81 inches for a double bed. Never accept "cut" sheets when "torn" are not available. It is better to wait since cut sheets lose their shape when laundered.

Colored Sheets

Colored sheets may make you feel like a queen, but they present laundry problems and soon fade. If you must have color, it's better to have white sheets with color-contrasting hems. Six sheets per bed is the minimum. This allows for one pair on the bed, one pair in the laundry and one pair on reserve for an emergency.

Pillow cases should match your sheets and be 6 inches longer and 1½ inches wider than the pillow to prevent splitting seams and still have a snug fit. You'll need eight cases per pillow.

Blankets, like clothes, are changed with the seasons. When snow drifts high and icy winds whistle through the cracks, you'll want to be tucked in under fluffy winter-weight all-wool blankets. You'll welcome cool summer breezes under a lightweight cotton blanket. For between seasons, a rayon-cotton-wool mixture is good and saves wear on your other blankets. You'll need one of each weight per bed.

Six soft, oversized bath towels that you can wrap around yourself, six hand towels for each person and 1 dozen guest towels should be included. It is believed that colored towels are not as absorbent as white, so if you have your heart set on color, buy a style that is white on one side or that has a colored border. One dozen 14-inch-square terrycloth washcloths may be laid in the chest next to your towels.

To set that table for two, or more when you entertain, you'll need tablecloths and matching napkins, runnersets, bridge sets and tray cloths. Fine damasks are a delight to own but are expensive and tend to suggest formality. More practical and inexpensive are lace cloths and napkins, charming peasant sets and novelty linen or cotton sets.

Crystal and Silver

If you want to start at once acquiring better dishes, begin with a minimum service for four persons. Select a pattern from open stock in which additional pieces may be purchased later. Like the dinnerware, your sets of crystal and silver can be started now and added to later. Sterling silver is a lifetime investment, but some plated patterns wear satisfactorily for many years.

Even the dream hope chest must come down to earth while you realize that where there's a home, there's housework, so add 3 dozen dish towels and dish cloths to your collection. The towels should be of linen or at least 50 percent linen, and the dish cloths of close-mesh, medium hard twist.

And remember, no matter what you've heard, you can't live on love alone, so tuck a good cook book in among those linens.

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