

Paper or Plastic...or Cloth?

A Tablecover Discussion

Okay, I know that table covers are not the most exciting topic. However, there are many choices, and with costs varying widely, the options can be confusing. Not only must you choose between paper, plastic, and linen, but deciphering the differences can be complicated. How do you know which one to choose? The following discussion, with pros and cons for each type, will help you make a decision that is best for you.

Plastic is usually the least expensive option. It comes in a wide variety of colors and is available individually or on a roll to fit rectangular tables. For round tables, they are packaged individually. Spills wipe clean and cause no damage. Plastic table covers come in standard sizes to cover rectangular or round tables with a little material to overhang around the edge of the table. Plastic comes in different “mils”, which is the weight of the plastic. A heavier mil will look nicer. This is the least formal table cover. It works best for casual events and for those on a strict budget.

Paper table covers usually are the next step up in price. In recent years, a new paper product called “Better than Linen” has surfaced, improving the look of paper tremendously. “Better than Linen” is a soft, heavy paper, resembling a thin felt-like material. In looks, it very closely resembles a cloth table cloth and holds up better than traditional paper to spills. It is only available in a soft-white, where the traditional paper is also available in colors. Either type comes packaged individually. Paper table covers, like plastic, come in standard sizes to cover rectangular or round tables with a little material to overhang around the edge of the table. Beware of the roll of paper however, as it is not generally the same quality of product as the individual packages. Paper is a step up in formality. The Better than Linen product is a super choice for more formal events where budget is still a concern.

The final option is linen, or cloth table covers. This is the most expensive and is usually rented. However, there is really no comparison between cloth and the other two types. Cloth is a quick way to formalize your event. If you do nothing else different, cloth alone can add that special touch you may be missing. Linen tablecloths come in standard sizes to cover rectangular and round tables. However, they offer many more sizes than their disposable counterparts, allowing a more generous overhang. In addition, there are floor-length options, which is not available in disposables. There really is no down-side to cloth, other than cost. However, because it can make such a stunning difference in the decor, I would recommend saving money somewhere else in order to allow yourself a “splurge” for linens. Linen works for all types of events, from casual to black-tie, and even though it costs a little more, can be affordable with any budget. (Be sure to check out some of our other articles to learn ways to save money when using linens.)