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A Well-Made Bed to Lie In

By [STEVEN KURUTZ](#)



Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

Workers from New York's Little Elves made a bed before Neal Beckstedt.

OUTSIDE of boarding schools, the military and mothers, few pay attention to proper bed making. Once you live on your own, your sheets can stay rumpled for days (and do, for many of us). Still, there's an art to making a bed, or at least that was the message at [Lorin Marsh](#) last week, where three interior designers gathered in the furniture company's East Side showroom to demonstrate to a small crowd the finer points of "styling" your bed.

Sherry Mandell, a founder of Lorin Marsh who introduced the designers, set the tone by calling the bed the "unsung hero" of the home and "the place you go to renew yourself and relax." In that spirit, the mattresses used to demonstrate bed making were not from Sleepy's but [Hästens](#), the luxury brand that, according to the company's Web site, stuffs its bedding with natural materials like horsehair and wool "from the forests of Sweden," something that its customers are presumably happy to pay as much as \$36,000 for.



Tony Cenicola/The New York Times  
Gideon Mendelson, working on his ideal bed at Lorin Marsh.

[Gideon Mendelson](#), the first designer to present, was trying not to overthink things. "I don't know if it's an art," he said before his presentation. "There really aren't any rules."

But he did allow that creating a stylish bed can be surprisingly intimidating: "When you hear how many elements go into it, I start to get a little scared."

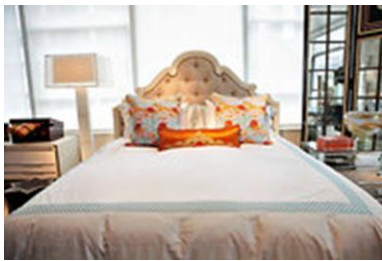
Consider the bouillabaisse of possible ingredients: fitted sheet, flat sheet,

duvet, coverlet, blanket, throw and, of course, pillows, the number of which is probably the second-most divisive bed-related issue between men and women.

Asked where he falls on the pillow scale (few or many), Mr. Mendelson said emphatically: "I'm a man. I lean toward function first."

His own bed, he said, is a four-poster with a simple look: "I've got crisp white sheets with sea-foam details. It looks pretty inviting."

Mr. Mendelson kicked off his presentation with a story about flying to Disney World recently with his young son and, upon arrival, finding a lumpy bed in his hotel room. "It was a bit of a bummer," he said. He went on to explain how to select the flat sheet, the coverlet and the duvet, and how to layer them to create "proportions of color."



Tony Cenicola/The New York Times  
The sleepscape created by Brendan Kwinter-Schwartz.

[Brendan Kwinter-Schwartz](#), the next designer up, urged the crowd to take risks when choosing colors and to think of the process of making a bed the same way they do dressing in the morning.

"Everything has to be neat, organized and styled," she said. "And then I bring in color through the accessories. I have a coyote throw stashed in a trunk or a beautiful Hermès blanket."

Using lightweight white sheets, Ms. Kwinter-Schwartz created a sleepscape that, she said, "felt very Hamptons-y" and was in keeping with the request she gets from many of her clients to make their beds feel like a spa. "That means tranquil, perhaps layers of blue, and not a lot of contrasting colors," she said.

[Neal Beckstedt](#) went last and came across as a bed-making maestro, tucking in the white fitted sheet to create precise hospital corners, offering both with- and without-duvet options, and revealing a neat trick with the flat sheet by putting it print side down (when flipped, the finished edge faces up).

Like his colleagues, Mr. Beckstedt was aided in the bed making by employees from [New York's Little Elves](#), the cleaning company favored by many Manhattan decorators. Showing how a throw could be casually tossed across the bed to add texture, Mr. Beckstedt got into a tug of war with one of the little elves over the positioning. "No, wait," he admonished her. "I'm trying to make it look casual."

The three finished beds all looked stylish, if not practical. White sheets, for instance, wouldn't be spalike for long in a house with a pet. To solve that problem, Ms. Kwinter-Schwartz suggested matching your sheets to the color of your pet, while Mr. Beckstedt advised training the animal to lie on a throw. "Dark sheets are also glamorous," he said. But a man in the crowd was still troubled by the pillow problem.

"I'm just a simple guy," he said. "What's the point of having so many?"

The decorators, unwilling to take on such a contentious topic, had no easy answers.