



Ironing Boards

2.116

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Ironing boards don't have to be hidden away in a closet or cloistered in the laundry room. As mundane as it may seem, there's a lot to learn about selecting a quality ironing board for great sewing and pressing results.

Board Basics

Ironing boards can be free-standing or mounted, depending on the available space and frequency of use.



Photo courtesy of Rowenta

Look for over-the-door models that fold down for use, wall-mounted fold-ups, hide-away boards protected in their own slim cabinets, table-top versions, portable take-to-class types and the traditional two-legged versions.

Taking Shape

Traditional ironing boards are long and skinny, about 15" wide and 4 1/2' long. They offer a narrower end for pressing hard-to-reach areas. Sizes vary depending on the brand and some companies offer much larger and wider boards for pressing quilt tops and home décor projects. Others offer board toppers to retro-fit a traditional size ironing board to increase the surface area.

Ironing board heights should be adjustable to avoid back strain. Most offer multiple heights than snap into position for stability.

Terrific Tops

A good ironing board should have a smooth, flat metal surface with vent or grid holes to allow steam to escape and not be trapped in the project being pressed.



Photo courtesy of Rowenta

Padding should be provided to cover the metal and it should be made from a natural fiber fabric like cotton or wool for best pressing. Foam pads are available for most ironing boards, but they do not allow for moisture absorption.

A cotton or wool cover is advisable for sewers, though many boards come with a Teflon-coated drawstring cover which reflects the heat. Because of this, many sewers prefer to tailor their own covers to fit their sewing room ironing surfaces.

Ready-made covers come in prints, solids and some are printed with grids for sewers and quilters to use in squaring pieces while pressing.

Add-ons

Good quality ironing boards may sport a rack underneath the board surface for storing laundry, press cloths or pressing equipment, etc. Others offer an attached iron rest at the end of the board, so the iron can be taken off the actual pressing surface and stored when not in use.

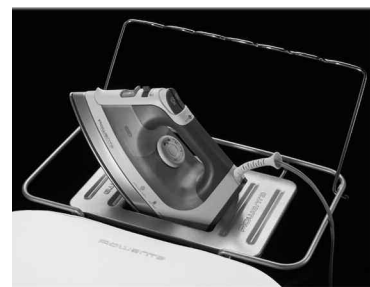


Photo courtesy of Rowenta

A garment rack may be incorporated at the end of the ironing surface for hanging freshly pressed items before they make it to the closet or to a sewing client.

Iron cords can get in the way and some ironing boards have a cord holder which elevates the cable to keep it off the pressing surface. These usually screw on to the underside of the board, so can be removed when pressing extra-large projects.

Non-skid feet are a handy feature if the ironing board lives on a hard-surface floor.

Vacuum Tables

When is an ironing board also a vacuum? It's not a silly joke, but a reality that sewers love.

Vacuum ironing tables use a fan to pull steam down through the surface (and the project being pressed) for quick cooling and skilled shaping on tailored projects. The suction also helps to hold slippery fabrics in place.



Photo courtesy of Viking Distributing Co.

Most vacuum tables also have a reversible motor so that air can be pumped upward through the project. This is a helpful feature for pressing delicate areas like puffed sleeves, fabric that can be easily damaged like velvet or embroidery, and also to raise nap on fabrics like velvet and corduroy so that the iron doesn't leave lasting impressions on the pile surface.

Coupled with steam generator ironing systems, these boards are the ultimate in pressing perfection and maximum steaming for tailoring and other sewing tasks requiring moisture and quick cooling.

Most vacuum boards have wheels for easy mobility and they fold up for storage.

Portable Pads

If pressing on the go is something you do often, check out the myriad portable pressing pads that fold up for travel. Whether you're taking them to class or on a family vacation, these handy surfaces substitute for a full-blown ironing board.

Some come with gridded surfaces for being sure your bias is straight or other tasks where measuring is key, and still others flip to a rotary cutting mat on the reverse side.

For more information on irons, see Guideline 2.115 Pressing Equipment. 🖨️

Beyond Boards

Ironing boards can come in handy for tasks other than pressing.

The padded surface allows you to poke pins into it to hold projects in place—for example, when fusing ribbons or if you need a "third hand" for braiding or plaiting.

Lowering the ironing board to desk height makes it perfect as an extra craft table, kid's table or buffet, as long as the legs hold it securely in place.

When sewing quilts or drapes, the ironing board can be placed next to or behind the sewing machine to help support the fabric bulk.