



HOW TO MEASURE STAGE CURTAINS

Step by Step

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How to Measure Stage Curtains

A small mistake in measurement can lead to major additional expense after curtain installation. Getting it right from the start means not having to go back to donors to request more money. Whether you are replacing existing curtains or installing new, follow the steps below to obtain accurate measurements.

You'll need at least two people and a tall ladder for many of these steps, so recruit a stage hand and have fun. We recommend that you read through the instructions ahead of time, so you can be sure you have everything you need.

FOR REPLACEMENTS TO EXISTING CURTAINS

Step One: Prepare for Measuring

- a. Determine which curtains you intend to replace, and what changes you'd like to add over the current arrangement. The [Curtain Types](#) section of our website will walk you through the many options and introduce you to terminology you'll find helpful in planning and talking with your dealer.
- b. Determine the type of fabric you will use. For information on your choices, visit the [Fabric Types](#) section of our website.

Step Two: Measure Height of Existing Curtains. Take separate measurements for each [Curtain Type](#).

- a. Start at the top of the fabric.
- b. Measure to the floor.
- c. Record your measurement, and then *subtract* 1" to 3" for cotton and natural fabrics, to account for stretch after hanging. Synthetic fabrics stretch less and require no adjustment to the measurement.
- d. Round the final number to the nearest full inch and record the result. This is the height.

Step Three: Measure Width of Existing Curtains. Take separate measurements for each [Curtain Type](#).

- a. Stretch each curtain to full width and measure, OR
- b. Measure grommet distance. If distance between grommets equals the standard 12", you can simply count grommets. Don't count the first grommet, and only count the second grommet in the case of double grommets.
- c. If measuring grommets, the number of grommets equals the number of feet in width. Otherwise, round your measurement to the nearest full inch and record the result.

Step One: Prepare for Measuring

- a. Carefully plan for the types and locations of curtains for your needs. Our [Curtain Types](#) section will walk you through the many options and introduce you to terminology you'll find helpful in planning and talking with your dealer.
- b. Determine the type of fabric you will use. For information on your options, visit our [Fabric Types](#) section.
- c. Identify the trim chains. If no trim chains are present, consider adding them. Trim chains allow you to raise and lower the curtain slightly to account for stretching and contracting of the fabric.
- d. Use carpenter's tape directly on the stage, in the outline of desired curtain locations. Alternatively, use a scale drawing of the stage to determine locations and size of curtains. If using tape, check sight lines and alignment carefully.

Step Two: Measure Height

- a. If trim chains are present, measure from the middle link of the trim chain. If no trim chains are present, measure from the carrier eye.
- b. Measure to the floor, then subtract all of the following that apply:
 - i. Desired hem height from the floor (i.e., the height of the trim at the bottom). This is typically from 1" to 3".
 - ii. Appropriate curtain distance from the track.
 - a) For Bit Snap connection: 1"
 - b) For Harness Snap flush to top: 0"
 - c) For Harness Snap below top: ADD 1" (do not subtract)
 - iii. For cotton velour and other natural fabrics, subtract 1" to 3" to account for expansion and contraction.
 - iv. Synthetic velour stretches less and needs minimal adjustment.
- c. Round final number to the nearest inch. This is your height measurement.

Step Three: Measure Width

- a. If using a scale drawing, simply gather numbers from the drawing.
- b. If using carpenter tape on the stage surface, use a measuring tape to obtain exact widths for each curtain type.
- c. Add approximately 2' in the middle of Draw Curtains for overlap.
- d. Remember that the carriers will need extra space on the sides to stack when the curtains are open all the way. Add approximately 15 inches on both sides.

VALANCES, BORDERS, AND SCRIM (OH MY!)

From valances and borders, to scrim and cyc, the variety of options for stage curtains can be dizzying. And while many of these options are a matter of taste, others can affect the functionality of your stage. Here is what you need to know to make smart choices and take the right measurements.

One: Valance and Borders

- a. Valances and borders add a decorative element and function to hide lighting battens and other workings above the stage.
- b. Valance height should be tall enough to fully mask the lighting battens and ceiling or fly space above. Unless they are mounted directly to the ceiling, it's better to make them a little tall and have room to lower them later, than to make them the exact minimum and take a chance on being too short.
- c. Width measurements are taken precisely as for floor length curtains.
- d. For the Grand Valance, add one to two feet of excess on either side of the stage opening to avoid gaps when the Grand Drape brushes against it.

Two: Scrim and Cyc

- a. Scrim and cyc, combined with good quality lighting set-ups, can add a special element of magic to the stage, enabling transition effects and exciting illusions. They also add a level of complexity to a stage curtain project, and mistakes made in measuring scrim can be devastating due to the seamless nature of the fabric.
- b. Measure height from the bottom of the pipe batten. Subtract 1% to 2% to account for stretch.
- c. Measure width along the floor. Don't count grommets to measure cyc or scrim, because grommet distance is not usually consistent for these pieces.

GETTING IT RIGHT

Planning and measuring for a stage curtain installation can seem overwhelming, and mistakes can be costly. For personal assistance, contact your local BellaTEX dealer to take advantage of our Get It Right Services, and order with confidence.