

Selecting the appropriate Outdoor Fabric can be challenging.

When you're looking for marine or outdoor fabrics, the bottom line is that they need to stand up to the elements.

In order to withstand whatever mother-nature dishes out, you want to protect and cover your investment with the best outdoor fabric for your application. Just use the chart below to help determine which fabric is best suitable for your environment and the performance you need. It is easy to use. Simply identify the factors that are important for how you plan to use the fabric.

Fabric Comparison Chart	Breathe ability	Waterproof	Abrasion Resistance	UV Resistance	Colorfastness	Cleanability
Sunbrella Marine Grade	4	3	2	5	5	4
SeaMark	1	5	4	5	5	4
Surlast	3	3	5	3	4	4
Top Gun	2	4	5	3	3	3
Odssey III	3	3	4	3	2	2
Harbor Time DISCONTINUED	2	3	3	3	2	2

*Fabric rated from 1-5 stars: 1=Poor , 5=Excellent

BREATHE ABILITY

The level of breath ability is determined by how easily air can pass through the fabric. Fabrics that naturally breathe well are assigned a rating of 3 or better. The breath ability of a fabric should always be considered before selecting a fabric for specific application. If an air tight enclosure is made of fabric that does not breathe well (waterproof fabric), condensation and mildew will become a problem. Waterproof fabric is an excellent choice for bimini tops, awning, and dodger tops, but enclosed covers may require may require ventilation with screens or vents.

WATERPROOF

Fabrics that do not breathe well are more water resistant, and those that do not breathe at all are waterproof. Extremely water resistant or waterproof fabrics are assigned a rating of 4 or 5. In general, completely waterproof fabrics are vinyl-coated or laminated. Many consider them less aesthetically pleasing than woven fabrics as they do not drape well.

ABRASION RESISTANCE

Fabrics that hold up well to abrasion are generally preferred for marine and outdoor cover applications. A rating of 3 or greater is considered very good. Abrasion resistant fabrics are usually heavy, stiff, and often coated with vinyl or other resins which make their surfaces somewhat harsh. A few exceptions, like Cotton Duck and Sunbrella Furniture Fabrics, are able to maintain a level of suppleness to their surface. Although Sunbrella Marine Grade was given a rating of 2, it is still the most popular and widely used outdoor canvas in the North America.

UV RESISTANCE

UV resistance is perhaps the most important consideration when evaluating an outdoor fabric. A rating of 3 or better is excellent. Highly UV resistant fabrics will last longer when exposed to sunlight consistently. Also, a manufacturer's warranty is always a great way to judge UV resistance. Longer warranties almost always correlate to life expectancy when exposed to sun, rain, wind, etc. As an estimate you can assume that the chart's ratings also indicate useful life in years of harsh sun exposure.

COLORFASTNESS

A fabric's colorfastness is determined by how well it holds its color over years of sun exposure, rain, and snow. Colorfast fabrics stay bright and do not fade or bleed. Ratings of 4 or better are excellent.

CLEAN ABILITY

Cleanability is very important, especially for outdoor fabrics. If dirt gets trapped in the weave of a woven fabric and is not washed out, mold and mildew can grow. Fabrics that do not release dirt well because of single side coatings (e.g. Harbor Time and Odyssey III) need frequent inspection and cleaning. Ratings of 3 are good.