Drapery Measuring Guide (Includes Calculator)

A guide for all types of windows to get that perfect, custom quality fit.

Before you get started:

- Use a steel tape measure for best results.
- Gather a step ladder, a sheet of paper, and a pen.
- You can also **print the drapery measuring worksheet for your convenience** (see page 13).

3 QUESTIONS YOU'LL ANSWER:

It's easy to get lost in the details of measuring for draperies. To give you a general idea of the process, understand that you'll be answering **3 main questions** during the steps:

1. Are your draperies decorative or functional?
2. How much longer will the draperies have to be to achieve a desired effect (i.e. illusion of height, puddling on floor)?
3. Where on the wall should the hardware be installed?

Keep this mind as you proceed. Now, let's get started.

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step 1

Rod Placement

Draperies can be hung many ways, including from drapery rods, medallions, and some can even be board-mounted. We'll focus on drapery rods here since those are most common.

Distance from the Ceiling

We usually follow these general recommendations with our clients on how high up to hang their draperies:

- If the room has **8-foot ceilings**, hang draperies right under the ceiling line (or crown molding).
- If the room has **9- or 10-foot ceilings**, hang draperies half way between the top of the window and ceiling line (or crown molding), or higher.
- For rooms with **11- foot ceilings** or higher, hang draperies at least 4 inches above the window if space permits.

This is done to add the illusion of height to a room and to make it look more spacious than it really is. This is of course just a recommendation, but it's very important for rooms that lack size and natural light.

For windows of varying heights (i.e. transom windows, palladium windows), it's best to use the tallest window for reference.

Also, it's best to hang all window treatments in the entire room at the same height in order to make the overall room design coherent. For example, a valance or Roman shade on an adjacent window should be hung at the same height as the draperies.

This rule only applies to outside-mounted window treatments, not window treatments that are hung inside the window.

Distance on the Left and Right Sides

A pair of draperies should frame your window, not cover it. Keep this in mind.

When determining how much wider the draperies need to be than the actual window, remember to work from the inside out. We first start with the **window overlap**. A **3- to 6-inch overlap** is a good rule of thumb. In other words, 3 to 6 inches of the drapery width would directly cover the window, with the rest of it covering the wall. Once the drapery is in place, it assumes its natural width, which we call a **stackback**.

Review the illustration below, then use the drapery width calculator to determine how wide the rod needs to be for a pair of draperies.

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ROD WIDTH CALCULATOR FOR A PAIR:

Fill out the form below, using the illustration above as a guide. All measurements are in inches.

The calculator is available by going to the link below:

https://www.prioritywindowvalances.com/drapery-measuring-guide/

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step 2

Fullness and Drapery Width

Next, we'll determine how wide each drapery needs to be using your desired stackback and fullness.

There are many different styles of draperies, and each has a different fullness requirement. But generally speaking, rod pocket draperies require less fullness than those that have more dramatic folds, like pleated, tab top, of flat panel drapes.

We generally find that a rod pocket drapery that's 50 inches wide has a natural stackback of about 24 to 28 inches, while our other draperies (pleated, tie top, tab top, etc.) that are also 50 inches wide generally have a natural stackback of about 15 to 24 inches each.

Use the calculator below to determine the width needed. You'll need to enter how much fullness you'd like on a scale of 1 to 3. See the header examples below for reference.

ROD POCKET
CASUAL

ROD POCKET WITH HEADER
CASUAL

FLAT PANEL TOP
STANDARD/FULL

PINCH PLEAT
STANDARD/FULL

EURO PLEAT
STANDARD/FULL

TAB TOP
STANDARD/FULL

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HIDDEN TAB
STANDARD/FULL

TIE TOP
STANDARD/FULL

**Assumes medium-weight fabrics and standard lining.*

DRAPERY WIDTH CALCULATOR FOR A PAIR:

Fill out the form below, using the illustration above as a guide.

Fullness can vary depending on the fabric of choice. Use more fullness for light-weight fabrics like silks and faux silks, and use less fullness for less pliable fabrics like woven polyesters or heavier linens. Blackout lining typically adds about 10% to 15% to the fullness compared to regular lining.

Measurements are in inches.

The calculator is available by going to the link below:

https://www.prioritywindowvalances.com/drapery-measuring-guide/

If your draperies will be decorative only, skip this section.

If you'd like them to be functional (able to draw shut fully), you'll need to do a **functionality test**.

With rod pocket draperies, you'd simply look at the overall width. If the total width for the draperies is wider than the rod width, you'll be able to cover the window fully.

For pleated draperies, the pleated header is about half of the flat width. For example, a 50-inch drapery usually has a pleated header of about 25 inches (give or take a few inches depending on the fabric).

Note that stackback isn't the same thing as the pleated width of a drapery. For example, a drapery could have a 24-inch pleated header on top but naturally stackback to about 14 to 21 inches easily.

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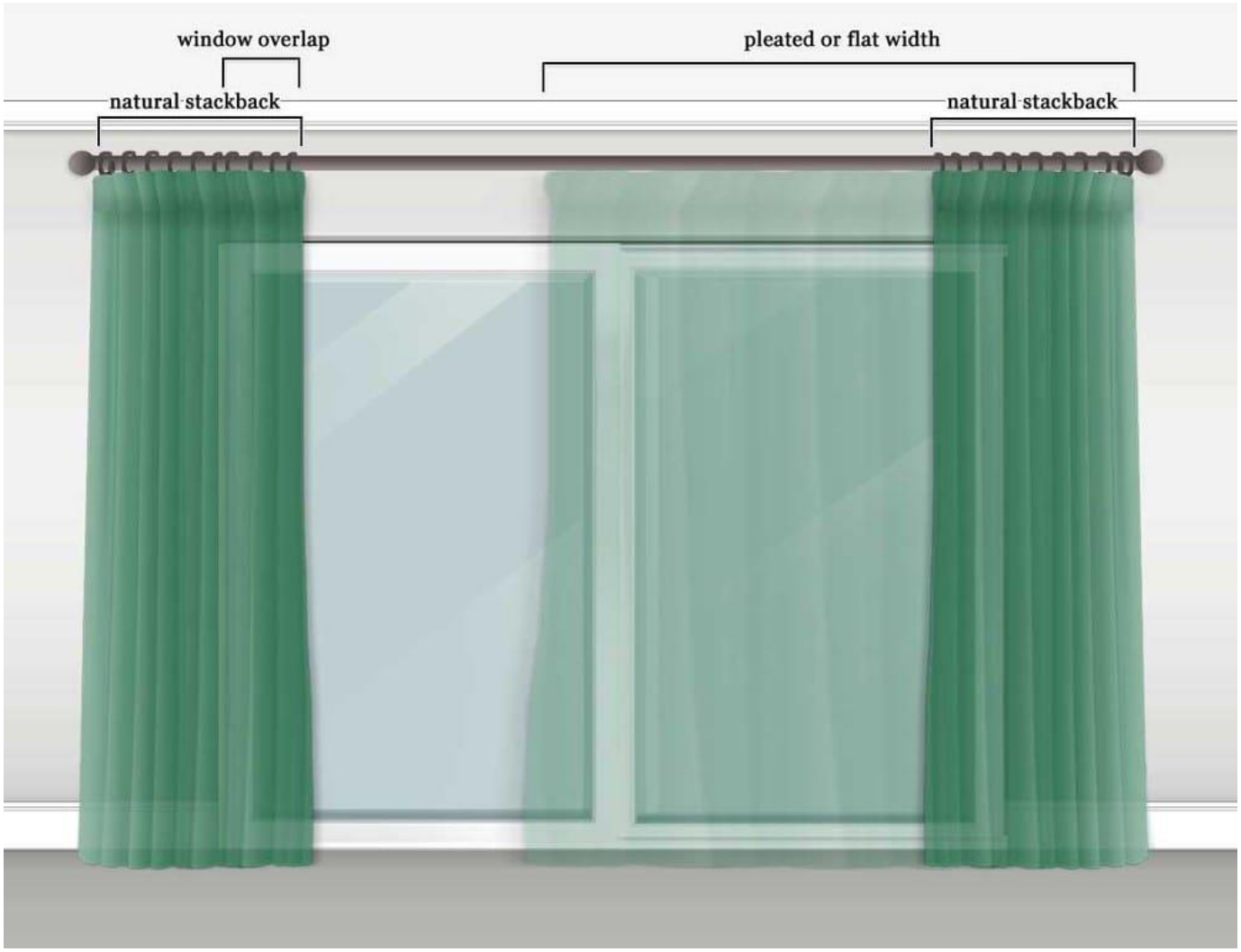

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step 3

Drapery Length

You've already determined how far above the window your draperies need to be hung in step 1.

Now, you'll need to determine how long each drapery needs to be.

STEP 3A:

Measure the distance from where the rod will be hung to the floor. Just measure starting from the top of the rod for now. We'll come back to more details later if necessary.

STEP 3B:

A drapery can either be floor-length, break-length, or puddle-length. Adjust the measurement in the previous step based on the information below. Be careful not to add too much length if the fabric is stiff or heavy.

Floor length – 1/4- to 1/2-inch above the floor (do not allow the gap to exceed more than half an inch!).

Break length – about 1 to 2 inches past the floor.

Puddle length – over 2 inches past the floor, up to about 16 inches for the most dramatic puddles.

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FLOOR LENGTH

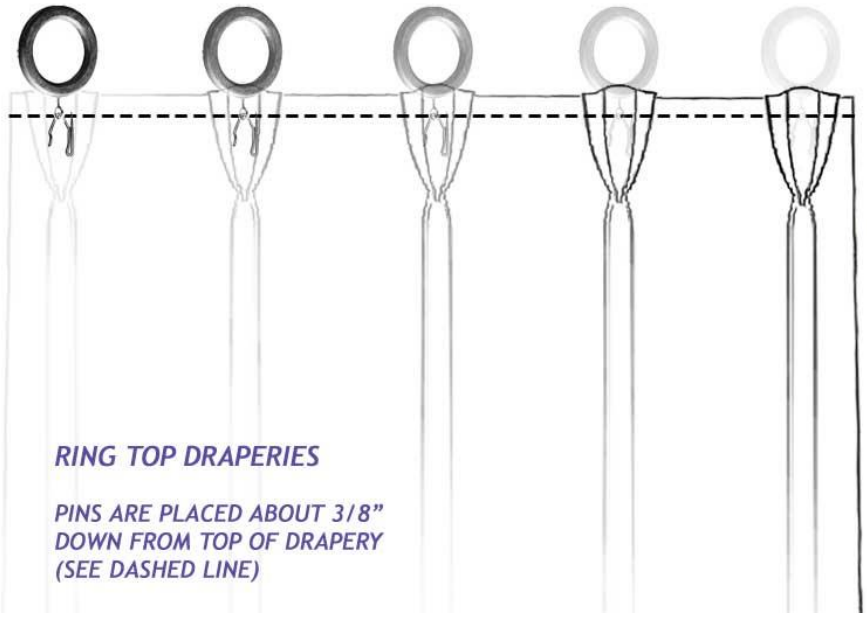
2-INCH BREAK LENGTH

4-INCH PUDDLE LENGTH

STEP 3C:

The above measurement is for rod pocket draperies. Skip this step if this is your drapery style of choice.

Otherwise, make sure to account for the rod hardware.



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For example, for ring top drapes, the pins are placed about 3/8 inches below the top of the drapery to hide the hardware.

For traverse rod installation, the pins are about 1-1/2 inches below the top of the drapery.

This is a general rule that most drapery makers follow, but you'll want to make sure to verify this with the workroom of your choice.

A Note About Length Measurements:

Don't let the exactness of the measurements intimidate you. Just because you happen to measure a drapery length at exactly 122-1/4 inches doesn't mean that the drapery itself needs to be that length exactly.

Instead, use that to guide you on where the drapery rod should be installed, so that if you order a 122-inch drapery, you'll know to lower the drapery rod by 1/4 of an inch to make adjustments.

summary

This concludes the guide. You can also download it in PDF format for future reference.

In case you'd like some more help, use the working example below.

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Working Example: 9-Foot Ceilings and a 54-Inch Window

STEP 1: ROD PLACEMENT

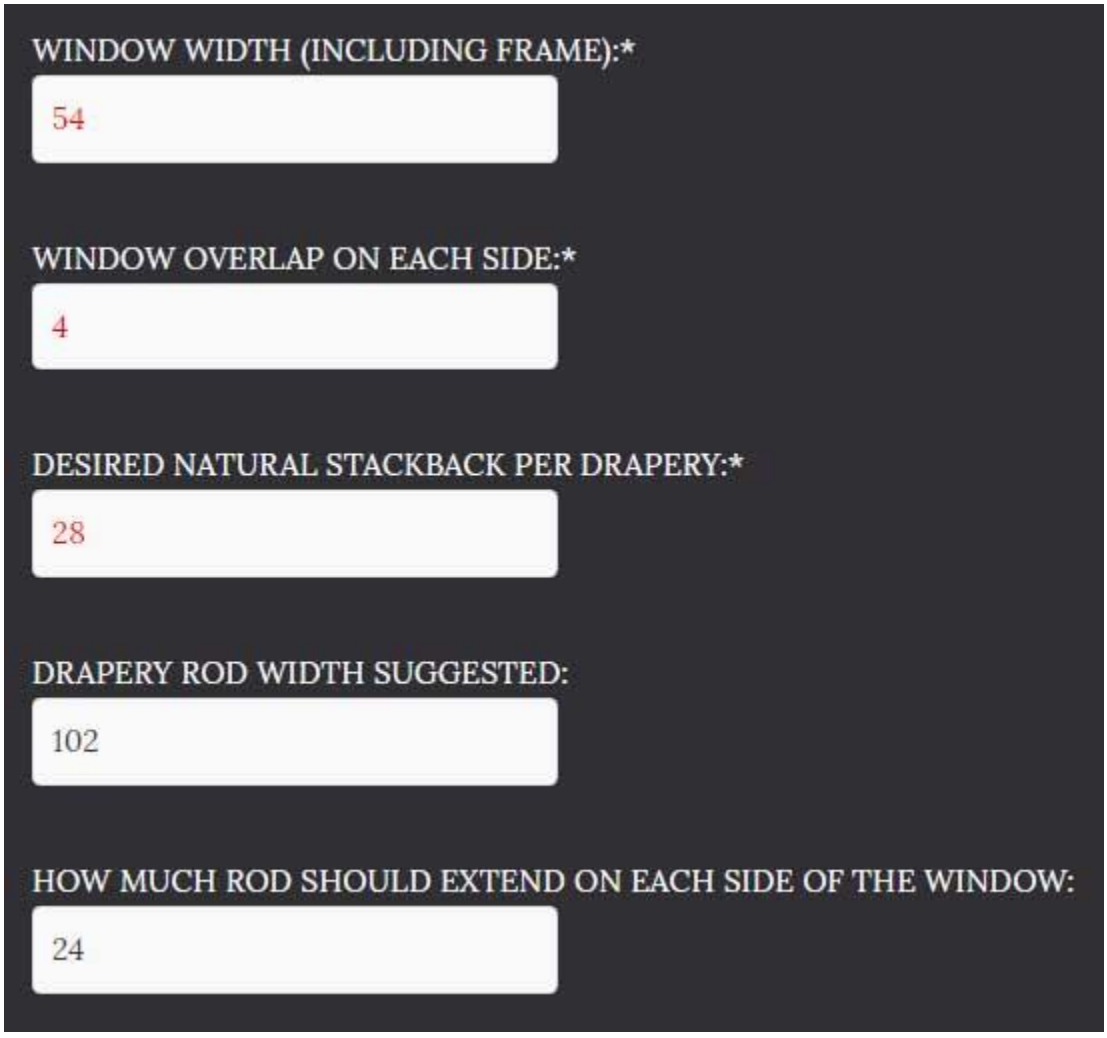
Client has a 9-foot ceiling with no crown molding and wants to dress a 54-inch wide window with a pair of pinch pleated draperies that hang from 2-1/2-inch drapery rings. The drapery pole is 1-3/8 inches in diameter.

The draperies are decorative only and aren't functional.

Client decides that she'd like to place the drapery rod 104 inches from the floor, which is 4 inches below the ceiling line.

Next, she decides on the window overlap and natural stackback. Her aim is to allow more light in and make the window appear almost twice as wide as it really is, so she decides on a 4-inch overlap and a natural stackback of 28 inches on each side.

Using the first calculator, her drapery rod width should be about 102 inches. She writes this on the worksheet.



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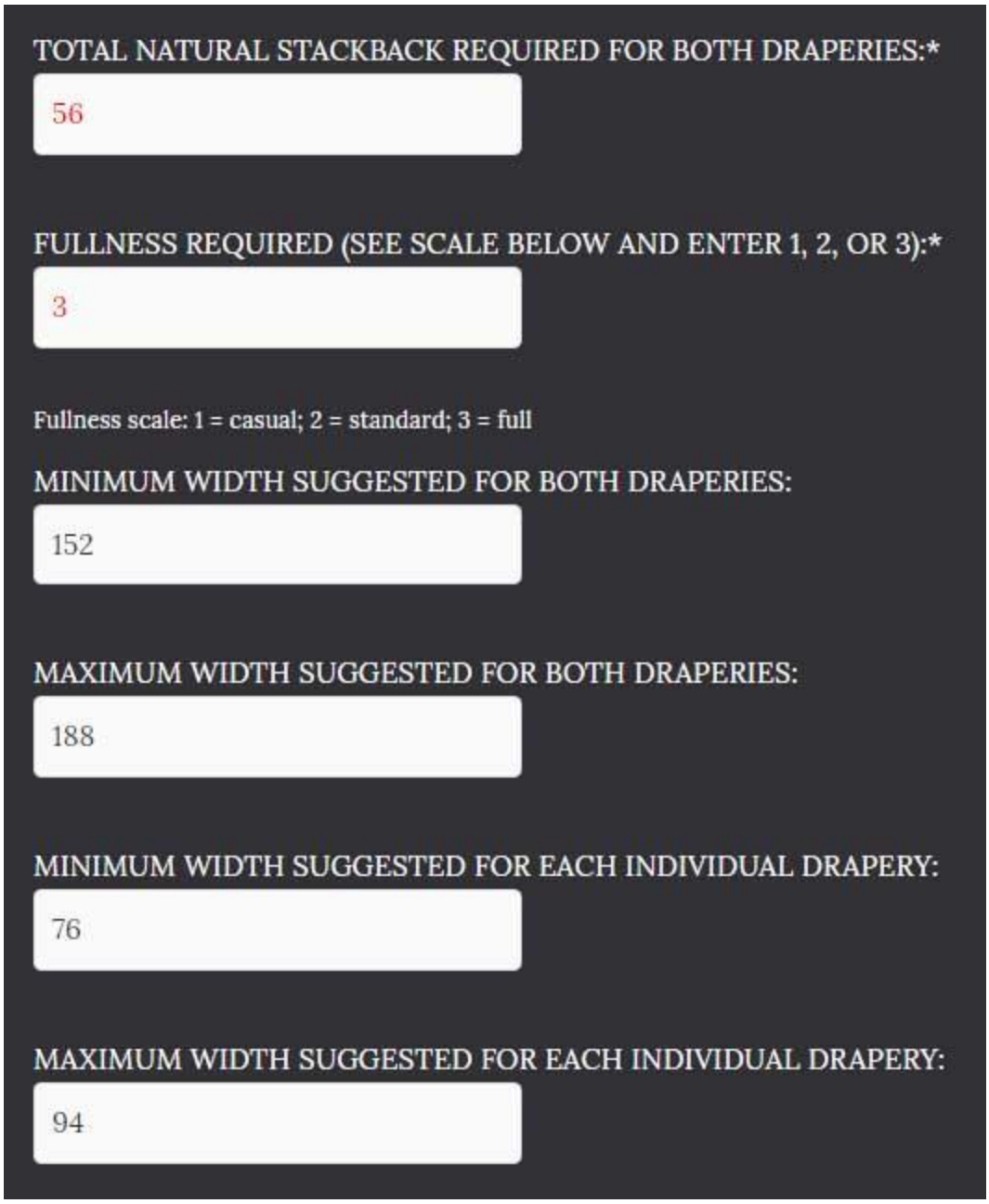
STEP 2: FULLNESS AND DRAPERY WIDTH

She moves on to step 2 to determine the fullness needed. Her lined pinch pleat draperies will need to be categorized as having either a standard or full fullness, but since the fabric is a light-weight faux silk, she decides for category 3 (full). She enters this in the next calculator, also entering the information she has gathered so far.



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Each of the draperies should be made about 76 to 94 inches wide when laid flat (measured at the bottom hem).

Now that the client has determined the width needed for the pair of drapes, she'll need to revisit the length to finalize her measurements in step 3. Remember, she determined that the rod will be hung 104 inches from the floor.

She subtracts 2 inches that the drapery rings will occupy below the rod and adds a modest 3-inch puddle, so her draperies need to be 103 inches long (104 – 2 + 3).

To summarize:

- The window is 54 inches wide, including the window frame.
- The rod is 102 inches wide total. It's installed 104 inches above the floor, 4 inches below the ceiling, and 24 inches away from each side of the window.
- Each drapery is 103 inches long.

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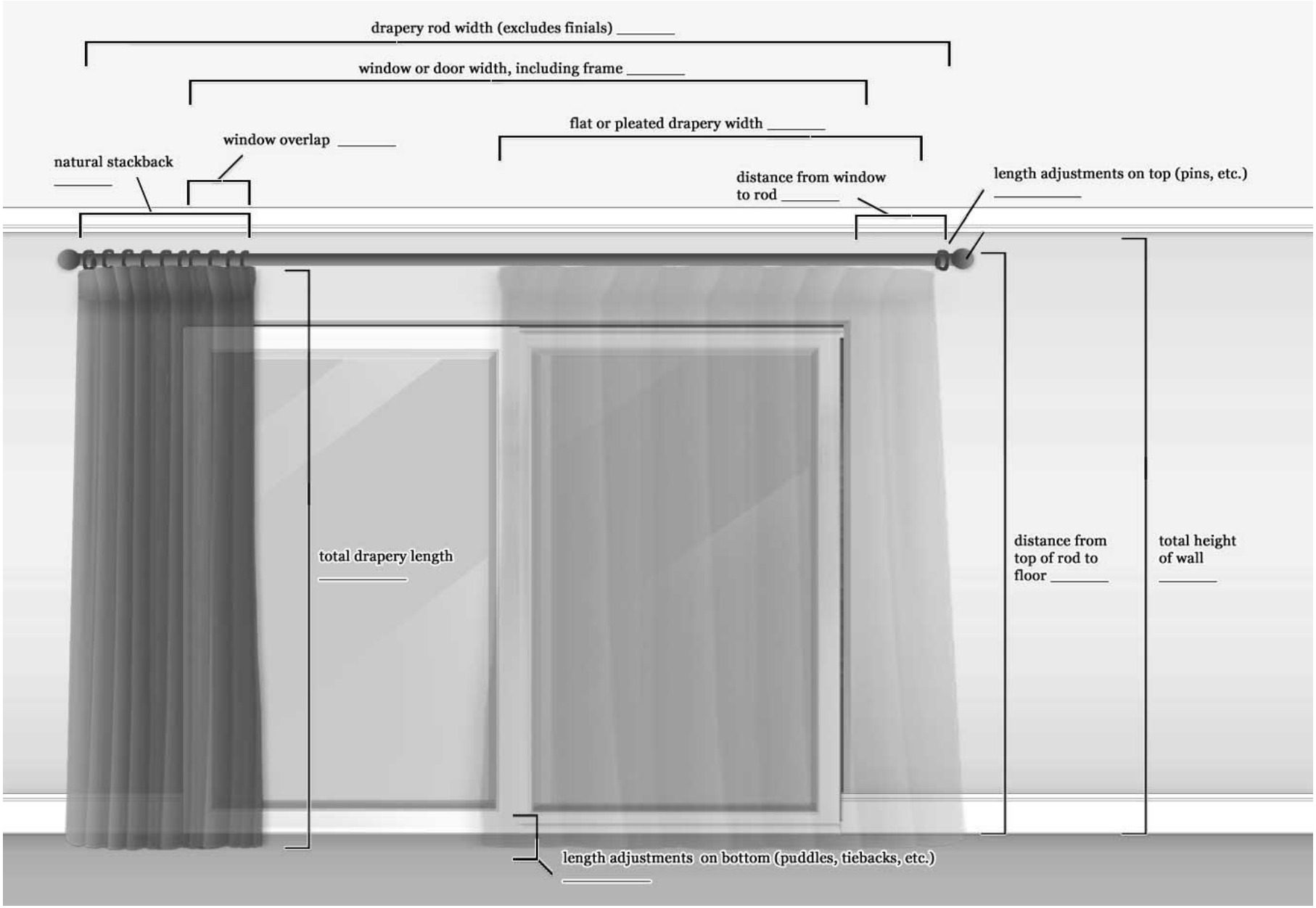
PRINTABLE DRAPERY MEASURING WORKSHEET



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