



## 12 week foundation course at the Traditional Upholstery School



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Today's professional upholsterer will have spent years training in a craft which, while its roots are firmly based on traditional methods, must be able to exist in the modern world. An upholsterer's skills extend from building up traditional hair-filled 18<sup>th</sup> century furniture, to pattern cutting for mid-century modern furniture. Understanding deep buttoning as developed by the Victorians is vital, as is being able to re-build a 1960s Ercol chair, affect woodwork repairs and understand current fire regulations for furnishings.

It takes years to master such a complex craft professionally. Yet at the Traditional Upholstery School we know there are many people who would like to be able to learn upholstery as a rewarding, useful and creative hobby, and to be able to successfully reupholster pieces to a high standard for their own homes.

We have designed this course to bridge the gap between an informal leisure class and full professional training. The 12-week foundation course gives students a solid grounding in many of the upholsterer's core skills. Students will learn: traditional stitched and stuffed upholstery using natural hair and fibres; working with foam and modern methods; deep buttoning skills; and core sewing skills. Students learn these skills working on carefully-picked pieces of furniture, producing four beautiful projects by the end of the course. You will be able to use and develop these transferable skills across a broad range of your own upholstery projects.

Practical workroom experience is at the heart of the training. Students work alongside each other, enabling work to be discussed with peers and tutors. Students get a sound grounding in all the processes, techniques and materials.



## 12-week Upholstery Foundation Course

The 12-week upholstery foundation course runs for 12 days, one day a week. Hours are 9.30am to 4.30pm.



## 2024 dates:

- Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> January to Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024
- Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April to Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2024

(there is a one or two week half term break half way through each course)

## Practical content

- Sew a **piped scatter cushion** with an inset zip ([week 1](#))
- Upholster a **deep-buttoned footstool** (modern methods and materials) ([week 2-5](#))
- Upholster a **drop-in seat chair or stool** (traditional methods and materials) ([week 6](#))
- Upholster a **sprung dining or nursing chair** (traditional materials and methods) ([week 7-12](#))

## Additional syllabus content

In addition to the practical syllabus, students have workshop inductions, demonstrations and teaching about modern and traditional core materials and techniques. This includes instruction on:

- Health & safety: when working with tools and equipment in a workshop environment
- Appropriate use and care of tools and equipment, both hand and machine
- Appropriate care handling of materials in a professional workroom
- Correct use of fillings & sundry materials
- Techniques and processes including knots, blind, top and slip stitching

On successful completion of the foundation course, students will be able to apply technical knowledge and skills to a series of basic modern and traditional upholstered techniques.

### **A typical day - how it works**

Our tutors are knowledgeable, friendly and patient and we aim to make sure that students thoroughly enjoy the learning process.

A typical day is busy, and there will be lots to learn and remember, so students should arrive ready and prepared.

Students are at their workbenches by 9.30am. The workroom is open at 9am and anyone arriving a little early is welcome to make a cup of tea and settle in. Lunchtimes are at 1pm-ish and tend to be short to make the most of the day. Students usually eat soup or a sandwich at the bar.

The end of the teaching day is 4.30pm, when your tutor will step away from the class. All students are expected to leave their workbenches and the surrounding floor area swept and clean, and tools put away properly – just as they found it - before leaving  
by 5pm.

### **Attendance – an important note**

The 12-week upholstery Foundation Course follows a tight syllabus and is packed with information, with our tutors planning the pace of each session carefully to ensure that students are taught thoroughly and to a high standard. A student missing just one session is likely to struggle to catch up. If you think that it is likely

that you may have to miss sessions due to work commitments, childcare or holidays this may not be the course for you.

## **How to enrol**

### **Course fees**

The full cost of the 12-week foundation course fees is £795. We will invoice and send you receipts for all payments. Please see our website for further details on booking terms.

On the first day you will be asked to fill in a contact form giving your phone, mobile and email details so that we can contact you in an emergency. This information will be kept private and not be shared with anyone.

### **Additional costs**

Additional costs to bear in mind are the cost of your chairs, stool frame, and the cost of upholstery materials and sundries such as hessian, foam and hair used. Each student will be given a sundries sheet, on which their materials are listed on an as-you-use-it bases. This is totted up throughout the course and a total will be sent to you on week 6 and 11. At the Traditional Upholstery School we charge just over trade prices (so much lower than retail prices) for most sundries, allowing students to get a good idea of the real costs involved.

At any stage you're welcome to get in touch with questions. The best way to do this is by email at [traditionalupholsterschool@gmail.com](mailto:traditionalupholsterschool@gmail.com) If you'd like to chat in the phone, please do email so we can arrange a suitable convenient time. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

## **Foundation course – the projects**

Students will complete four projects. Each piece is carefully considered to enable students to learn the appropriate skills in the time allowed.

## **Project one – Piped scatter cushion with a zip (Week 1)**

WHAT TO BRING: 1m soft furnishing weight fabric

Students will be provided with a 50cm square feather-filled cushion pad, piping cords and zips. The charge is approximately £10.

Students will provide their own top fabric: one meter of suitable\* soft furnishing fabric is enough for the front and back, plus the piping.

**Students are asked to bring their own sewing machines, which should be in good working order.** Let us know if you haven't got one, thank you.

\*a medium weight cotton or linen fabric is ideal. Avoid anything stretchy, with a pile such as velvet, or heavy texture or embroidery.



## **Project two – Deep buttoned footstool (Weeks 2 - 5)**

WHAT TO BRING: 1m upholstery weight fabric. We recommend a sturdy linen such as Linwood's Pronto, or a quality woolcloth such as Warwick's Amatheon II, both of which are good quality and good value. Students can order their fabric at the Traditional Upholstery School at the start of the course if they wish.

All students will be working on a specially-made frame which is 12inx18in, fitted with 6in Queen Anne style beech legs. The size and shape have been designed to give the optimum learning experience for this technique. All foams, specialist materials, wadding, glues and



other sundries are also provided. The charge is £65 for the frame and all sundries.



### **Project three – Drop-in seat chair (Week 6)**

WHAT TO BRING: a drop-in seat chair/stool, 1m upholstery weight fabric

This can be a chair seat, or stool seat. As we will be working using traditional methods, it is recommended that you source a chair that is prior to 1950. The chair should be sturdy with no wobbles before you begin. The upholstered pad should be stripped ready for the start of the session. (Stripping can be time consuming and can eat into much-needed classroom learning time.)



Most students manage to successfully find suitable pieces of furniture in local charity shops, auctions and on eBay. The Shepton Mallet Giant Flea Market is always popular and usually runs about six times a year.

Tip: Please do note that when buying on eBay and Facebook Marketplace you cannot see any damage or wobbles which would need repairing before the course, so do ask the right questions before you buy.

Note: Traditional Upholstery School aims to keep a few suitable drop-in seat chairs in stock at all times, priced around £20 each, as seen. We can show you what we have at the start of the course.

We will provide all the stuffings, materials and sundries required for this project, priced £15 for an average seat size.

### **Project four – sprung dining or nursing chair (Weeks 7-12)**

WHAT TO BRING: Victorian/Edwardian sprung chair , 1m upholstery fabric, gimp braid if required.

On this project you will learn to hand-tie traditional springs and build up a stitched and stuffed seat pad using hessian and hair. You will need to bring a sprung Victorian or Edwardian dining chair. It should be in sturdy condition with no wobbles, stripped ready for the class.

Note: As with the drop-in seat chair, Traditional Upholstery School aims to keep a few suitable sprung dining chairs in stock at all times, priced around £25-£40 each, as seen. We can show you what we have at the start of the course.

We will provide all the webbing, springs, stuffings, materials and sundries required for this project, priced £40 for an average seat size.



## **New students ... getting into the swing of it**

The first session of the course is always really exciting. There'll be new faces who'll become friends and the brand new challenge of learning the hugely varied and complex skills of upholstery to get used to. We aim to make it a really positive experience and to ensure students enjoy it.

You will have a huge amount to take on board in the first few sessions: from knowing everyone's names; to the rules on how we look after tools, to fitting in with our health and safety policy. Rather than bombard you at the beginning, every student will receive a code of practice once they have enrolled. This will be enforced as we go along with tutors leading the way.

So to start with we would like to encourage new students to make sure they arrive prepared and ready to learn. Here are a few tips and suggestions that we think will help you make a success of your first few days and weeks:

- Always aim to arrive on time or a little before. The kettle will be available for mugs of tea if you need time to recover from a long drive. Your tutor is likely to be preparing for the day's class at this stage so do give her space to get on with it.
- A little research really helps. From week one you will be following a syllabus. You will find it helps your learning if you read up a little about each process before you start. Your tutor will help guide you in this.
- Save a little time each week for homework. Students aren't required to keep a portfolio on this course, but we know there's a huge

advantage in taking notes while you work. Stage-by-stage photos really help as reminders of what you've learned. Update your info each week, rather than in bursts.

- In the workroom, always wear workroom appropriate clothing. This doesn't mean the full Dickies Workwear catalogue (but you can if you wish) but it must include sturdy shoes which cover your toes, and clothing you don't mind getting dusty and dirty. In winter the workroom is heated, but it is still likely to be far colder than your home. Many students favour warm puffa jackets and scarves. (Students who arrive in flip flops or crocs will not be allowed to work in the workroom for their own safety!).

- Specialist hand tools are provided for use on the course. However, just like in school, you must always bring your pencil case of workbench essentials. This workbench essentials kit must include the following items:

- fabric scissors, general craft scissors, 6B pencil, black marker pen, sturdy bead-headed pins, selection of hand sewing needles, tape measure, ruler.

- notepad and pencil, plus phone for taking photos.

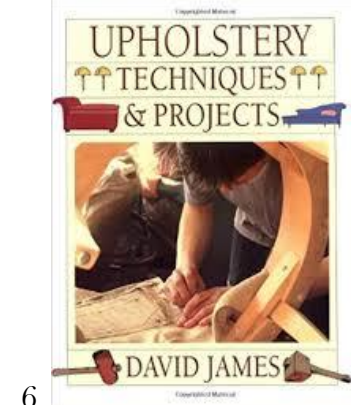
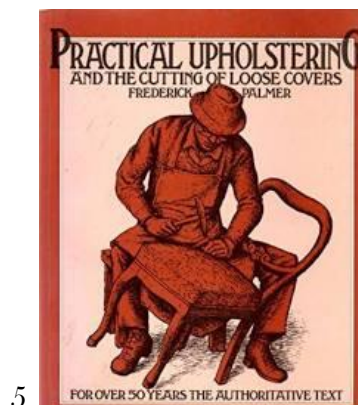
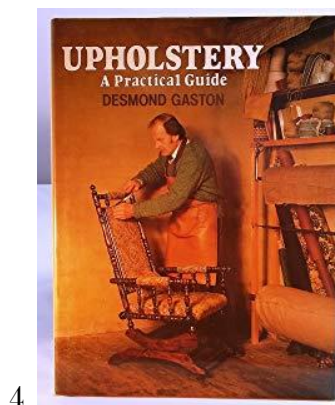
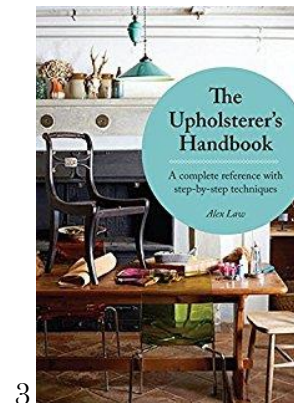
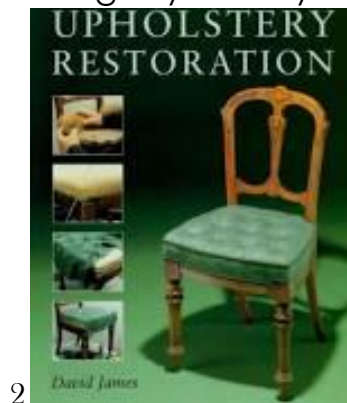
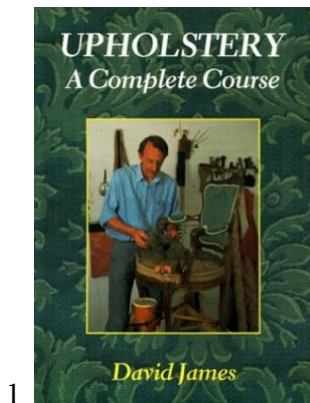
- specs – if you need them for reading, bring them with you.

## **Suggested reading list**

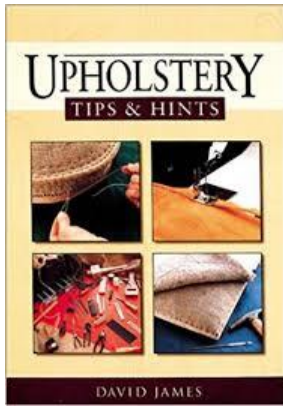
The Traditional Upholstery School workroom has an ever-growing library of excellent resource books for upholstery, woodwork repairs, sewing skills and related topics. We do ask students to make sure they have two or three good upholstery handbooks of their own, as they will find them an essential support for their studies. Happily, even though many are rather old-fashioned, the content doesn't go out of date and they can be bought fairly

cheaply second hand. Here are some of our favourites, with the top five considered fairly essential:

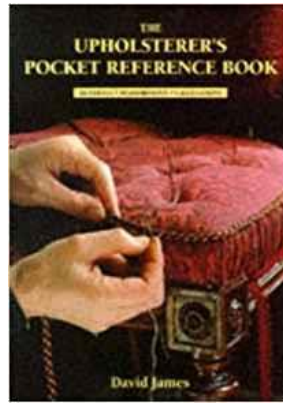
1. Upholstery A Complete Course, by David James
2. Upholstery Restoration by David James
3. The Upholsterer's Handbook: A Practical Reference by Alex Law
4. Upholstery A Practical Guide by Desmond Gaston
5. Practical Upholstering and the Cutting of Loose Covers, by Frederick Palmer
6. Upholstery techniques and projects, by David James
7. Upholstery Hits & Tips by David James
8. The Upholsterer's Pocket Reference Book by David James
9. The Complete Upholsterer by Carole Thomerson
10. Professional Soft Furnishings by Wendy Shorter



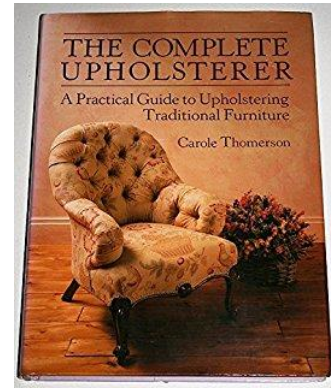




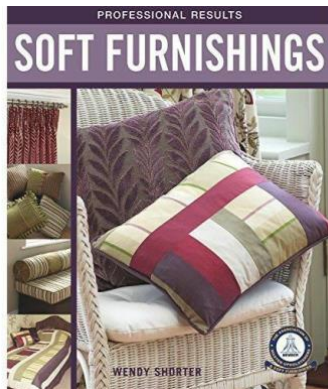
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## Suggested tool list

Students are provided with a box of hand tools which they may use throughout the day. We do find that many students like to start collecting their own tools so that they can work at home, so we have put together a recommended list.

### **A portable workbox**

Many students prefer a wooden trug-style tool box as this is easiest to use on the workbench. There are many variations online.

### **Magnetic hammer**

A bronze headed magnetic upholstery hammer, by Osborne no 33, is possibly the best thing you'll ever own. A split-head magnetic hammer will also do the job very well and is much cheaper.

### **Sharp fabric scissors**

You can spend a fortune – and good scissors are an essential investment. However, we've found that Ikea's fabric scissors at £5 are great and will stand you in good stead until you find your ideal pair. You will also need a pair of craft scissors, for card, foam etc. They need to be strong, quite sturdy, but cheap will do.

### **Specialist upholstery tools:**

Ripping chisel – cranked handle; Tack lifter; Staple remover; Wooden carpenter's mallet; Peg and slot web stretcher; Regulator; Double pointed needle(s); Upholstery skewers\*

### **Sewing sundries:**

Sturdy glass headed pins

Ordinary glass headed pins for general work – Asda/Waitrose

Tape measure, marking chalks, soft pencil and a pencil case for all your bits and bobs

\* Many of these items can be bought from the Traditional Upholstery School. We put together 'starter packs' for students, which include tool packs, needle sets, haberdashery sets, etc. Students can request a list of tool packs prior to the course.

## Why train at the Traditional Upholstery School?



The Traditional Upholstery School was set up in 2016 by craft author and professional upholsterer Joanna Heptinstall. It has already launched many talented students into the working world of upholstery. It is based in a lovely big, light and airy workroom in the Wiltshire countryside. We are two miles from Bradford on Avon, ten miles from Bath, 30 miles from Salisbury and just 14 miles south of the M4 Junction 17.

We are very proud that the Traditional Upholstery School in Wiltshire is one of only a handful of UK training centres approved by the Association of Master Upholsterers and Soft Furnishers to teach its professional diploma. As well as this highly-respected qualification, we also run a series of very popular leisure classes, and short courses in specialist upholstery techniques.

We have plenty of free parking and are based on the ground floor (important when carrying chairs to and fro!). There's a kitchen, huge teaching workroom and additional classroom for specific tutoring. There's a 'bar area' too, where tea-breaks, lunches and chats happen. This is where the best ideas are often formed... and cake is munched.

Class sizes are small and our tutors are experienced, supportive and friendly. Each class has a maximum of eight students. This small tutor-student ratio ensures we can give every student individual attention, allowing everyone to get the best from the training.

