Choose the Right String Mop


The wet mop head, main component of a “mop,” is the paramount tool of the cleaning world, yet most maids and janitors do not know how important it is to choose the right size, weight, and fiber. Too often I have watched cleaning professionals overwork or underwork themselves only because of picking the wrong type of mop head for the task. As mentioned in my last article, “The Wet Mop Handle Dissected,” the right combination of mop head and mop handle for the individual user can make the difference between backache and profitability. Never believe that the cost of mopping equipment should be the determining factor when it comes to choosing the mop head. Equipment costs are cheap in comparison to labor costs; therefore, always match equipment to the person first, and then to the job. After all, a few extra dollars spent on the paramount tool could mean hundreds of dollars in labor savings.

So, what factors need to be studied? Foremost is the “head” factor. That is, get your own head wrapped around the idea that correct mop heads for the job are important. Let’s run a simple scenario: Our hypothetical client needs 500 square feet of VCT (vinyl composition tile) flooring thoroughly cleaned in a big hurry. The no-brainer solution would be to get the largest mop head in our arsenal and use it. That would be a 32 Oz. Industrial Cotton Mop Head with a cleaning path of about 18 inches across. We could then thoroughly mop the floor in about 18 minutes using correct posture, an ergonomic figure-8 motion, while rinsing and wringing as needed in a mop bucket. However, we find out that we only have a 12 Oz. Rayon Mop Head available, which has a spread of 14 inches. Mathematically speaking, that’s 22 percent (18-14=4/18x100) less coverage on a swipe. Hence, 18 minutes becomes 22 minutes (18x22%) with the smaller mop head, strictly calculating on width of the mop. If we’re paid $12 per 60 minutes (hourly wage), that’s 20 cents per minute times 4 extra minutes equaling 80 cents extra labor cost on 500 square feet mopped. But, is this the only cost that must be considered? Not by a long shot.

Continuing with our example, we must throw in the human factor. Every person is different; different work speed, different upper body strength, different stamina. The same 500 square feet of floor space to a brawny six-foot man may be a pittance of effort while a thin 5’6” woman might find the task daunting. The job still needs to be handled with alacrity though. What do we do? Well, it’s not simply a matter of upsizing or downsizing a mop head, now is it? Just because we hand the small woman a small mop head with a small mop handle to match doesn’t necessarily mean she will get the job done in a timely fashion with less effort.

With a bit of research and calculation we will find that a 24 Oz. Rayon Banded Looped Mop Head will be less weight with nearly equal coverage at 17 inches wide, only 6% less than the 32 Oz. Industrial Cotton Mop Head. Why choose this particular mop head for the small lady? Two reasons: rayon holds far less liquid than cotton; the banded and looped yarn style gives nearly equal spread for fast area
coverage. The 32 oz. industrial 4-ply thick strands of cotton on the man’s mop head will hold about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a gallon of liquid, or about six pounds (water = 8 lbs. per gallon x $\frac{3}{4} = 6$ lbs.) while the lady’s rayon mop head holds only about 3 pounds. Thus, the lady can get nearly the same area coverage in the same time allotment with her mop head as the man does with his.

Now let’s take a look at mop head features. We’ve already seen that synthetic yarns hold less water than natural cotton fiber. This makes a great way to lessen the load for a smaller person without compromising area coverage in a timely fashion. To accommodate your specific needs, there is a wide variety of mop styles to choose from.

### YARN

Certain yarns do a specific task better than
other yarns. That’s why there’s such a variety of mop heads. To get maximum efficiency and value from a wet mop, it’s important to select the right yarn for the job.

**TWIST**
A yarn’s “twist” is a result of how tightly the fiber strands are wound together. While a tightly twisted yarn might be stronger and last longer, its absorbency may be decreased. Like yarn ply, the best value isn’t determined by the yarn’s twist, but by the type and quality of the yarn and the mop’s construction. A mop with looped-end construction enables the yarn to have a loose twist while eliminating fraying.

**YARN PLY**
Yarn ply indicates the number of strands twisted together to make a single yarn strand. More plies give added strength, though higher ply numbers do not necessarily mean higher quality yarn. More strands may add durability but they also decrease absorbency. It’s much better and more cost effective to choose a higher quality yarn than a high ply, low quality yarn.

**SIZES**
A mop’s size should be in relation to the job to be performed, the mop wringer being used, and the user’s size. Cut-end mops are sized by their approximate weight in ounces. Loop-end mops are sized by industry standards since they absorb and retain much more while also covering a greater surface area than a cut-end mop.

**CUT-END**
The cut-end is the most popular and economical (initially) mop style. Cut-end mops fray and unravel, increasing the lint factor and leaving loose strands behind. In addition, without tail bands, cut-end mops cover less area per pass. Since cut-end mops cannot be laundered, they are often considered “disposable” and thrown away before their useful life is over.

**LOOPED-END**
The looped-end is a premium style mop designed for superior performance and extended life. There are no ends to fray or unravel as the mop sweeps over the floor surface in a wide, even path. Loop-end mops can be laundered for longer life and cleaner appearance. The initial investment is soon compensated with lower replacements, reduced labor cost and increased performance.

**HEADBANDS**
Headbands come in a variety of widths ranging from about 1 inch wide up to 6 inches. Wider headbands work best with stirrup-type handles while thinner bands work great for claw-style handles. Headbands are useful on finishing type mops such as rayon banded and looped-end mop heads. The synthetic mesh material provides nonabrasive scrubbing to help dislodge dirt and to allow quick drying of yarns. Abrasive scrubbing pads can also be included for this purpose.

As with the mop handle itself, the style of the mop head must be accounted for when choosing the correct one for the task. Make it a priority in your cleaning service to analyze the way mops and mop handles are chosen for particular people and jobs. Forget about the minor costs involved with the purchase of mopping equipment and focus on the overall savings of time and labor, as equipment costs are minor compared to the rest. Treat the paramount tool of the trade – the wet mop – with respect to easily maximize profits while minimizing backaches. All it takes is a small amount of study in this overlooked area of our cleaning world!