

# Pillow Loft by Sleep Position

Loft is pillow height, and it is the single biggest factor in choosing the best pillow for your sleep position. Match it to how you sleep and your spine stays neutral; too high or too low is the most common cause of morning neck pain.

Position	Target loft	Why
Side	4 – 6 in	Side sleepers need the most loft of any position, to fill the wide shoulder-to-ear gap. Broad shoulders trend to the high end (about 7 in).
Back	3 – 5 in	Supports the natural curve of the neck without pushing the head forward.
Stomach	Under 3 in	Any real height tips the head back into extension. A thin, soft pillow, or none, is best.
Combination	About 4 – 5 in	Use an adjustable-fill pillow; add or remove fill as you shift between positions.

## The 10-second test

Lie down the way you actually sleep. Your ear should line up with your shoulder and your head should sit level, not tilted up toward the ceiling or dropped toward the mattress. If it tilts, your loft is off.

## Loft classes

Low is under 3 in. Medium is 3 to 5 in. High is 5 in and up.

## What shifts your number

### Softer mattress

Go lower. Your shoulder sinks in, which shrinks the gap.

### Broader shoulders

Go higher. The gap you need to fill is larger.

### Pillow packs down

Start slightly higher with a firm fill that holds its loft.

### For side sleepers

The best pillows for side sleepers sit in the 4–6 in range, up to about 7 in for broad shoulders, and stay firm enough to hold that height all night instead of packing down.

**Why height first:** a 2016 Applied Ergonomics study found pillow height is the single biggest factor in keeping the neck aligned overnight, ahead of fill material, firmness, or shape.