

QUALITY FURNITURE

After reading the information below, develop a quality checklist of the qualities you would look for in furniture.

For most families the purchase of furniture is a major long-time investment. It requires a careful evaluation of family needs, a review of budget possibilities, and an adjustment of family likes. The family must consider furniture styles, the choice of wood, finishes used on wood surfaces, and methods and materials use in upholstered furniture.

Before purchasing furniture consider: Who will use this furniture the most? Is the right size? Is the finish too fine for the wear and tear of family use? Can you count on cleanability, wearability and livability of upholstered furniture? Does the size of the furniture fit the room size and shape? Does it fit the scale of furniture you already own?

TIPS ON BUYING FURNITURE:

1. Furniture is a family investment. Buy it for the people who live in the homes, not the people who will visit.
2. Plan ahead--it is easier to move paper models than furniture.
3. Taste is a personal matter; have confidence in yours. Price does not necessarily connote good design or good taste. You can find handsome styling at budget prices.
4. Begin with a budget. Financial pre-planning enables you to enjoy your selection.
5. Take your time. Let the salesperson know what you want: style, approximate price, purpose, etc. Learn the language of furniture.
6. Do your homework; read, browse, study, look, plan, write for literature, become informed. Do not try to furnish a home in one shopping trip.
7. Upholstered furniture has a frame, cushioning material and a covering. It requires a combination of fine fabric and excellent construction and materials. The fabric should be the first consideration. Selection should be based on attractiveness, durability of fiber, surface finish, ease of care, and tightness of weave. Upholstery fabrics are divided into 3 classes determined by how they are made: woven, non-woven, and knitted. Before purchasing a piece of upholstered furniture, a person should:

- a. Sit down and check the seat depth from the front of the seat to the back
 - b. Lean back--the back should extend at least 13 inches above the seat
 - c. Bounce a little while listening for creaking or noise from the springs
 - d. Ask questions to determine quality of inner construction
 - e. Inspect the hangtag
 - f. Check the warranty
8. When selecting upholstery fabrics:
- a. Evaluate how will it wear, how will it clean, how will it keep its beauty?
 - b. Avoid fabrics with loose loops which catch buckles and snag.
 - c. Is outer fabric is firm, but not too tight?
 - d. Are seams straight?
 - e. No puckering or loose threads
 - f. Are patterns matched at seams and do loose cushions match the rest of the piece
 - g. Is welting neat and even.
 - h. Has the fabric been treated to help resist staining and soiling?
 - i. Is there padding on the frame that will help the upholstery to wear longer?
9. A quality frame is made of dry, good quality hard wood. Frame joints should be a combination of glue and double doweling. Corner blocks and screws should be used to reinforce corners.
10. Are the springs a good quality? There are mainly of two types: coil and flat. The 8 way hand tied stripping is considered to be the best. Springs should be of highly tempered, enameled steel and evenly distributed with at least 8 and preferably 12 springs per seat. Springs should be covered with burlap, topped by a layer of padding and a closely woven fabric such as muslin, then upholstery fabric. Several layers of material and padding will insulate the springs from the seat. A good quality coil spring requires a firm base of fully woven fabric, or interlaced webbing, firmly anchored to the frame on all sides.
11. Did you check the hangtag? Furniture hangtags list the materials used in both case goods and upholstered furniture. Upholstered furniture contains an Upholstered Furniture Action Council (UFAC) tag that contains a cleaning code:
- W = water base cleaning
 - S = water free solvent
 - SW = either water or solvent solutions
 - X = vacuum or brush only.

12. From what are the cushions made? Cushion construction may include coil springs, feather down, foam material or a combination of these materials.
13. Are the drawers of top quality?
 - a. Drawers should have center glide supports.
 - b. Drawers should glide smoothly.
 - c. Drawers should have a stop to prevent being unintentionally pulled all the way out of the cabinet.
 - d. Interiors of drawers should be sanded and finished.
 - e. Sides and backs of drawers should be made of wood.
 - f. Upper drawer edges should be rounded.
 - g. Drawer sections should be connected by either dovetail or tongue and groove joints.
 - h. There should be dust partitions between the drawers.
 - i. Drawers should be flush with the drawer openings.
 - j. Hardware should be securely attached.
 - k. Drawers should pull out evenly and stay level.
14. Plastic furniture should have smooth edges, uniform color and a flawless surface. Each piece should be strong and durable.
15. Metal and glass furniture should be rustproof and have smooth surfaces. The glass should be tempered for safety and there should be a ledge or groove to keep the glass securely in place.
16. Check the efficiency of storage furniture. Can the piece be used for more than one purpose? A chest of drawers can often serve as an end table, a serving table, or a bedside table. Can the piece be used where wall space is limited? Some cabinets can be placed at right angles to the wall to serve as room dividers as well as storage units. Are the size and depth of drawers well planned for holding clothing, linens, or equipment? Are shelves in cabinets and bookcases adjustable? Are there one or more standard-size filing drawers in the home business desk?

17. General construction techniques to evaluate:
 - a. Does the furniture have strong joints?
 - b. Is corner blocking included for stability inside standard joinings of corner sections?
 - c. Are all edges including lower edge of tables, chairs and desks smoothly sanded and finished?
 - d. Is the furniture constructed of the same wood throughout the piece?
 - e. Do doors shut tightly without sticking?
 - f. Are door and drawers flush with opening?
 - g. Are legs attached with mortise and tenon or dowel joints?
 - h. Do legs stand squarely on the floor?
 - i. Is the back panel inset?
 - j. Are drawer handles and knobs evenly spaced?

18. Cautions to avoid:
 - a. Butt joints
 - b. Presence of staples
 - c. Excessive use of particle board
 - d. Poorly matched joining filled with glue or other material
 - e. Thick stained varnish
 - f. Brush marks on the surface

SAMPLE CHECKLIST

1. Do drawers slide easily on guide strips or ball bearings?
2. Do doors shut tightly without sticking?
3. Are doors held shut with magnetic catches?
4. Are doors and drawers flush with openings?
5. Have corner blocks been used for reinforcement on chair and table legs?
6. Are dovetail joints used on drawers?
7. Are dust panels provided between drawers?
8. Are legs attached with mortise and tenon or dowel joints?
9. Do legs stand squarely upon the floor?
10. Are surfaces free from defects when viewed in good light and touched with fingertips?
11. Is hardware attractive and securely attached?
12. Will the furniture piece fulfill your use, style, color, and size requirements?
13. Have insides of drawers, backs of chests and underside of tables and chairs been sanded and finished?
14. Are pillows solid forms, not loose foam.
15. Are there any puckers or loose threads?
16. Are prints matched front and back and on each cushion front and back?
17. Are extra arm covers provided with upholstered pieces?
18. Is the piece comfortable?