



THE COMPLETE

Furniture Buying Guide

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE
BUYING FURNITURE FOR YOUR HOME



Before You Start Shopping

The biggest mistake people make when buying furniture is walking into a store without doing any homework first. A little preparation goes a long way toward avoiding expensive regrets.



Measure Everything

Grab a tape measure and record the dimensions of every room you're furnishing. Include the width and depth of the space where each piece will go, the height of your ceilings, and — this is the one people always forget — the width of your doorways, hallways, and stairwells. That gorgeous sectional won't do you much good if it can't physically get into your living room. If you're moving furniture upstairs, measure the staircase width and any tight turns along the way.



Photograph Your Space

Walk through each room and snap photos from multiple angles. Capture the wall color, flooring, existing pieces you're keeping, and the natural light at different times of day. These photos become invaluable when you're standing in a showroom trying to remember whether that accent chair will work with your rug.



Think About How You Actually Live

This is where most generic advice falls short. Your furniture needs to match your real life, not a magazine spread. Ask yourself some honest questions: Do you have kids or pets? How often do you entertain? Does anyone in your household have mobility concerns? Do you eat dinner on the couch more than at the dining table? Is your living room also your home office? There are no wrong answers here — just honest ones that will point you toward the right pieces.

Identifying Your Style

Instead of trying to label yourself, pay attention to what catches your eye.



- You don't need to know the technical name for your design aesthetic, but having a general direction will make shopping dramatically easier. Save images of rooms you love on Pinterest or Instagram, and look for patterns. You'll likely notice that you're drawn to certain shapes, colors, and textures over and over again.
- A few broad style families to consider: traditional styles tend toward curved lines, rich wood tones, and classic silhouettes. Contemporary and modern styles lean into clean lines, neutral palettes, and minimalist shapes. Transitional style blends both worlds — it's the sweet spot between timeless and current, and it's one of the most popular directions right now because it gives you flexibility to evolve your look over time without replacing big-ticket pieces.
- Keep in mind that most people don't fall neatly into one category, and that's perfectly fine. The goal isn't to match a style label. It's to create a home that feels like you.

Setting a Realistic Budget

Furniture is one of those purchases where price ranges are enormous, and it's hard to know what's reasonable if you haven't shopped in a while. Here's a general framework to help you set expectations.



Sofas

For a sofa, you can expect to spend roughly \$800 to \$1,500 for entry-level quality from a mass retailer, \$1,500 to \$3,500 for mid-range pieces with better construction and more customization, and \$3,500 and up for premium and luxury options.



Recliners

Recliners typically range from \$500 to \$3,000 depending on size, features, and upholstery.



Dining Tables

Dining tables run from \$500 to \$5,000 or more, depending on materials and craftsmanship.



Bedroom Sets

Bedroom sets can range from \$1,500 to \$8,000+
**If your budget is limited (and whose isn't), spend more on the pieces you use every day and that take the most wear. **



Don't Forget Hidden Costs

Delivery fees, fabric protection, and sales tax can add 10% to 20% to your total. Factor these in before you commit so there are no surprises at checkout.

Understanding Furniture Quality

Price alone doesn't tell you whether a piece is well-made. Learning to spot quality will help you get the most value at any price point.



The frame is the skeleton of your furniture, and it determines how long a piece will last. Kiln-dried hardwood frames (like oak, maple, or birch) are the gold standard because they resist warping and cracking over time. Engineered wood and plywood can be perfectly adequate in certain applications, but particleboard and staple-only construction are red flags. If you can, ask what the frame is made of. If a salesperson doesn't know or won't tell you, that's worth noting.



Joints matter too. Corner blocks, dowels, and double-doweled joints create durable connections. Mortise and tenon joints — where a protruding piece of wood (the tenon) fits snugly into a carved-out pocket (the mortise) — are one of the oldest and most reliable woodworking techniques in existence. They've been used in furniture and architecture for thousands of years because they create an incredibly strong bond that actually tightens with use rather than loosening over time. If you see mortise and tenon construction listed in a piece's specs, that's a sign the manufacturer is investing in longevity. Staples and glue alone, on the other hand, won't hold up to years of daily use.



Understanding Cushion Quality

This determines your comfort today and five years from now.

High-resilience foam is the most common filling in quality furniture. It's rated by density — generally, the higher the density, the longer the cushion will hold its shape. A density of 1.8 pounds per cubic foot or above is considered good for seat cushions. Some manufacturers wrap foam cores in a layer of fiber or down to create a softer initial feel while maintaining support underneath. If you love that "sink in" feeling, look for cushions with a down or down-alternative wrap. If you prefer firm support, high-density foam alone may be your best bet.

Spring systems also play a role. Sinuous (S-shaped) springs are standard and work well in most applications. Eight-way hand-tied springs are considered top-tier — each spring is individually tied in eight directions to distribute weight evenly. They're more expensive but exceptionally durable and comfortable.



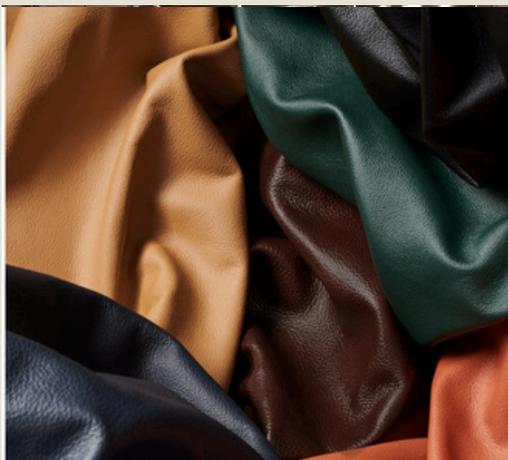
Fabric and Leather Basics

Your upholstery choice affects how your furniture looks, feels, cleans, and ages. There's no single "best" material — it depends entirely on your household.



Performance Fabrics

These have come a long way in recent years. No longer stiff and plastic-feeling, there are hundreds to choose from. Designed to resist stains and odors, these are the perfect option for homes with pets and kids.



Leather

Top grain and full-grain are the highest quality, improving with age. Used on contact surfaces with split hide on sides and backs. If someone quotes you a surprisingly low price on a "leather" sofa, ask specifically what type of leather it is.



Natural Fabrics

Cotton, linen, and wool are beautiful and breathable but may be more susceptible to staining and wear. They tend to work best in lower-traffic rooms or homes without young children or pets.

PRO TIP** When comparing fabrics, look at the double rub count — this is a standardized measure of abrasion resistance. For a piece that gets daily use, you want at least 15,000 double rubs. Heavy-use pieces like family room sofas should be 25,000 or above.

Testing Furniture In-Store

Online photos and reviews will only get you so far. Whenever possible, sit on furniture before you buy it — and sit on it properly.



Sofas and Sectionals

Pay attention to seat depth (deeper seats are great for lounging but can be uncomfortable for shorter people), back support, and arm height. If you tend to nap on the couch, lie down and see how the armrest feels as a pillow.



Recliners

Body fit matters more than most people realize. A recliner that's too big or too small for your frame will be uncomfortable no matter how much you spend. Your feet should reach the footrest comfortably, your lower back should feel supported, and your head should rest naturally against the back cushion.



Dining Chairs

Sit at a table that's similar in height to yours and check the seat height, back support, and how easy it is to scoot in and out. If you tend to linger at the dinner table, comfort is non-negotiable.

PRO TIP* Don't just perch on the edge for thirty seconds. Sit the way you actually sit at home. Lean back. Kick your feet up if it's a recliner. Lie down on the sofa if that's what you do in real life. Spend at least five minutes in each piece. Comfort that feels great for one minute can become uncomfortable over twenty.

Customization

One of the biggest differences between mass-market furniture and higher-end retailers is customization.



- Many quality furniture brands let you choose your frame, then select from hundreds of fabric and leather options. Some also offer choices in cushion firmness, leg finish, and even arm style.
- Customization means a longer wait — typically 6 to 12 weeks for a custom-ordered piece — but you end up with furniture that matches your space and lifestyle precisely. If you're investing in a piece you plan to keep for a decade or more, that wait is usually worth it.
- If you're on a tighter timeline, ask about in-stock and quick-ship options. Most retailers keep their most popular styles in a selection of their bestselling fabrics, ready to ship within days or a few weeks.

Navigating Delivery

Furniture delivery is not like ordering a package from Amazon. Understanding how it works will save you frustration and potentially money.



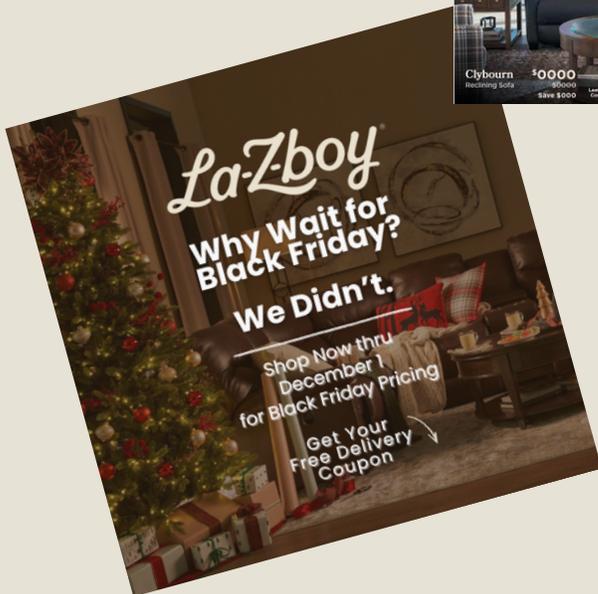
Full-Service Delivery means a team brings your furniture inside, unpacks it, assembles it, places it exactly where you want it, and hauls away the packaging. This is the most convenient option and usually costs between \$100 and \$300 depending on the retailer and distance. Some retailers include it in the price; most charge separately.

Threshold Delivery means the furniture is dropped off at your front door, still in the box. Assembly and placement are up to you. This is common with online retailers and is sometimes free.

PRO TIP* Before delivery day, clear a path from your front door to the room where the furniture is going. Move any fragile items, roll up area rugs, and measure one more time to make sure the piece can navigate your hallways and doorways.

The Best Times to Buy

Furniture retailers run sales throughout the year, but some windows offer better value than others.



- Holiday weekends — Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Black Friday — tend to bring significant promotions, but they usually start long before and last long after the actual holiday.
- Mid-summer and late winter are also good times to shop, as retailers often discount outgoing inventory to make room for new collections.
- That said, don't let a sale drive your decision. A 30% discount on a piece you don't love is still a bad deal. Find the furniture that's right for you first, and then keep an eye out for promotions. If you're not in a rush, ask a salesperson when the next sale is coming and whether they can hold your selection.

Your Pre-Shopping Checklist

Use this quick reference before you head out:

- Measured room dimensions (length, width, ceiling height)
 - Measured doorways, hallways, and stairwells
 - Photographed each room from multiple angles
 - Identified which pieces you're keeping and which you're replacing
 - Set a total budget with a cushion for delivery and extras
 - Decided where to invest more and where to save
 - Created a style direction (inspiration images, color preferences)
 - Listed lifestyle requirements (pets, kids, mobility, entertaining)
 - Noted your timeline and any flexibility for custom orders
 - Researched which retailers offer free design services



This guide was created by La-Z-Boy Southeast, where we believe the best furniture decisions start with the best information. Have questions? Our degreed interior designers offer complimentary consultations at all of our locations across North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

