

Consumer How to CHOOSE A FURNITURE STORE

With all the eclectic choices available today, there has never been a better time to buy new furniture. Whether your budget is big or small, choosing new seating, tables and accessories can make a big difference in your daily life. Furniture gives your house a personality. It creates an ambiance that sends a message to guests about who you are. What is your particular and unique style? What do you value most in furniture?

QUALITY THAT LASTS

Look for a store that sells quality, long-lasting furniture. While inexpensive accessories can be bought cheaply and changed often, big furniture investments -- sofas, dining tables, and the like -- need to be purchased for the long term. That means putting solid construction before a pretty style. Solid construction isn't always apparent at first glance. It should feel solid, not flimsy, of course. Beyond that, find out as much information as possible about the frame, materials, and what kind of warranty it comes with. A well-trained staff can inform you about their furniture, how they're built and why the construction matters. The best stores have employees who act as guides and teachers, not pushy salespeople.

VALUE, NOT JUST PRICE

It is best to pay more for a quality piece than to try to save money on something that will not last in the long term. The bigger the investment, the more important the design and build quality become. Concentrate on finding the best value. An inexpensive sofa will not be a good value if it is built with cheap and weak materials. Likewise, the most expensive love seat will have a wise investment if the frame is not built solidly. It's best to look for brands with a long track record and good reputation.



SERVICE, DELIVERY

Every store has a different customer service policy. Choose a store that is well known for being loyal to its customers. Inquire about return policies. Some furniture stores will allow you to exchange an item within a certain time limit if it doesn't meet your expectations. Learn what fees are involved if you have to return an item -- if that is allowed at all. As well, ask about the store's delivery policy, including how much it costs, how far they'll deliver and how quickly your furniture will arrive.

If you are comparison shopping, factor the delivery cost when considering different stores. A low-priced couch will not save you money if it comes with an expensive delivery fee. It may be worth it to pay a little more for the couch if free or reduced cost delivery is available.

The bottom line is that there are only two things that matter: the quality of the furniture you are purchasing, and the level of service you receive. Once you discover them both, furniture shopping can be a fun experience that will beautify your home for many years. And you can be happy and comfortable with the furniture for generations to come.

