



## HOW TO CHOOSE: OFFICE CHAIRS & SEATING

Office chairs come in a variety of styles & materials. Seating is the most important thing you can purchase for your office to alleviate injury, fatigue & raise productivity.

The style, usage, fabrics, ergonomics & support of the chair are important to the on-going well-being of your team.

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Chairs are a significant office purchase. To choose the best office chair(s), you'll need to answer the following questions:

- What type of chair do you need?
- What material should your chairs be made of?
- Do you need to order any special sizes of chairs, like Big and Tall Office Chairs?
- Should you consider used and/or refurbished chairs for budgetary and/or quality reasons?
- Is price point important to you?
- How many chairs do you need?
- When do you need your chairs?

### Types

Choosing an office chair is largely determined by the function it provides. If cost is important to you, used or refurbished chairs may be a great option. Depending on quantity, you may be able to afford a better chair that way.

**Ergonomic Office / Task Chairs** are the chairs of choice for people who spend all day working at a computer. They are designed to help prevent repetitive stress injury and pain associated with sitting for long periods of time.

**Executive Office Chairs** will make you feel like the CEO! Executive office chairs typically have high backs and are very comfortable. The fabric of choice in executive chairs has been leather. Many executive chairs incorporate good ergonomic design to ensure the user's comfort and productivity. They are often used in executive private offices, conference rooms and client meeting spaces.

**Conference Chairs** enable easy interaction with each other during meetings. The best conference chairs are ergonomic, which maximizes comfort during long meetings.

**Guest Office Chairs** are designed to accommodate visitors. They are stationary chairs that may or may not have arms. Often, there are two of them placed for easy conversation with the host.

**Lounge and Reception Chairs** are designed to comfortably seat people who are waiting. They are often in a public area where image is important. Make sure the chairs you pick match your corporate brand colors and exude the vibe you want to project about your company.

**Stacking or Nesting Chairs** are agile and can easily be stored in a small area. They can be stationary or wheeled and are used for temporary seating in breakrooms and overflow areas. Good ergonomics are not as important as their lightness and ease of moving. Look for wheels on the chairs themselves or on the cart on which they are stored. Be sure to lift one up to evaluate how easy they are to move.

**Training Room Chairs** are often mobile, compact (so as not to block anyone's view) and comfortable (to accommodate long hours of sitting).

**Industrial Seating** includes stools, benches and seating for industrial use are available. They may have a special design or be made out of a special material to ensure practicality in a lab or industrial setting.

**Heavy Duty/24-Hour Office Chairs** are designed for maximum comfort and built with industrial strength components to last for round-the-clock intensive use. Perfect for dispatchers and call centers, they are made with heavier duty parts and usually come with a warranty that encompasses intensive use.



### Materials

Office chairs come in a variety of upholstery materials. Here are the pros and cons of the most common materials used in the construction of new and used office chairs and seating.

#### FABRIC

**Pros:** Less expensive than mesh or leather. Available in an infinite color palette to match your design scheme. Requires regular cleaning to keep looking "good"

**Cons:** Easy to stain and soil, although regular cleaning and treating with fabric protection upon purchase will help repel stains and extend the lifetime of fabric-covered chairs. Susceptible to rips and wear and tear at friction points.

**General Usage:** Material of choice for high end executive chairs and lounge seating

#### LEATHER

**Pros:** With proper care, will last a lifetime. Harder to stain than fabric. Easier to clean than fabric - just wipe with a damp cloth. Distinctive look; adds sense of quality and luxuriousness. Distinctive feel; soft "hand."

**Cons:** Expensive. Needs occasional conditioning. Being a natural material, it may have markings or imperfections, although these may be part of leather's appeal. Limited color selection.

**General Usage:** Historically, material of choice for high end executive chairs and lounge seating.

#### VINYL/FAUX LEATHER

**Pros:** If high quality, vinyl is hard to differentiate from real leather and is almost as durable as leather. Easier to clean than fabric - just wipe with a damp cloth. Hard to stain. Easier to maintain than leather, does not need conditioning. Cheaper

than leather; comparable in price to fabric. Synthetic, so no imperfections.

**Cons:** Breathability is poor; vinyl sweats making it uncomfortable on a warm day.

**General Usage:** A cost-effective choice for task chairs and general use.

#### MESH

**Pros:** Contemporary, fashionable "look". Durable, easy to clean - just wipe with a damp cloth. Hard to stain. No maintenance of the mesh is required. Cheaper than leather; comparable in price to fabric. Synthetic, so no imperfections. Breathability - no sticking or sweating. Mesh adapts to comfortably fit any body size or shape.

**Cons:** Limited color availability

**General Usage:** Excellent choice for general office work, meetings, or all day computer work.

#### WOOD

There are very few solid wood chairs like there were fifty years ago. However, wood continues to be used to trim chairs or as a main component in guest chairs.

**Pros:** The natural beauty of wood is unsurpassed. Comes in a variety of wood species (cherry, mahogany, ash, maple, oak, etc.) and finishes. Strong, long-lasting. Bendable/moldable, with limitations.

**Cons:** Solid wood chairs are uncomfortable to sit in as they are not ergonomic.

**General Usage:** In Guest chairs or as a high-end trim on a variety of chairs.





### ACRYLIC OR PLASTIC

**Pros:** Bold contemporary, fashionable look. Durable. Inexpensive. Lightweight. Easy to move. Easy to clean - just wipe with a damp cloth. Hard to stain. No maintenance required.

**Cons:** Can be uncomfortable; generally no padding or ergonomic support so not recommended for extended use. No breathable.

**General Usage:** Educational/institutional usage. Mobile chairs. Nesting and stacking chairs.

### MEMORY FOAM

Memory foam is an open celled viscoelastic material that is built into the seat and back of the chair.

**Pros:** Reacts to body heat and weight. Contours itself to fit the curve of your body. Reduces pressure on the pressure points. Comfortable for long periods of sitting.

**Cons:** Can compress over time and lose malleability.

**General Usage:** Many ergonomic chairs contain memory foam in their seats and backs.

### Big & Tall Chairs

One chair size does not fit everyone. When you are larger or taller than average, getting into the standard office chair may be challenging and working in one all day can be uncomfortable.

Big & Tall office chairs are specifically designed for people who are larger and/or taller than average. Typical chairs usually have a 19" seat, whereas Big & Tall chairs are made with a 21" seat for lots of room. Additionally, adjustable armrests and chair backs can add more width and depth to your seat.

Standard office chairs are usually rated for up to 250 lbs., office chairs for the big & tall accommodate up to 450 lbs. They are built to last with appropriate seat padding and chair components, including reinforced cylinders and frames designed for larger people. Waterfall (sloping) seat fronts rare contoured appropriately to reduce pressure behind your knees, which aids both circulation and comfort.

Although with more limited choices, Big & Tall Office Chairs are available in task, executive, ergonomic and guest styles. They are more expensive than a comparable regularly-sized chair.

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