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Consumer reports mattress buying guide

Foam Mattresses Provide Soft, Cushioned Comfort with Various Types to Suit Needs These mattresses are suitable for larger bedrooms with a minimum size of 12x12 feet, similar to standard king beds. However, different brands may have varying firmness levels, making it challenging to compare them directly. To help with this, we measure each mattress's firmness on a scale from 1 (extremely soft) to 10 (extremely firm), which can be found in our ratings. For instance, what one brand considers "medium" might be perceived as "firm" by another. To assess durability, we subject each mattress to a rigorous test involving a 300-pound wood roller that travels across the surface 30,000 times, simulating around eight to ten years of use. Interestingly, our tests reveal that some budget-friendly mattresses can also be quite durable. For more information on this topic, refer to our ratings chart. Some mattresses are better at allowing airflow than others, which means they tend to retain less heat. Generally, innerspring models are cooler than foam ones due to their coil design; however, the overall construction of a mattress plays a significant role in determining how hot it gets while sleeping. If you're sensitive to heat during sleep, consider checking out our article on "Best Mattresses for Hot Sleepers" for further guidance. Stability is another crucial aspect when choosing a mattress, particularly if you share your bed with a partner or pet. This refers to the mattress's ability to isolate motion, allowing one sleeper to shift without disturbing the other. Our tests show that foam models generally have better stability than innerspring mattresses, although some innersprings with individually wrapped coils perform well too. It's also worth noting that new mattresses can emit a strong chemical smell due to volatile organic compounds (VOCs) released from the materials used. To minimize exposure, it's recommended to let the mattress off-gas in a well-ventilated area until the odor dissipates completely. If you're particularly sensitive to chemicals or have allergies, consider looking for mattresses with low-VOC certifications. Ultimately, the best mattress will provide adequate support throughout the night, ensuring your spine remains aligned and you wake up feeling refreshed rather than achy. This depends not only on the mattress itself but also how it interacts with your body weight and sleep position. Our ratings offer a comprehensive assessment of each mattress's ability to support side, back, and large/small sleepers. In terms of thickness, there is no one-size-fits-all solution as it largely comes down to personal preference. However, be wary of mattresses with excessive fillers that can lead to sagging or softening over time. Our ratings provide an average thickness for different types of mattresses, including foam (11 inches), innerspring (13 inches), and adjustable air mattresses (12½ inches). Lastly, it's worth noting that even though some manufacturers claim their mattresses are "all-foam" or "all-innerspring," the truth is that they often blend components from both categories. Mattress Types: What You Need to Know The right mattress choice depends on how supported you feel, not just the type itself. When selecting a mattress, consider coil count and height, as well as foam layer thickness. Some mattresses are more foam-forward, while others have a more innerspring feel. The performance of a mattress depends on its foam quality, construction, and the type of layers it uses. These layers provide support without the slow sinking feeling of memory foam, making them less cuddly but easier to move around on. Latex layers offer cushioning and a slightly springy feel due to their construction from liquid extracted from rubber tree plants. Some mattresses combine polyurethane foam with latex or memory foam, while others use different synthetic materials. The overall feel is determined by the mattress's construction, with the top layer having the greatest impact on what you experience. Twin-size beds are suitable for small children and small bedrooms, while twin XLs provide extra legroom for growing teens and college students. Full beds offer more width than twins but still fit in smaller spaces, comfortably sleeping one or two people. Queen-sized mattresses provide enough space for two people to sleep comfortably and move around freely, while king-size mattresses are ideal for couples who value ample room. California King mattresses cater to taller couples seeking extra legroom. When evaluating firmness, it's essential to compare different brands using a standardized scale from 1 (extremely soft) to 10 (extremely firm). Durability is tested by simulating eight years of use with a wood roller, and some budget-friendly mattresses have surprisingly high durability ratings. Airflow can vary between models, affecting heat retention, with innerspring mattresses generally retaining less heat than foam ones. Stability refers to a mattress's ability to isolate motion, which foam models tend to excel at due to their construction. Good mattresses offer several benefits, including stabilization and support for the spine. When purchasing a mattress, consider one that is certified for low levels of potentially toxic chemicals if you're sensitive or have allergies. A good mattress should keep your spine aligned throughout the night, taking into account factors such as body weight distribution and sleep position. The best mattress thickness varies depending on personal preference, but poor-quality fillers can lead to sagging and softening. Innerspring mattresses with a higher proportion of foam may feel more foam-forward, while those with less foam will have a firmer feel similar to an innerspring. Ultimately, the right choice is one that provides adequate support for your spine. Some high-performing mattresses are available at various price points, including options under $600 and above $1,000. However, it's essential to note that some of these features, such as organic-cotton covers and latex foams, aren't necessarily crucial for a good night's sleep. Mattress Toppers Can't Fix Flawed Mattresses - Here's How to Choose the Right One Dedicated mattress stores like Dreams, John Lewis, Emma, Simba, Ikea, and MattressOnline offer a wide range of mattresses from well-known brands and their own ranges, with double mattresses starting at less than £160. Some stores only stock their own branded mattresses, while others have partnerships with various brands. When shopping for a mattress, it's essential to consider the type of construction, including pocket sprung, memory foam/foam, open coil spring, and latex. Memory Foam vs Coil Spring vs Latex Mattresses: What's the Best Option? When it comes to choosing a new mattress, there's a wide variation in the level of support offered. In our testing, we've found that different types of mattresses excel in various areas. Memory Foam Mattresses: * Pros: + Moulds to your body shape + Durable + Can be pressure-relieving * Cons: + Can be expensive + Restricts movement (memory effect) + Can feel warm to lie on and increase body temperature These mattresses are topped with a layer of temperature-sensitive viscoelastic material, making them conform to your body shape. However, they can also make the mattress feel warmer. Coil Spring Mattresses: * Pros: + Cheaper than other types of mattresses + Can be cool to lie on + Tend to be breathable due to open coil construction * Cons: + If you share a bed, you're more likely to be disturbed by the moving springs + Coils tend to wear out more quickly than pocket springs Continuous coil mattresses are usually basic and made from a single looped wire. Open coil mattresses, on the other hand, have individual springs fixed together by one wire. Latex Mattresses: * Pros: + Manufacturers claim they're more resilient and better able to keep their shape + A good choice for those who want a natural surface to sleep on * Cons: + Can be expensive + Some people are allergic to latex Latex mattresses have a core made up of layers of springy latex. They're less common than other types of mattresses, but still offer excellent support and durability. Choosing the Right Mattress Firmness: Firmness is a matter of personal preference, rather than a fixed standard. We assess mattress firmness on a scale of one to 10, where one is the firmest and 10 is the softest. Look for this rating in our reviews to compare different mattresses. Don't be fooled by manufacturer-sounding terms like "orthopedic" or "posturepedic". Any mattress manufacturer can use these descriptions, so they don't necessarily mean a mattress is better for you. When shopping for a new mattress, consider the following features: * Bed-in-a-box: Online mattresses that come vacuum-packed and shipped directly to your door * Body-support rating: Look for this rating in our reviews to find out how well a mattress will keep your spine in its natural position. A box delivered right to your doorstep. By cutting out middlemen and selling directly from manufacturer to consumer, many brands claim you're getting a higher-quality mattress at a lower price. Most online-only mattresses come with a sleep trial that can last anywhere from 40 nights to a year. During this period, you can try the mattress at home and return it if you don't like it. In most cases, the manufacturer will collect the unwanted mattress from your home for free before recycling or donating it. Bed-in-a-box mattresses are available in various types, including foam, memory foam, hybrid (combining both), and more. See our guide to popular brands like Emma vs Simba vs Eve. Rolled-up mattresses are similar to bed-in-a-box models, but they come rolled up and vacuum-packed in a bag for easy transportation. Alternatively, they can be delivered and easily taken to your bedroom without the hassle of dragging a large mattress upstairs or around tight corners. Like bed-in-a-box mattresses, they sometimes need to be aired out or left for a few hours to regain their shape. If you prefer natural fillings, look for mattresses made with materials like wool, coconut coir, or cotton. Be cautious and check the claims, as some might only have a token layer of natural materials. One-sided mattresses are designed so that only one side needs to be slept on, eliminating the need for regular flipping. Mattresses can be heavy, with some weighing over 50kg. Check our reviews for ease-of-use ratings to see how easy it is to move each mattress. Discover which mattress brands Which? members are most satisfied with in our guide to the best mattress brands. It's recommended to replace your mattress every eight to 10 years, but many people keep theirs for longer. There are four signs your mattress needs replacing: discomfort, sagging or sinking in places, excessive noise when you move, and visible signs of wear and tear. Old mattress symptoms include sagging or softening, dips where you sleep, and being over 10 years old with significant use. This age can lead to around 22,550 hours of usage, making it a less-than-ideal sleeping place due to absorbed body moisture and accumulated dead skin cells. Visible signs like damage to foam, springs poking out, or loose stitching also indicate the need for replacement. Cleaning and disposing of the old mattress in an environmentally responsible way are recommended. The cost of a good mattress varies greatly depending on type, brand, size, and materials used, with prices ranging from under £100 to over £3,000. However, expert tests have found affordable options that support the spine and last for years. Adjustable air mattresses have a core covered by foam or padding that can be inflated or deflated to adjust firmness levels. A main advantage is that the firmness level can be customized for each sleeper on a queen or king bed. Some models feature an adjustable bed frame, allowing users to lower and raise the head or foot of the bed. However, these mattresses tend to be pricey. One benefit is that they allow for slow sinking into curve-conforming layers, making them less cuddly but easier to move around in. These mattresses often combine different materials such as latex, memory foam, and polyurethane, resulting in a unique feel depending on the construction of the mattress. They come in various sizes, including twin, twin XL, full (double), queen, king, and California King, each offering distinct advantages for solo sleepers or couples. A recommended bedroom size varies by mattress type, with at least 10x10 feet required for a queen bed. Their firmness can be measured on an industry standard scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being extremely firm. Some models also feature improved airflow, reducing trapped heat and promoting better sleeping conditions. We've tested the durability of these mattresses by simulating eight to ten years of use with a 300-plus-pound wood roller, finding that some affordable options can be surprisingly durable. A mattress's ability to dissipate heat is influenced by its overall design and materials. For more information on mattresses that cater to hot sleepers, refer to our article "Best Mattresses for Hot Sleepers." Photo: Avocado Stability in a mattress refers to how well it can isolate motion, allowing one partner (or child or pet) to move without disturbing the other sleeper. Generally, foam-based mattresses are more stable than traditional innerspring models. However, some innersprings with individually wrapped coils perform better than those without this feature. To find high-performing mattresses that offer good stability and also cater to couples, click on "Best For" and filter our ratings accordingly. You can also read our article "Best Mattresses for Couples." Photo: iStock The familiar scent of a new mattress is caused by volatile organic compounds (VOCs) escaping from the foam, upholstery, and adhesive materials. These chemicals can have negative health effects when released indoors in high concentrations. To minimize exposure, let your mattress off-gas with windows open until the odor dissipates. If you're sensitive to chemicals or have allergies, consider a mattress that has been certified for low levels of potentially toxic substances. For more information on low-VOC mattresses and certifications, refer to our article "Best Low-VOC Mattresses." Photo: GOTS A good mattress maintains proper spine alignment throughout the night, reducing morning stiffness and discomfort. This depends not only on the mattress itself but also on how it interacts with your body weight distribution and sleep position. We evaluate each mattress for its ability to support side and back sleepers as well as both large and small individuals. For more details, explore our ratings and read our reviews of the best mattresses for side sleepers and back sleepers. Photo: Getty Images The ideal mattress thickness is a matter of personal preference. While a thick mattress may seem luxurious, it's essentially about what's contributing to its height. Low-quality fillers can lead to sagging and softening over time. In our ratings, the average foam mattress is around 11 inches, while innerspring models typically range from 13 inches on average, and adjustable air mattresses usually measure 12½ inches. Photo Illustration: Consumer Reports, Getty Images Hybrid mattresses combine both innerspring and foam elements to offer resilience and comfort. When shopping for a hybrid model, pay attention to the number and height of coils as well as the thickness of foam layers. This will give you an idea of how much each component contributes to the mattress's overall feel. For example, mattresses with more foam will have a softer, more foam-forward feel, while those with less foam will be closer to traditional innerspring models. Photo: Zoma Ultimately, choosing the right mattress isn't about its specifications but rather how well it supports you during sleep. Your spine should remain aligned and comfortable throughout the night, regardless of whether the mattress is firm, soft, or somewhere in between. Research has shown that medium-firm mattresses can be particularly beneficial for individuals with back pain, as they offer the right balance of support and pressure relief. Photo: Adobe Stock Some gel-infused foams might feel cool to the touch initially but will eventually warm up with prolonged exposure, making them no more heat-resistant than non-gel foam models. Heat can be a concern when it comes to sleeping, but not all foams breathe as well as others. However, none of them have the ability to actively cool you down, unless they are equipped with a system of fans or chilled water - features more likely to be found in cooling mattress pads.

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