

# 7 Steps for Choosing the Perfect Mattress

A Mattress Buyer's Guide

**saatva**  
Sleep Enlightened

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# Welcome

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Buying a mattress can be complicated—especially if it’s been a while since the last time you went mattress shopping. To make things easier, we’ve put together this simple guide to set you on the path to sleep enlightenment.

Like all journeys, it begins with a single step. Let’s get started.

# Step 1

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Decide how you want  
your mattress to feel

## Step 1: Mattress feel

# There's no “best mattress” for everyone.

The right mattress for you is a matter of personal preference. You probably have an idea of how you want your mattress to feel. Do you prefer a firm surface or something with a bit more give? Do you like the bounciness of innersprings or the body-hugging embrace of memory foam? Or perhaps something in between?

Each mattress material has a distinctive feel: Innerspring mattresses feel, well, springy. Memory foam mattresses feel huggy. Latex mattresses feel floaty.

That said, any mattress type can accommodate a wide range of sleep preferences. And many mattresses these days combine features of more than one type—innersprings with memory foam, for example, are often called “hybrid” mattresses.

If you're sure about the mattress type you want, check out our detailed buyer's guides for [innerspring](#), [memory foam](#), and [latex mattresses](#). If not, proceed to Step 2.



## Step 2

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Take special requirements  
into account

## How you want your mattress to feel is the main thing, but it's not the only thing.

Depending on the way you sleep, certain mattress types may not be a good fit. For example, do you tend to sleep hot? Do you suffer from back pain? Do you jolt awake every time your partner tosses and turns?

The answers to those questions will point you in the direction of your best mattress match. If sleeping cool is your top priority, then you'll likely be happiest with innerspring; its open construction allows for more airflow through the mattress than any other type. But if you care most about cutting down on motion transfer, nothing beats memory foam. And if you want a "greener" option that is all-natural and environmentally sustainable, you're looking at latex.

### **Understanding mattress materials**

"When you think about the makeup of a mattress, know that the bottom eight inches are what will support you, while the top three to four inches are what will determine how cushiony the mattress feels," says Michael Breus, PhD, a clinical psychologist and fellow of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

A mattress with an innerspring support system will provide the "bounciest" feel,

though even within the innerspring category you can find a range of firmness options. One clue to how firm an innerspring mattress will feel is coil thickness, or gauge. Mattress coil gauge typically ranges from 12 to 15, with lower numbers indicating thicker wire. The thicker the springs, the firmer the feel.

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Foam mattresses don't have that springy feel, which makes sense since they don't have springs. Firmness is a function of foam density; the denser the foam, the more supportive the mattress and the less you'll sink into the surface. Premium memory foam mattresses contain support layers of

## Step 2: Special requirements

high-density foam, typically 4 to 5 pounds per cubic foot.

Somewhere in the middle of innerspring and foam lies latex. A more elastic, “springier” material, latex offers the support of foam but with a buoyant, elevating sensation.

As a result, your body will stay lifted up all night long.

To learn more about the pros and cons of specific mattress materials, see our guides to [innerspring](#), [memory foam](#), and [latex mattresses](#).

## Mattress materials at a glance:

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### Innerspring: Sleeps cool



- bouncier, “free” feel
- very breathable
- 70% of consumers buy this style

### Memory Foam: Less motion transfer



- hugging, “close” feel
- online mattresses are typically memory foam

### Latex: Greenest option



- elastic, “buoyant” feel
- typically higher-end due to manufacturing costs

# Step 3

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Consider your  
sleep style

### Step 3: Sleep style

## The next big decision is comfort level.

Comfort is a fancy way of saying how firm or cushiony a mattress will be. Most mattress types come in a range of comfort levels; the right one for you depends on the way you sleep: on your back, side, stomach, or some combination.

Here's why that matters. The weight in our bodies is not distributed evenly, so your sleep position will affect the amount of pressure you're exerting on the surface underneath you. Sleeping on your side, for example, creates pressure points at your shoulders and hips, since your body weight is concentrated within a smaller surface area. Sleeping on your back, on the other hand, spreads your weight out more evenly across the bed. Pressure equals force divided by surface area. Who said science was boring?

That's why side sleepers generally prefer softer mattresses, which cushion pressure points, while back sleepers like firmer mattresses that don't mess with natural spinal alignment.

These rules aren't universal, of course, since some people are more sensitive to pressure than others. Body type matters here too: heavier people tend to need the support of a firmer mattresses, and lighter people might be more comfortable on a softer surface.

If you're a combination sleeper (i.e., someone who switches between positions), consider a medium firmness level. That way your mattress will be neither too soft nor too firm for whatever position you take throughout the night. If you're a stomach sleeper, though, you'll want a firm mattress to keep your lower back from hurting. (It's worth noting that this is considered the least healthy sleep style, so try other options if you can, ahem, stomach them.)

Back sleepers	—————>	Firmer
Stomach sleepers	—————>	Firmer
Combination sleepers	—————>	Medium firm
Side sleepers	—————>	Softer



## Step 4

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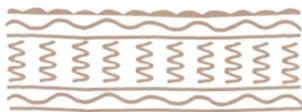
Evaluate mattress quality

## So now you have an idea of the kind of mattress that might suit you. What's next?

Let's say you're a 35-year-old woman who sleeps on her side and prefers a bouncy feel. In that case, you'd go for a soft (a.k.a. "plush") innerspring mattress. Simple, right? Not quite. There are dozens of plush innerspring mattresses on the market. What sets them apart? When comparing mattresses, here are some key questions to ask:

### What's inside the mattress?

Every mattress has multiple components, and you should know what goes into each one. A good mattress company will provide diagrams with detailed descriptions and precise specifications for each layer. For example, a memory foam mattress isn't made just of memory foam; if it were, it would be too mushy to sleep on. Instead, it's made of multiple layers of foam of varying densities. Make sure the company or salesperson can explain each part of the mattress and its function.



### How does the mattress provide lumbar support?

Lumbar support is important for everyone, but especially anyone who is prone to back problems. The human spine has

a natural curvature that needs to be maintained, even when we lie down. A mattress without adequate support in the lumbar region will cause the hips (where most people's weight is concentrated) to dip down, pulling the lumbar spine out of alignment. To ensure proper lumbar support, a mattress should have stronger, firmer material in its center third.



### Will the mattress keep me cool?

All mattresses will absorb body heat throughout the night. The question is whether the mattress is able to disperse that heat efficiently so you stay cool under the covers. Innerspring mattresses are naturally good at this, since springs and coils have lots of space between them where air can flow. Memory foam, on the other hand, is very dense, so heat gets trapped because air can't flow through the material. To combat that natural tendency, memory foam mattresses often contain cooling gel layers or other technology

#### Step 4: Mattress quality

that helps transfer heat away from the body. Other foams, like latex, are naturally more porous and so sleep cooler than traditional memory foam (though not as cool as innersprings).



#### Is the mattress eco-friendly?

Consumers are increasingly concerned about the environmental and health impacts of the products they wear, eat—and sleep on. If you're looking for something eco-friendly, ask: Does it use organic components? Are the foams certified to be nontoxic and low-VOC? Does it use a natural flame retardant? Questions like these will help determine not only whether the mattress is manufactured sustainably, but also whether it's likely to affect your health (especially if you are sensitive to chemical smells or prone to allergies). Where it's made matters too: Mattresses made in the U.S.A. must meet strict health, safety, and environmental standards.



#### How much does the mattress cost?

Mattress prices are all over the map, from as little as a few hundred dollars into the tens of thousands. A higher price tag doesn't necessarily translate to a better night's sleep. A quality mattress that has the features above and is made with premium materials generally costs in the range of \$1,000 to \$3,500. As a rule, memory foam and innerspring mattresses tend to cost roughly the same amount, while latex carries a higher price tag—a result of the expense of harvesting and processing the natural material, which is derived from the sap of the rubber tree.



For specific quality considerations, see our individual [innerspring](#), [memory foam](#), and [latex mattresses guides](#).

# Step 5

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Choose a size

## Step 5: Choose a size

# This one might seem simple, but even here you have more options than you might realize.

Couples who prefer different comfort levels, for example, can have a king size bed with two separate firmnesses by pairing two twin XL mattresses side-by-side. Mattresses come in the following standard sizes:

SIZE	DIMENSIONS	GOOD FOR
Twin (“single”)	38” x 75”	Young children
Twin XL	38” x 80”	Taller children, dorm rooms, Couples who want customized comfort levels
Full (“double”)	54” x 75”	Single adults, Couples with limited space
Queen	60” x 80”	Couples with limited space
King	76” x 80”	Couples with pets or children
California King	72” x 84”	Taller couples



# Step 6

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Decide on a base

Step 6: Decide on a base

## Without a firm base, a mattress is more vulnerable to sagging and general wear and tear.

Unless you're planning to put your mattress on the floor (which is a perfectly acceptable choice), a mattress needs a base to (1) raise it to a comfortable height and (2) provide adequate support for the interior components.

## There are three main types of bases:

### Traditional Foundation

You probably know these as “box springs.” Foundations are simple rectangular structures, usually made of wooden slats, foam, and quilted covering. Depending on the size and type of mattress, the manufacturer will recommend—or in some cases require—a particular style of foundation. A latex mattress, for instance, requires a solid foundation, or one with slats a specified distance apart.



### Platform Bed

As its name implies, a platform bed is made of a solid surface or a base of wooden slats, raised from the floor on legs. The mattress rests directly on the platform, without the need of a traditional foundation. The choice to go with a platform is an aesthetic rather than functional one.



### Adjustable Base

Controlled via remotes or smartphone apps, adjustable bases let you raise or lower the head and foot of the bed. They're great for sleeping—especially if you have back pain or other conditions that keep you from finding a comfortable position—and also reading, watching TV, or just lounging. Most mattresses these days are compatible with adjustable bases, but make sure to check before purchasing.



# Step 7

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Read the fine print

## Step 7: Read the fine print

# A mattress is what's called a "considered purchase."

Which means people do their research before buying (that's why you're reading this guide after all). You'll be investing a fair amount of money and time in the process—and living with your choice for a decade or more—so it pays to know what else you're getting in terms of ongoing customer service and fine-print policies. Here are some questions to ask:

### **How does delivery work?**

Does the company offer free delivery? Will it set the mattress up for you and take away your old one? If your mattress comes packed in a box, keep in mind that it's going to be very heavy, and you might need help carrying it up the stairs and unpacking it. For other considerations specific to beds in boxes, see our [memory foam buyer's guide](#).

### **What are the warranty terms?**

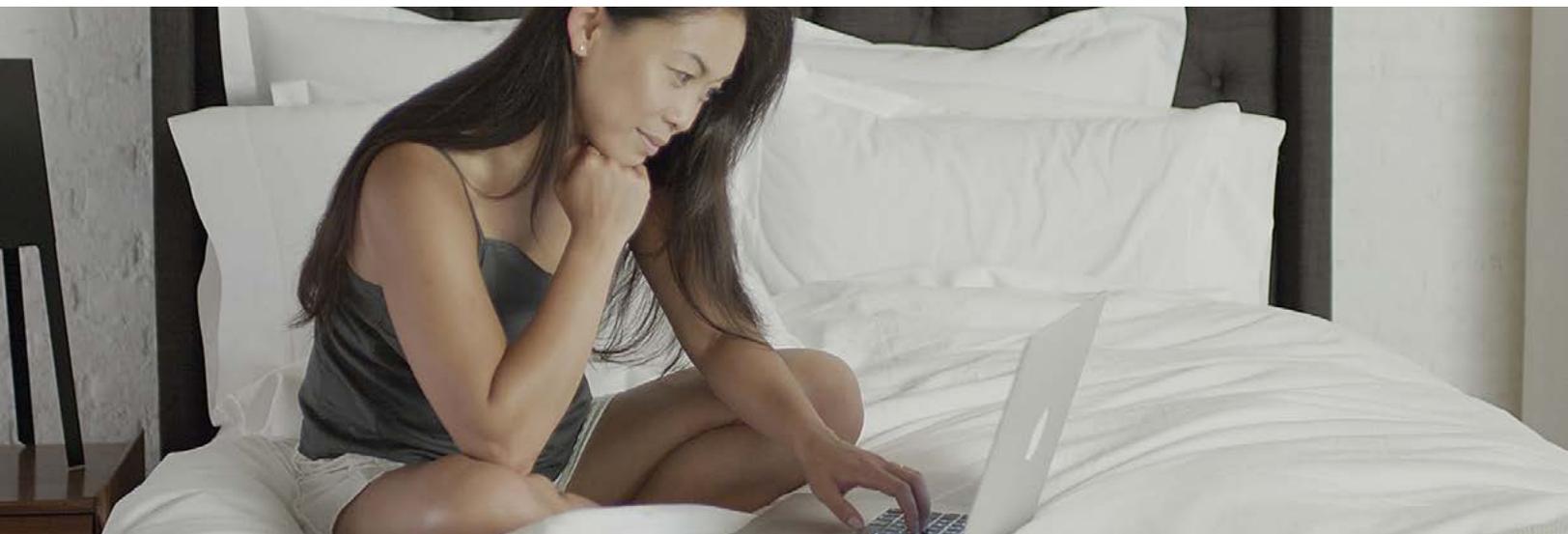
Like any big ticket item, a mattress should have a robust warranty, and the company should be willing to stand behind it. Look for a warranty period of at least 10 years. Ideally, you want a warranty that is not prorated, which means the amount of coverage doesn't change the longer you own the mattress.

### **What's the return policy?**

The best thing you can do is find out—before you plunk down your credit card—everything about how the company handles returns. Is there a waiting period before you can return the mattress? Will you pay a fee for pickup or restocking? What happens to the mattress after it's been taken away? Does the company donate or recycle old mattresses? [Check reviews online](#) to see what experiences other customers have had with returning a mattress.

### **Is there a home trial?**

Most online companies will give you at least 30 days to try your mattress at home. Saatva offers 120 days. We know that it can take a while to get used to a new mattress, and you won't know if it's really right for you until you've slept on it for a while.



# About Saatva

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Since 2010, Saatva has been committed to delivering the most comfortable, durable, and affordable luxury mattress without the stress and markups associated with traditional mattress stores.

With three mattress styles—Saatva Classic innerspring, Loom & Leaf memory foam, and Zenhaven Talalay latex—Saatva has a bed to match every sleep preference.

All of our mattresses are handcrafted in the U.S.A. with premium, eco-friendly materials and come standard with free white glove delivery and Saatva’s signature 24/7 customer support.

To learn more, visit [saatva.com](https://www.saatva.com)

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 [Innerspring Mattress Guide](https://www.saatva.com/blog/innerspring-mattress-guide)

<https://www.saatva.com/blog/innerspring-mattress-guide>

 [Memory Foam Mattress Guide](https://www.saatva.com/blog/memory-foam-mattress-guide)

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 [Latex Mattress Guide](https://www.saatva.com/blog/latex-mattress-guide)

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