

Finding a Great Mattress Outlet

One of the most important things a consumer can do when they are mattress shopping is to first do some preliminary research into any manufacturer or retailer you are considering visiting before you take the time to visit them. What you are looking to find out is their ability and willingness to disclose the materials in their mattresses and their knowledge, experience, and ability to give you the guidance that is necessary to help you make meaningful comparisons and your best possible choices.

The better retailers and factory direct manufacturers will have 3 main qualities that sets them apart from the majority of retailers or manufacturers.

1. They will understand the importance of a consumer knowing the quality specs of every layer or component in a mattress they are considering, will have the knowledge to help them "translate" the mattress specs so their customers know what they mean, and they will encourage meaningful comparisons between mattresses based on the materials inside it. There is more about the types of information that all good retailers or manufacturers should be able to provide you about any mattress they sell in [this article](#).
2. They will have the knowledge and experience to help their customers "match" a mattress to their specific needs and preferences so they are less likely to buy a mattress (even if it is great quality and value) that may not work for them.
3. They put the legitimate best interests of their customers above their own profit.

The two main parts to solving the mattress shopping puzzle.

The first of these is to find a mattress that is suitable for your height, weight, body shape, sleeping positions, and preferences. This is what we call PPP which means **P**osture and alignment, **P**ressure relief, and your **P**ersonal preferences. No matter what your own unique body shape, sleeping positions, and circumstances may be, [the two basic functions of every mattress](#) are to keep your spine and joints in their natural alignment and relieve pressure on the pressure points of the body in all your sleeping positions. After this ... everything boils down to preferences which covers things like sleeping temperature and microclimate, safe materials, motion isolation, motion restriction, and the overall subjective feel and response of a mattress.

Durability which is part of the next part of the puzzle will tell you how long the materials in your mattress will continue to provide you with the PPP that is the reason why you bought it in the first place. This means you will need factual information about what is inside your mattress so you can identify any lower quality materials in the mattress that can affect durability and the useful life of a mattress. Without knowing the quality and

specifications that affect the durability of the materials and components in your mattress ... there is no way to make meaningful comparisons, identify any lower quality materials or "weak links" in a mattress, or be able to realistically assess how long a mattress may really last. Any mattress ... even those that use lower quality and less expensive materials ... can feel great in the highly managed environment of a mattress showroom. The difference though is that the "showroom feel" doesn't last once you are back in the real world of actually sleeping on your new mattress and lower quality materials will soften and break down much more quickly than higher quality alternatives. The loss of comfort and support that comes from the softening, compression, and breakdown of lower quality materials is not covered by warranties and accurate information about what is in a mattress is the only thing that will tell you about its real quality and value compared to the other options you have available to you.

People who will give you accurate information and truly know the difference between the many different materials and components of a mattress are rare in today's market where marketing stories about "benefits" (that are often questionable) tend to replace factual information about the quality of the materials that provide those benefits or how long those benefits will last. Unless you are willing to take the time and effort to become a "mattress materials expert" yourself ... it makes more sense to find retailers or manufacturers that are "mattress people" rather than "marketing people" who already know what you would otherwise need to learn and have the desire and willingness to give you the benefit of their knowledge and guidance. These are people who understand that the value of a mattress is not about the name on the mattress label but about how well it matches the needs and preferences of each person and the construction, quality, and durability of the materials inside it.

The art and science of mattress construction

People who also have a good understanding about what makes a mattress suitable for one person and not another are also rare in the industry. There is both a science and an "art" in providing the type of guidance that can help "match" someone to a mattress that is best for them based on their height, weight, body shape, sleeping positions, and other personal circumstances. People who are good at this and are more interested in your long term satisfaction than they are in their profit or commission can be your best resource and best friend in the mattress shopping jungle. Even the highest quality mattress made from the best materials may have a construction type or layering that makes it completely unsuitable for a particular person to sleep on no matter how great the value of the mattress may be.

Because of the knowledge and research that can be involved in making your best choices on your own ... it makes sense to focus your initial efforts on finding the retailers and manufacturers who are experts in both mattress materials and providing guidance to their customers rather than putting your initial efforts into finding the best mattress when you may not have the knowledge and information that is necessary to know the difference. As it happens ... these types of "mattress people" are relatively easy to find because they exist all around the country at local factory direct mattress manufacturers and the better sleep shops that usually sell alternative independent or smaller local brands. These are also the type of people who understand and sell real

value and because their success depends on reputation rather than advertising and marketing, they are much more accountable to their customers.

One of the biggest benefits of these types of retailers and manufacturers is they tend to deal directly with the factory that makes their mattresses (or they are owned by the factory), have a shorter supply chain from manufacturer to customer with fewer "mouths to feed" along the way, and operate with lower profit margins. This means that they tend to sell mattresses that have significantly better quality at lower prices than stores that are more focused on the latest story or advertising campaign, know little about what they are actually selling, and have little interest in supplying consumers with information that helps them make meaningful comparisons with other mattresses.

More qualities to help you recognize better manufacturers or retailers.

Because finding one of these stores can be your most important first step in mattress shopping, there are a few guidelines that will help you know when you have found one.

1. Employees and/or owners who really know the difference between different types of mattresses and materials and can explain them in both factual and layman's terms that make sense.
2. Retailers and manufacturers that employ people who are more interested in educating you and fitting you to a mattress than they are in the profits they will make (they understand that profits are a side effect not a "cause"). They can tell you "why" one mattress may be better than another for your needs and preferences.
3. Manufacturers and retailers who understand that one of the most significant parts of the value of a mattress (outside of its suitability for your body type and sleeping style) is based on the materials in the mattress and how they are put together. These are the type of people who will show you how to compare a mattress based on what is in them rather than the stories that are "attached" to them. These types of manufacturers and retailers WANT you to know what is in their mattresses and can tell you why each material is used and how durable it is rather than making meaningful comparisons more difficult. They will provide you with specific information about the type and quality of all the layers and components including (most importantly) the density of any polyfoam and memory foam and the type and blend of any latex in a mattress.
4. Retailers and manufacturers who base their prices on the real cost of what is in the mattress and putting it together more than the fake sales (based on prices that nobody ever really pays), advertising stories, or sales techniques that try to convince you that a mattress is worth more than it really is or that you were "lucky" to have found such a "great deal".

Always make a phone call before visiting and testing mattresses.

One of the most effective things you can do is to phone each outlet you are considering and "interview" them to get a sense of their level of knowledge and service. The better ones that appreciate better questions and more educated consumers will quickly become apparent.

The first step here is to ask whether they carry the general types or category of mattresses that you are interested in testing. There is more about the different types and categories of mattresses in [this article](#).

Outside of asking about the types of mattresses they carry ... here are a few examples of the types of questions you can ask in your "interview" to find out if they meet one of the most reliable signs of a better retailer or manufacturer which is the willingness to give you good information on the phone (not necessarily prices) and help identify a few mattresses that would be worth testing if they have a clear sense that you are a serious shopper. They will not only provide better answers but will also ask you better questions focused on finding out what you really need and prefer.

- *If I like one of the mattresses you carry ... will you be able to provide me with a list of all the layers and components in your mattresses that includes the density of any polyfoam or memory foam that is in it? If they say "yes we have spec sheets" ... make sure you ask again and confirm that they include foam density of any memory foam or polyfoam in lbs/cu ft or the type and blend of any latex because this is usually missing and is the most important information you need.*
- *Do you have any latex mattresses that don't have more than about an inch or so of polyfoam above the latex?*
- *Can you tell me the thickness and the density of all the foam in any memory foam mattresses you carry?*
- *Can you tell me the thickness, type, and density of all the foam in any innerspring mattresses that you carry?*
- *Do you have special sales or do you sell your mattresses for a similar price every day of the year (better retailers and manufacturers sell their mattresses at fair prices every day and don't have "major sales" with massive discounts based on the time of the year or holidays)?*
- *Is your listed price your best price or do your customers negotiate for the best price (negotiating is often a warning sign for mattresses that are overpriced)?*
- *Given my weight, height, sleeping positions, preferences, and budget (of course you would need to tell them this) ... do you carry mattresses that you think would be a reasonable place to start when I visit you?*

- Do you sell mattress based mainly on how they feel or do you help people know how to fit a mattress to their individual needs and preferences and what to look for?

If there is one single factor that will increase the odds that you are dealing with a more knowledgeable retailer or manufacturer it's their willingness and ability to provide you with the thickness and type of all the foam layers in the mattress including the density of any memory foam and polyfoam and the type and blend of any latex and to be able to talk knowledgeably about the specifics of the materials in a mattress. This by itself will often differentiate more knowledgeable retailers or manufacturers from those that know much less about their mattresses. Negotiable prices are a second major warning sign.

Retailers and manufacturers that can and will answer these types of questions accurately, cheerfully, and easily without "resistance" and are clearly interested in helping you rather than telling you to "come in and lie on the mattress" before they give you any good information are the ones worth visiting. You will get a clear sense of what to expect by asking these types of questions and it will save you watching a lot of eyes roll and "I'm going on a break" or "only engineers need that type of information) comments if you go into the store and start asking questions about materials and construction without an "interview" first. In those rare cases where there are few stores of this type within reasonable driving distance ... then there are also some great online retailers and manufacturers that are "experts" in working with their customers on the phone and these along with some local testing to give them some guidelines about your needs and preferences can lead to better choices and value than going to an outlet where a sale is based on the "story or promotion of the day".

For all these reasons and many more ... alternative or local independent mattress manufacturers who sell factory direct or through smaller sleep shops with knowledgeable staff are the best source of quality and value in a mattress. If you don't know of any in your area, then a question [on the forum](#) with your zip or city can help identify some possibilities for you.

Finding the "better" retailers or manufacturers in your area as a first step can be just as important as trying to find your best mattress without having the real knowledge to do so. A knowledgeable manufacturer or retailer that carries mattresses that have fair value, that you can trust to give you accurate and meaningful information, and are focused more on educating their customers than they are on "selling" their customers, can turn mattress shopping from a difficult and frustrating experience filled with roadblocks and uncertainty into one that is actually enjoyable and save you many hours of research and frustration. It can also lead to finding your "perfect" mattress and many years of restful and healthy sleeping at prices that are better every day than the best sale prices of the larger outlets.