

# How to Choose a Mattress: Features Worth the Money and the Waste of Money

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According to the National Bed Federation, the average age of a mattress is around 6 years. That's a lot of foam and springs going to landfill. Should you continue using an uncomfortable bed for the sake of the planet, or make a wiser choice next time you go mattress shopping?

Choose wisely, especially if you find a retailer who will recycle your old mattress for you. A well-made mattress that strikes the right balance of support and comfort for your size and sleeping position can really make a difference in the quality of your sleep. It can also ease aches and pains, help you sleep soundly next to your partner – and can last well beyond six years. But a good, durable mattress doesn't come cheap.

Mattresses come in a variety of flavors these days, including 'beds in a box' that come straight from the factory. You can't try these mattresses before you buy them, but they do have a long trial period so you can sleep on them for months before deciding whether to keep them. That's arguably a better way to evaluate a mattress than being the 200th person to jump on a sample bed in a showroom.

This article will look at **the pros and cons of different types of mattresses and reveal what to look for when you buy the ideal mattress for you** .

# Mattress Types

## Pocket spring mattress

1. **Pros:** provides support in the right places; more environmentally friendly than foam mattresses.
2. **Cons:** may be too bouncy if you share it with someone else; may flatten over time.

You can buy cheap 'open coil' spring mattresses that have a long cord, but if you're looking for a comfortable sleep, you'll want to choose a pocket spring mattress. These mattresses contain hundreds or even thousands of solid springs, each sewn into a fabric pocket to isolate any movement. This creates a firm but pleasantly bouncy foundation that provides support and cushioning where you need it. The isolation of each spring also helps absorb the motion of your partner, although not as well as a foam mattress.

Pocket sprung mattresses are said to have a lower environmental impact than foam or multi-layer mattresses because their manufacturing process typically uses less plastic and contains more natural fibers. This also allows air to circulate and helps keep you from overheating while you sleep.



## Memory foam mattress

1. **Pros:** Balance of comfort and orthotic support; excellent motion isolation.
2. **Cons:** can retain heat and feel damp; takes time to get used to.

Some foams include regular poly foam, the type used for seating and as a comfort layer over springs in pocket sprung mattresses. Memory foam is more expensive and denser than memory foam, so it offers excellent support – very firm in some cases – as well as cushioning and pressure relief. It also has good motion absorption.

The body-conforming properties of memory foam can make it feel soft and air-tight. Some people like this feel, but others don't, and this can lead to overheating issues. Another option is latex foam, which is naturally breathable and hypoallergenic, but is more expensive than regular memory foam.

Many all-foam mattresses contain multiple layers of foam, including latex foam & various densities of memory foam. The only way to be sure you'll like a foam mattress is to sleep on it for a while.

## Multi-layer mattress

1. **Pros:** best balance of cushioning, support, breathability and motion isolation.
2. **Disadvantages:** can be very expensive and heavy; many variations make it difficult to choose the ideal product.

Combine a pocket spring mattress with a memory foam mattress and you have a multi-layered mattress. The combination of foam, springs, and other components varies from mattress to mattress, with some high-end models encasing thousands of extra-tall springs in layers of latex foam, high-density memory foam, mesh foam, bamboo-infused cooling foam, and natural wool. Many models also add a layer or two of 'microsprings,' which increase comfort by allowing them to contour to your body.

The idea of a layered mattress is to have all the benefits of springs and foam without any of the drawbacks. However, there is no such thing as a perfect mattress – only the perfect mattress for you, so layered mattresses will certainly vary in firmness, cushioning, temperature control, and motion isolation.



## Why is a firm mattress not always a better choice?

One person's perfect mattress is another person's back pain. One of the reasons why mattress buying advice with a long trial period is popular is because it can take a few nights or even weeks to gauge how firm a mattress is for you.

However, there are a few ways to predict how you will like your new mattress. First, lie on your back and try to slide your hand under your lower back. If there is a lot of space, the mattress is too firm. If there is no space at all, the mattress is too soft.

Now lie on your side in a sleeping position and have someone take a picture. If you can draw a straight line down your spine to your knees, then your spine is 'aligned' and the mattress is right for you. If the line curves up or down, then your spine is not straight and you will feel uncomfortable.

The ideal mattress firmness will vary depending on your natural sleeping position. If you sleep primarily on your side, you will need extra support for your hips, knees, and shoulders (pressure points). A mattress that is too firm will not be right for you, especially if you have muscle or joint problems such as hip pain. If you sleep on your back or stomach, you may benefit from a firmer surface.

However, no one benefits from a mattress that is too hard or too soft. *' If the mattress is too soft, you will find it almost impossible to maintain a good posture while sleeping ,'* says Simon Durrant, director of the Sleep Research Centre at the University of Lincoln. *' But if the mattress is too firm, it will lead to an uncomfortable and painful sleeping position, and as a result you will wake up more often .'*

Your size also affects this. Smaller bodies don't sink into the mattress as easily as larger bodies. If you're small, you'll need a little more softness to feel comfortable; if you're large, you'll need a firmer surface to feel supported.

Whether big or small, don't skimp on the size of your bed. If you can stretch out in bed, you'll sleep better and be less likely to suffer from stiffness or joint pain — and if you're sleeping next to someone, you'll both want more space.

## **Mattress Features Worth the Money**

Size, firmness, and price are probably the main factors you'll consider when choosing a mattress, but there are other factors to consider.

A warranty of 10 years or more is a good sign that the mattress is built to last. Most warranties will ensure that the mattress will not sag significantly or have broken springs or seams that come apart within a decade – just don't rush into buying one, as this will void the warranty.

All boxed mattresses come with a trial period during which you can return the mattress no questions asked, as long as you have taken care of it by using a mattress protector.

A removable, washable cover is a must if your mattress has memory foam, which retains heat. Most good foam and multi-layer mattresses have a soft fabric cover that you can unzip and put in the washing machine at 40 degrees Celsius.

Another useful item is a cooling layer, which helps counteract the cooling effects of memory foam. No mattress can actively lower your body temperature—it's not like putting your sheets in the fridge—but layers that contain breathable materials like wool, bamboo, and graphite can prevent overheating and help you sleep comfortably, especially if you're struggling with the sweaty effects of menopause or medication.

Zoned mattresses provide different levels of firmness in different areas to match the parts of your body that need support. The problem is, we all come in different shapes and sizes. Unless you're a very relaxed and still sleeper, it's unlikely that the zones of a mattress will conform perfectly to you.

Most mattress brands offer to pick up and recycle your old mattress when you deliver your new one, but consider shipping fees and terms from the supplier.

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