Hot Tub Guide
Buyers Checklist

Here is a convenient, customizable list of all the checkpoints you may want to consider when buying a hot tub or spa.

To help save time and simplify your shopping, we suggest that you print the list, review it, and place a checkmark next to the items you feel will be most important to you. Then you'll have a prioritized checklist to take with you when you go hot tub shopping.

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BEFORE YOU BUY

Site Preparation

- ☐ Do not place your spa within 10 feet of overhead power lines.
- ☐ Make sure access to the spa's equipment panel is not blocked.
- ☐ Be certain that your installation will meet all city and local safety codes.
- ☐ Place the spa on an elevated foundation so that the water drains away from it.
- ☐ If you install indoors, pay close attention to flooring. Remember, a spa filled with water can cause moisture damage.
- ☐ A spa filled with water is heavy. If you are installing on an elevated structure, it is recommended that you consult a contractor or structural engineer.
- ☐ There is a 4" minimum depth requirement for a concrete pad. It is strongly recommended that a qualified, licensed contractor prepare the foundation.
- ☐ Your surface must be level and straight.

Pathway Preparation

- ☐ No matter where you install your hot tub, be sure to allow for service access.

Electrical Requirements

- ☐ If your spa runs on 240 volts, it must be permanently connected (hard wired) to the power supply.
- ☐ If your spa runs on 120 volts, it may use a G.F.C.I. cord, plugged in to a dedicated grounded outlet.
- ☐ The power supplied must be a dedicated circuit with no other appliances or lights sharing the power.
- ☐ Wire size must be appropriate per NEC and/or local codes. It is determined by length of the run from the breaker box to the spa and the maximum current draw.
- ☐ Copper wire with THHN insulation is recommended. Do not use aluminum wire.
- ☐ The electrical supply for the spa must include a suitably rated switch or circuit breaker with a disconnection readily accessible to the spa's occupant, but installed at least five feet from the spa water. Check with local municipalities for additional code requirements.
- ☐ The electrical circuit must include a suitable ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) as required by NEC.

HYDROTHERAPY

Jets

- ☐ Does the spa offer the right size jets with the appropriate intensity for all muscle groups?
- ☐ Does the spa allow you to divert water flow pressure from one seat to the next?
- ☐ Can you turn jets off and on individually to personalize your massage?
- ☐ Does the spa have a combination of straight-stream and oscillating or rotating jets?
- ☐ Can you change the direction of the jet to obtain a more personalized massage?
- ☐ Take a critical look at the hot tub. How many seating positions with hydrotherapy jets ("therapy stations") does it offer? How many different massage experiences can you find?
- ☐ Check the placement and combination of jets. Are the large, powerful jets placed for the appropriate muscle groups in your body, such as your lower back, shoulders, and feet?
- ☐ Consider jet groupings. Does the hot tub offer an overall back therapy seat, with jets placed in all the major muscle groups of your back? Does it offer a good lumbar massage?
- ☐ Consider the delicate areas of your body. Make certain that jets directed toward your neck are not too strong. Are there additional jets for muscle groups in your wrists, your hands and your calves?
- ☐ Imagine an overall massage experience. Can you move from one therapy station to the next and achieve a massage that rivals a traditional massage (i.e. can you work your entire body, head-to-toe, with a customized water massage)?

Power and Controls

- ☐ To gauge over-all spa power, take a soak, or just stick your hand in the water and use the controls to check the water flow from the various jet groupings. This should tell you everything you need to know about a spa's pump power.
- ☐ If jets are installed in a series or a straight line, it's difficult to get full and equal pressure to each jet. Does the spa have plumbing that allows precise clustering of jets and an equal amount of water pressure to each jet?
- ☐ Does the spa have options that allow you to adjust the flow of water? Are those adjustments simple and easy? Can you make the adjustments from any position? Is there enough versatility to provide you with the flow and power to meet your needs?
- ☐ Does the control panel show actual temperature and set temperature (like a good home heating thermostat)? This is important, because you don't want to enter a spa if you can't see the actual temperature of the water.
- ☐ Is there an auxiliary control panel on the spa? Two panels allow you to adjust the pumps and water flow from multiple positions in the spa, so you don't have to stand up during your massage.
- ☐ Does the control panel have a locking system, so your spa's temperature can't be changed without your knowledge?
- ☐ Are there pre-programmed filtration cycles on the control panel? Or, if you prefer, can you program the cycles yourself?
- ☐ Is the control panel simple to use? Do you understand the operations and would you feel comfortable performing them?
- ☐ Does the control panel come with an "energy-saver" or "efficiency" mode?
- ☐ Can you see the control panel clearly in the dark? Does it have three-dimensional buttons you can feel?

FEATURES

Water Management

- ☐ Try to choose a spa with filters that are easy to access for periodic maintenance.
- ☐ Make sure to inquire about filtration cycles. How often is all the water filtered? Remember that filtration is a gradual process. If the spa you're considering holds 250 gallons of water, it is important that the spa can filter at least 10,000 gallons of water per day!
- ☐ Does the spa have an Ozonator?

Covers & Lifters

- ☐ Be certain that any cover you buy is ASTM approved.
- ☐ Be sure that the vinyl on your cover can withstand wear and tear from weather and spa chemicals.
- ☐ Look for good gaskets and hinges.
- ☐ Look for ASTM approved locking standards.
- ☐ How is the device attached to the spa? It's best to choose a lifter that uses heavy gauge hardware, rather than chains or small brackets to hold the cover.
- ☐ Do you have enough clearance? A lifting device lifts the cover over the top of the spa. If you have a roof overhang or a gazebo, you may not have enough clearance to properly use the device.
- ☐ What materials were used to build the lifter? A good lifter should be light and sturdy, with well-treated rust-free materials.
- ☐ Does the device offer the assistance you need? Lifters may include gas shocks, or even foot pedals to ease the removal and placement of your cover. Test the lifter in the dealer's showroom. Can you easily remove the cover without assistance? If not, look for another lifter.

MANUFACTURING & WARRANTIES

- ☐ Are you familiar with the spa manufacturer? Are they well known? Have they been in business for a minimum of 20 years?
- ☐ Are you familiar with the local spa dealer? Can you get positive references from friends or family members? How long has the dealer been in business? Does he have trained technicians on staff to service your spa?

Shell

- ☐ Take a look at the spa's shell. Does it have attractive contours and intricate styling? Do you like the way the spa looks?
- ☐ Sit in the spa. Are the seats comfortable? Is the acrylic molded to the contours of your body? Are there places for your arms and feet to rest? Can you move from seat to seat without barriers?
- ☐ How is the spa's acrylic shell manufactured? Is there a layer of acrylic and additional layers of support material to ensure strength and longevity?
- ☐ Does the spa have full foam insulation? Are the plumbing fixtures housed inside the insulation, to reduce vibration and leaks?

Frame & Cabinetry

- ☐ Does the spa have a unitized frame, with horizontal supports along top and bottom, and vertical supports along the sides of the frame? Are the side panels attached in pieces for simpler servicing later on?
- ☐ Is the spa's cabinet made from a specially formulated synthetic material to withstand the elements?
- ☐ Is the cabinet attractive? Does it fit into your back-yard setting? Do you like the way it looks?

WARRANTIES

- ☐ Does the spa have a comprehensive warranty that covers all structural areas and components? Does the warranty extend for an acceptable period of time?
- ☐ Does the warranty have particular exclusions? Is it pro-rated? Will you be fully covered by the warranty as time progresses? Is there a deductible?
- ☐ Is the company that built the spa financially sound? Can they stand behind their warranty? Does the local dealer have a service relationship with the factory? Will the dealer stand behind your spa, and provide technical support for repairs?

Certifications

- ☐ Is the company that built your spa ISO9001-Certified?

STYLE & COLOR

Cabinets & Surrounds

- ☐ Look for synthetic cabinets that are UV-resistant.
- ☐ Be certain that gazebos or surrounds are built specifically for your spa; fit is important.
- ☐ Make sure that the price quoted includes installation. Some gazebos take an entire day to build, and installation may be more costly than you might expect.
- ☐ Take careful measurements of your location, and be sure that the gazebo will fit into the designated area. Also make sure that there is access for servicing your spa.
- ☐ If you live in a community with a Home Owners' Association, check their guidelines and make sure you have the proper approval to build a gazebo in your yard.