

# How To Shop For A Weight Machine

The following are some "TIPS" provided for our local customers to educate them on how to "shop", "test", and "compare" weight machines and their components (parts). In the past 15 years there has been many manufacturers getting into the fitness industry and producing all kinds of fitness equipment. Weight machines have been one of the most popular pieces of equipment chosen by customers wanting to exercise at home and in health clubs. Please read the following information carefully and if you have any questions, please feel free to ask one of our fitness consultants for a more "In Depth" presentation.



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## Where can a customer shop for a weight machine?

Weight machines are found in many retail environments such as sporting goods stores, specialty fitness stores, and numerous internet web sites. We highly recommend that you purchase from a location that you can actually get on the product and test it. Comparing a weight machine on paper only or through specifications really does not give you the "feel" or "performance" of any given weight machine. You need to try a few basic exercises like leg extension, bench press, lat pulldown, and bicep curl to get the overall "feel" of the machine. These four exercises use all the cables on the machine and will signal if any other exercises will feel "shaky" or unsmooth. Many machines look the same in pictures but when used they feel absolutely different due to pulleys, cables, upholstery, gauge of steel, and biomechanics. Each of these above mentioned parts will be discussed more thoroughly later in this guide.

## What should a customer ask about any given weight machine?

There are so many parts on a weight machine. Everything is important in some respect. The upholstery and upholstered parts need to be comfortable. The frame has to be strong enough for many years or use. The pulleys and cables need to be able to take every day use along with some abuse so you don't get injured. Some of the most important questions are not about the weight machine at all, they are about service. Who will service the weight machine when it breaks down? Are they local? How long does it take to get a problem fixed? Are parts for each weight machine stocked by the service company? These types of questions really should be weighed in your decision of what weight machine you purchase.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** Before you make your purchase, ask for the phone number to the service department from whatever company you are thinking of purchasing. Is it a local number? Where are they located? How long does it take for them to respond to a service call? How long to order a part?

## What should a customer know about ordering a weight machine over the internet ?

Buying a weight machine over the internet is very risky. Does the phrase, "Some Assembly Required" scare you? Installation of a weight machine is not the most difficult thing you will ever try but it is not as easy as it may appear. There are many pulley and pivot points on the product that if not tightened enough will make the machine feel loose and if tightened too much will make the machine feel stiff. It is best if you let someone assemble the product that has some experience on your specific machine. Many internet purchases become expensive and time consuming when a part is not in the box or if the blueprint does not explain assembly well enough and you spend hours changing parts back and forth. If you try a machine that feels smooth and solid at the \$1,000 (+) price point and then see something similar to it on the internet for half the price, realize that it most likely is not the same. Most weight machines do not have patents on them so the design can be copied by anyone and all the parts like pulleys, cables, etc., can be cheapened to bring the price down.

## PARTS COMPARISON

### Gauge of Steel ( Frame )



The amount of steel, in particular the thickness of the steel (gauge), is a major factor in how much a weight machine will cost. The thicker the gauge of steel, normally the more expensive the unit. The lower the gauge number, the thicker the steel. For example: an 11 gauge steel frame is thicker than a 14 gauge steel frame. Many machines use a combination of many gauges of steel. On lower priced units, the manufacturer will use a thinner gauge of steel for the entire machine. Higher quality manufacturers use 11 or 12 gauge frames or a combination of 11 gauge through 14 gauge. The reason for using combinations of gauge are to help keep costs down. On main frames where there is going to be more stress during exercises, better manufacturers will use 8 gauge to 11 gauge steel. Then on smaller areas of the unit that are not going to be under too much stress, they will use a lighter gauge like 14. This gets very confusing for the consumer when they start to compare machines on paper due to there not being any regulations on how a machine is advertised. For instance: two machines may look identical in a brochure but one could retail for \$ 1,000 while the other for \$ 600. The literature may state that both are 12 gauge steel frames. The problem with this advertising is that many manufacturers can advertise that their machine is any particular gauge of steel as long as one piece of steel on the machine is what they say. So if a lower priced machine says it has an 11 gauge steel frame and it is considerably lower priced to another similar model, the likelihood is that one small part is 11 gauge while the majority is probably a thinner gauge steel.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** It is very difficult to see the thickness (gauge) of the steel. Normally a very good thing to do is to lift the bench press station seat up and out of it's support column and look at the thickness of the steel. This is a very stressed part of the frame. Each manufacturer should use a very thick gauge of steel on this part, if not, an injury due to a frame or frame weld breaking could result in a severe leg injury.

### Pulley(s)



Pulleys give a weight machine it's "Feel" and determines how smooth the machine is going to operate. Pulleys are partially hidden by the frame of each machine. There is constant pressure on most of the pulleys. The better the pulley bearings, the smoother the feel of the machine. There is normally about 15 - 20 pulleys on any given machine. This may seem like a small part of the machine but a good pulley will add to the cost of any machine. Better grade pulleys not only use better bearings but they are fiberglass reinforced. Typical plastic pulleys will crack if they get hot or if they are in a basement that is very cold. Fiberglass reinforced pulleys withstand more use and abuse. Most cheap pulleys have a very smooth finish to them. Nylon w/ fiberglass reinforced pulleys have a rougher finish. The bigger the pulley, the better! Bigger pulleys allow the cable NOT have to bend as sharply and extends your cable life. A smoother feeling machine will actually help you enjoy your workout more. If you are doing an exercise and it feels like the weight is catching or hanging up, it can become aggravating. When the operation of a machine is very smooth, quiet, and precise - the experience of working out is much more enjoyable. Some manufacturers offer aluminum pulleys as upgrades to their machines. Aluminum pulleys are more expensive to make, therefore many manufacturers do not offer them. However, aluminum pulleys are more durable and should never break, crack, chip, or wear out. Aluminum pulleys will make a slight "ringing" noise when being used due to the aluminum surface of the pulley. Aluminum pulleys come on many machines used in commercial applications, especially in facilities with heavy usage.

**EXTRA INFORMATION:** If possible, ask to see the pulleys that are used on the machine. Put them in your hand and feel the weight and size. Spin them between your fingers to get a feel for the quality of the bearings. Are they smooth when they turn or do they "click" and "tick?"

## Cable(s)



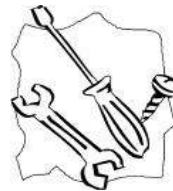
Cables help give a weight machine its "Feel" also. You can tell how high of quality a cable is by the way it sounds when it travels through the pulleys of any machine. Does the machine make a "creaking" noise when you are lifting the weight? That sound is coming from the cables, it means they are slowly deteriorating and stretching. All cables are going to stretch a little but a "creaking" noise is a sign the cable is under a lot of stress. On a brand new machine most will not make any noise. However, after years of use, cheaper cables will start to deteriorate and make this "creaking" noise. Better grade cables have higher tensile strength (weight capacity) than cheaper cables. Cables are like tires on your car, they are going to wear out at some point, but how quickly and how often depends on your amount of usage. The better the cable, the longer it will last. Most machines have 2 - 3 cables. Higher quality manufacturers use nylon coated cables with tensile strengths of 2000 - 2200 pounds. Be aware that cables are like pulleys, they appear to look the same when you are looking at them on the machine. If you ask questions and use the machine, the feel will be different due to quality differences!

## Biomechanics



The words "biomechanically correct" and "biomechanics" are thrown around by every manufacturer. Many shoppers are confused by exactly what these words mean. Biomechanics is the study of the mechanics of a living body, especially of the forces exerted by muscles and gravity on the skeletal structure. So when someone says a product is biomechanically correct or it has great biomechanics, it simply means the product teaches specific movements for the human body. So the words sound like they mean something very special but unless you know what you are trying to do with the machine, the biomechanics mean nothing. Many machines on the market have great biomechanics but some are very poor. This is when you need to talk to a fitness consultant who knows the product. He or she can take you through many exercises to show you how to do each exercise "Biomechanically" correct. Many exercises on a weight machine require adjustments on the seat pad, back pad, range of motion levers, etc., and each need to fit you properly. This is where a specialty fitness store will be well worth the price of any weight machine. Not only can they help you begin your workout with showing you how to use the machine, but you can always come back in and ask more advice if you want to change your program. A qualified staff that uses the products they sell can really benefit the customer.

## Service



When you are purchasing a new product of any kind, many people neglect to ask about how the product will be serviced if it breaks down. Even quality weight machines are going to have "breakdowns." There are many things you can do to help prevent "breakdowns" but eventually parts will need to be replaced. Local service is the most beneficial for any consumer. Before you purchase, find out how to get service on the weight machine you are purchasing. Ask the following questions: Where is the service company located? How long does it take to get a service technician to your house when a breakdown occurs? Are parts stocked for quick repair times? Ask for the service phone number so you can call the number and see if there is a problem getting through. Ask how long they have been servicing home gyms? Is the service company associated with the store you are purchasing it from or a subcontractor? Service for your gym is just as important to ask about as the components for the gym. How good is a weight machine that costs \$500, \$1,000, or \$2,000 if you can't get it serviced when it breaks down?

## Warranty



Warranty's speak volumes about a company's faith in their product. Compare them and ask questions about why one may or may not be as good as another. Higher quality manufacturers are going to have longer warranties. Cables and pulleys are going to wear out eventually on any machine, the cheaper the machine - the quicker they will wear out. Ask about the labor warranty along with parts. Who is going to service the product when it breaks? These questions are important!

### Our History, Our Future, Our Story - Exercise & Leisure Equipment Company

In 1936, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the President of the United States, the book Gone With The Wind was published and a man named Art Becker from Northern Kentucky started a company called Health Equipment Company. He sold a product called "The Exercycle" door to door for years. Once the business built up over many years, he opened a store in Norwood Ohio. He added more products like treadmills, bikes, and gyms to sell to commercial facilities to help the company grow. Each year business got bigger and bigger. Art's two son's Mark and Jerry entered the business in the late 1970's to help the company grow even more. They renamed the company Exercise and Leisure Equipment Company and opened a "mega" store located in Columbia Township - Ohio to showcase fitness in a grand fashion. In the 1980's fitness and health started to become a main concern to people due to illnesses related to lack of exercise. Jerry's two son's went to college and began to work in the family business in the late 1980's / early 1990's. In 1994 Exercise and Leisure Equipment Company expanded back to where it had started in Northern Kentucky. Our Ft. Mitchell location showcases the highest quality residential fitness equipment brands on the market. Fitness equipment categories like treadmills, elliptical machines, bikes, climbers, rowers, free weight benches, home gyms, etc are on display for customers to try out and ask questions. Exercise and Leisure Equipment Company has been the tri-states resource for home and commercial fitness equipment for many years. Come in and see 70+ years of experience in our company details. Here are just a few of them:

- # 1 Our "FITNESS TEAM" is educational about helping you make the correct purchase, not selling you on a piece of equipment. Meaning we will give you the information to help you make a decision based on product facts and exercise regimens. You make the decision to buy yourself, not "pushed" by a salesperson.
- # 2 "In-Home" installation and delivery are offered on most of our products. Some restrictions do apply! Ask about details when in our store. Our delivery crew(s) are employees who work for us, not subcontractors. We come to your home, in our company trucks and company uniforms. No need to worry about "some assembly required" with Exercise & Leisure - we make it look easy.
- # 3 Service is second to none! Every person who purchases a product from Exercise and Leisure will have access to our service department when it is needed. Again, no subcontractors here! They come to your home in company service vans and company uniforms. Most service calls are responded to within 72 hours.

Exercise & Leisure Equipment Company - "On our third generation: growing & going strong." -

**Randy Becker**

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