

Outdoor Furniture Department

Take a Seat

Take a seat before you buy. Comfortable patio furniture, just like interior furniture, will be used regularly as opposed to uninviting patio furniture, which might have good looks but not-so-good comfort.



Comfort is important -- very important. You may want aluminum or wood construction in your patio furniture for

stability and longevity, but don't forget that without some homey comforts like soft, plush cushions, your outdoor furniture will go largely unused. Avoid pancake cushions. You know, those thin, puny little cushions that aren't plush or even very pliable. Opt for chubby cushions that feel light when you pick them up. Look for cushions with polyester filler, too. The more lightweight and springy the filler is, the more quickly it will dry out after exposure to moisture. That means it will resist mold and mildew and stay comfortable and sweet smelling longer.

A patio set can look attractive but have glaring flaws that can lead to problems after a few months, KEEP IN MIND:

- On large furniture pieces, choose cushions with springs or flexible straps. They'll hold their shape longer.
- When inspecting metal furniture, bring a magnet. Aluminum is not magnetic, but steel often is. Although it doesn't work with all types of steel, you can sometimes distinguish aluminum from steel construction (or fittings) by just testing them with a magnet. Remember, steel will rust while aluminum and stainless steel won't.

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Take a Seat (Continued)

- Look for aluminum loungers made with long, unsegmented framing pieces. They cost a little more, but they'll last longer.
- Check chairs to make sure the legs are solid and sturdy. Sit in the chair to see if it shifts or flexes as it takes your weight. Award extra points to chairs that include cross bracing pieces.
- Opt for furniture assembled using stainless steel screws.
- Run your hands along wood pieces to make sure they're sanded smooth.
- Check to make sure chair and table legs have rubber or plastic feet that won't scratch your deck or patio.
- You can't grab a pillow from your family room and expect it to adapt to life outside on the patio. Most textiles designed for indoor/outdoor use are made from all-weather materials like Sunbrella fabrics, that repel water or encourage moisture to evaporate quickly by remaining porous.
- Fabrics designed for use outdoors are usually fade resistant and UV protected, too. They'll look good and feel soft and comfortable for at least a couple of seasons. When you're evaluating fabrics for outdoor furniture, check cushion seams for heavy duty thread and consistent, even stitches. Choose cushions with vents that encourage air flow and quick drying.
- Invest in furniture with cushions that can be unzipped and taken apart for periodic airing, repair or replacement. It's also a good idea to buy outdoor furniture outfitted with cushions you can turn and flip. This will help them retain their shape, dry more quickly and fade evenly. Acrylics, polyester, treated canvas and cotton duck are all comfortable, durable fabrics used in the construction of outdoor furnishings. Look for them in upholstered items, cushions, toss pillows, curtains, and umbrellas.