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On the Hunt for a New Mattress

By [ANN CARRNS](#)

Recently, my husband started noticing that his back felt sore when he awoke in the morning. He seemed to sleep more comfortably on hotel beds than he did at home. I, too, began to notice some aches and pains. Our mattress was at least 10 years old, so we reluctantly decided a new one was in order.

Usually, when it comes to large purchases, we're careful, patient shoppers. My husband has been known to research cars for weeks and take repeated test drives before settling down to some hard bargaining with a dealership. But mattresses are not quite as expensive as automobiles, and we wanted a new one — fast.

A quick look on the [Consumer Reports](#) Web site revealed that comparison shopping for mattresses is difficult, because there is little standardization of features or terminology. What one brand calls “super plush” might just be “plush” at another retailer. And the range of prices is truly mind-boggling, from a few hundred dollars to thousands for “memory foam” mattresses, made of material that was designed to protect astronauts.

The Consumer Reports ratings — which are based on surveys of the magazine's readers — gave good marks to several stores, including the Denver Mattress Company. There happens to be one in our town, so we opted to skip the usual in-depth research and head straight to the store. (Mattresses are resistant to online shopping; you really do have to try it out, in person, to make sure it's not too firm, not too soft, but just right.) We vaguely recalled paying around \$800 for our last queen-size mattress and box spring set, so we had that in mind as an informal budget.

We plopped first onto a “memory foam” mattress, and I have to say it was extraordinarily comfortable, if a bit odd to feel the foam molding around my limbs. And yes, it feels silly lolling about on beds in public. But mattress shopping requires it. Still, even though we'd be using it nightly for years, its nearly \$2,000 price tag seemed extravagant. (A floor model was available at a discount, but it lacked any sort of warranty. And since we had not had any experience with memory foam, we opted not to take a chance.) We moved on to see if there were less-costly innerspring models that would work.

We next tried the store's Doctor's Choice brand, which offered a queen-size "Euro top" model for about \$600. It felt O.K. to me, but seemed too firm to my husband. So we moved up to the "Madison plush," which is usually about \$700, but was being offered at \$100 off. Also, the salesman offered to throw in a free pillow. (One piece of advice that Consumer Reports offers is to always wait for sales when buying mattresses, because they are so common.) We tried it, and both liked it. And it could be delivered in two days. That clinched the deal.

Forty-eight hours later, as promised, the mattress arrived (at a fee of \$50, though some stores offer free delivery). It's been more than a week, and we both agree we're sleeping more soundly so far. Sometimes, it seems, buying in haste doesn't necessarily require repenting at leisure.

Have you recently bought a mattress? What was your experience?

3 Comments

We've been shopping for a new mattress for more than six weeks. it's a jungle--with scams-a-plenty and lots of high-pressure "sales" and psychological maneuvering.

I cannot recommend highly enough two resources I found:

themattressunderground.com and the YouTube channel of Mattress To Go, The Beducation channel.

The website is amazingly informative and the YouTube videos are great. I live in Spain, and I even called Jeff, the guy behind the videos and he was kind enough to give me advice over the phone. If I lived in Michigan, he would definitely have my business. Both he and the person behind the website have exchanged a number of emails with me, giving me invaluable feedback as we've winnowed down our options.

I have learned so much about mattresses that honestly, out of the ten different stores we've visited, there has only been one salesperson who knew as much as I did about the mattresses. We've made about 12-14 visits and have laid on probably 150 mattresses. We even took a comforter along and had 30-minute naps on four finalists. We felt a little silly, but it was amazing what was revealed by spending more time on the mattresses, letting our bodies sink in and warm them up.

As I type this, I'm laying on a test mattress, the second of two that one store has sent to our home for us to try out.

We're down to two choices, and will make our choice this week, much more confident and knowledgeable about mattresses than I've ever been.

Buyer Beware!
Bill McKinley