

MARTIN'S FORKLIFT USED LIFT TRUCK BUYERS' TIPS

If you've never bought a forklift before or are unfamiliar with the equipment, consider these key items that will define what type of truck you need.

Capacity: How heavy and what size are your typical loads?

Forklifts can lift from 1,500 to 35,000 lbs but most are in the 3-5,000 lb range.

Identify maximum weight and load size you are going to be lifting. If you are lifting unusually large or long loads, you may need to buy a truck with excess capacity. Plan ahead – if you may be lifting heavier loads in the future, again buy a truck with some excess capacity.

Capacity: How high do you need to go?

How high do you need to lift the load? Do you only load and unload trucks or are you placing loads on high racking? How high are the shelves in your warehouse?

Dimensions: size and height of truck?

At the same time as defining the racking height, check the width of your aisles. Standard trucks generally require a minimum 11' aisle to turn around. Narrow-aisle trucks can operate in aisles 8'10" wide.

Are there any low overhead clearance areas? Check the closed height (i.e when the mast is not raised) of the truck. This is also important if you plan to unload containers with your truck.

Location: Where will you be using your forklift?

Indoors or outdoors or a combination? Smooth ground or uneven surface?

Forklifts are supplied with solid, cushion or pneumatic tires.

Electric or propane?

Electric forklifts are suitable for primarily indoor applications. They are powered by large, heavy-duty lead acid batteries that require regular charging with specialized chargers (often provided with the truck). Note, however, that the battery chargers come in different voltages so it is important to check that a charger is compatible with your building power. The main advantages of electric trucks are zero emissions, lower running costs, quieter operation. Note, battery maintenance is very important - new batteries are around \$5,000 so the condition of the battery is as important as the condition of the truck itself.

Propane trucks with internal combustion engines are suitable for indoor/outdoor applications where good ventilation is available. They are often more robust than electric trucks, but again regular maintenance is necessary.

How many hours per day will you use for your forklift?

Many businesses successfully run used forklifts in their operations. They cost far less than new, but if you are going to be using it all day every day, a used forklift might not be the best option for you.

How much should I budget on spending?

This depends on your answers to all the questions above. Well-known brands like Toyota, Yale or Raymond cost more for good reason. When buying a used forklift you should consider that obscure brands or very old trucks can be more expensive to fix due to lack of replacement parts and technical information. When buying any used forklift, you should always budget on some regular maintenance costs as well.

Key things to look for:

What environment has the forklift been in – harsh environments include fish processing plants, poultry plants, cement factories, freezers.

Just like buying a used car, you should test the forklift yourself – try all functions – lifting, tilting, side-shift, braking, steering, tires, etc.

Battery – if buying an electric forklift take a look at the battery, is it badly corroded or rusty?

Check the capacity plate for the truck's specifications.

Last but not least once you have purchased a lift truck, make sure your operators are trained to use it. Training should be site and equipment specific. Visit our training pages for more information on forklift operator certification courses:

www.martinsforklift.com/training.