

THE ULTIMATE BUYING GUIDE FOR WORKBENCHES

WORKBENCHES: THE UNSUNG WORKHORSES OF ANY SHOP.

From auto shops to warehouses, retail stores, manufacturing and assembly plants, the backbone of many industries and businesses is the ubiquitous workbench. When setting up a new workstation or remodeling an existing one, you'll be faced with a lot of choices and choosing the right one can be the difference between a smooth and ergonomic workflow and one that works against you and costs you time and money.

Regardless of what you're using the workbench for, the goal of a good bench is to:

- Have room for all the tools and diagnostic equipment you need close at hand
- Provide a solid and stable work surface
- Be comfortable to work at
- Improve your workflow

Keep reading to see how to make your workbench work for you.



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ANATOMY OF A WORKBENCH



BENCH TOPS:

There are a wide variety of bench tops to choose from and knowing the job you're doing will dictate which one to choose.

WOOD:

By far, the most popular and cost-effective is wood. Usually made of a durable hardwood, these tops are great for just about any job, except for food preparation and application where you may experience heat burns like welding or soldering. Wood is also easy to care for with the application of oils like linseed, and is non-reactive when exposed to many chemicals and acids.



WOOD VARIATIONS:

Hardboard, also called high-density fiberboard (HDF), is an engineered wood product similar to particle board, but stronger & more durable. Due to its engineered nature there is no grain, so hardboard resists splitting and warping like natural hardwood tops. Particleboard tops share similar properties to hardboard, but without the extra strength. Both products can be used by themselves or as a substrate for laminated wood veneers or Formica.

SPECIAL TOPS:

High-pressure laminated plastic, when used with a substrate like hardboard and particle board, produces a highly-durable top that is highly-resistant to chemicals, corrosion, fire, and wear.

The danger of static discharge from your body and damaging circuit boards or other delicate electronics that you're working on can be devastating. If your job requires you to work on electronics, consider Electrostatic Discharge bench tops. These surfaces are made of special plastics that protect against static discharge that damage electronics or even spark flammable liquids.

STEEL:

Steel tops are extremely durable and corrosion-resistant, which makes them a great choice for heavy-duty jobs. Another option is stainless steel, which is easy to clean, disinfect, and sanitize, making them perfect for food preparation.

RESIN:

Resins, like phenolic resins, produce very strong and stable tops, especially when used with other materials like fiberglass.

BASES:

The base of your workbench provides among other things, the height and stability to your work surface as well as the overall size of your work surface. There are several factors that should be considered when selecting your base:

Weight capacity: You need to make sure that the base can safely handle the weight you're going to be putting on it.

Working height: If your bench is too low, then you'll find yourself hunched over and that can lead to fatigue and back injuries

Adjustability: Do you find that your project changes size and shape? Utilizing manual or electrical height adjustability can allow you to assemble items and lower the work surface to maintain a comfortable and safe working height. Adjustability can also accommodate people of different heights who use the same workbench.

Mobility: If you find that you need to reconfigure your working area or you need bring your bench to raw materials, you can opt for bases that are on casters for easy mobility. Having two or more wheels that lock improve safety and that casters will likely add height to the bench, so take that into account when determining the optimum working height if the base height isn't adjustable.

Material: Bases can be made out of wood, steel, or aluminum. Metal bases can further be made of round or square tube or C-channel. Wood is inexpensive and easy to work with, steel is solid and heavy to aid in stability, and aluminum is lightweight and corrosion-resistant. Choosing the right base material will help determine the overall weight and weight capacity of your bench.

Work: How are you going to work at the bench? Do you need an open base to accommodate your legs if you sit on a chair or stool? Will you be standing and need a foot rest for comfort? How you work will affect the base configuration you need.

Storage: Will you need to store stock, parts, or tools under the bench? Do you need to add cabinets or bins? The design of the base can help improve usability or work against your unique needs. Pay special attention to support bar and cross-brace placement if you plan on adding shelving and storage underneath.



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TYPES OF WORKBENCHES:

CONFIGURABLE:

This type of “a la carte” workbench provides a great degree of customization. You can choose the base & top materials, overall design, functionality, and storage solutions that work best for you.

PRE-CONFIGURED:

Pre-configured desks are designed and purpose-built for specific jobs or tasks. They are usually offered based on the manufacturer’s experience and customer feedback to provide all that you need in a single unit, which helps to reduce or eliminate you forgetting something that you need or hadn’t considered needing.

TYPES OF PRE-CONFIGURED BENCHES INCLUDE:

- **Packing and Shipping:** Often offered with power outlets, lighting, peg board for tool and supply storage, drawers, and shelves, this type of workbench sets you up for success.
- **Automotive:** Outfitted with drawers for organized tool storage and wheels for easy mobility, they help mechanics get their repairs and maintenance done quickly.
- **Assembly:** Built for rugged durability and extra-long lengths, assembly desks provide larger work surfaces to ensure products won’t fall off the side or be hanging dangerously off the side or ends of the benchtop.
- **Food Service:** Easy to clean, disinfect, and sanitize, food service benches are usually made of stainless steel and can withstand heavy daily use. Some are offered with matching integrated stainless steel sinks for improved usability.



SPECIALTY:

Specialty benches and desks are designed with a specific need in mind.

- **Shop:** Specifically designed for shop and warehouse management, shop desks are usually made of strong and durable metal with an array of drawers, cubbies, organizers, and cable management to keep things neat and clean. They are available in an array of sizes and configurations from small wall-mounted folding models to mobile desks to full-sized designs.
- **L-Shaped:** As the name suggests, these benches have a work surface that extends to the side to add space for parts, equipment, tools, computers, diagnostics, and other essentials.
- **Height-Adjustable:** Ideal for assembly or when you need to both stand and sit, adjustable-height benches keep the working surface at a comfortable and safe height.



Manual:

Manual adjustment benches usually operate with a simple hand-crank to raise and lower the surface.



Electric:

Raise and lower the bench top with the touch of a button. Some models have quick-keys that will bring the bench to pre-selected heights for faster and easier adjustment.

ACCESSORIES:

Accessories allow you to customize your workbench and give you the functionality to get the job done right and without a lot of hassle. The type of accessory and where you put them are wholly dependent on you and your work.

BALANCERS & VICES:

When you're working in a light manufacturing industry, holding and supporting the item you're working on can present a range of complications, especially if the item is irregularly shaped or you need to constantly move it to get to different points of it for assembly or access. A Balancer system installed above your bench holds and suspends your work, which frees up both of your hands for work and ensures the item won't fall and get damaged and eliminating fatigue from you having to hold and move it around. Some can be fit onto a track that allows it to be moved from side to side, and others have adjustments to dial-in the holding weight for greater safety and convenience.

Another way to hold your work is a simple bench vice or clamps. Many types can be permanently attached to the bench for maximum stability.



BINS & RACKS:

Many uses include large and small parts, and this holds true for machining and assembly jobs, auto mechanics, and crafting. Bins, organizers, and racks allow you to hold a wide assortment of items like nuts, bolts, washers, pins, keys, and even tool bits to keep them neat and clearly marked to make every process faster and more efficient. The right organization, set up the right way, and clearly labeled can be the key to your productivity.



WASTE BINS:

Another part of organization that some people often forget about is waste control. Stocking your work station with garbage bins reduces clutter and ensures your area stays neat & clean with reduced risk of injury due to slips or trips. Adding dedicated recycling bins when and where appropriate reduces sorting time later and makes helping the environment cost effective.

LIGHT & ELECTRIC:

Electrical accessories are key to many industries as well. Examples of why you need power capabilities for your workbench include that you use corded tools that require power outlets, cordless ones that need charging docks, you need lights to see, or a way to keep your phone charged. With today's technology, there is a good chance that you'll need power at your bench at some point. Light is probably the most important electrical accessory that you'll need, not only to do the job, but to do it correctly and to reduce the risk of mistakes, fatigue, and injury. You can get long shop lights that illuminate the whole work surface, spotlights for specific areas of your bench, or even lighted magnifiers for delicate & intricate work like sewing, scrapbooking, soldering, or minute assembly.

CHAIRS, STOOLS, & ANTI-FATIGUE MATS:

One aspect of working at a bench that many people forget about is user comfort. Standing all day will take a toll on feet, legs, and backs. Back injuries consistently top any list of on-the-job injuries in the US, and taking that into consideration is important, especially when you or your people are standing all day on cold, hard concrete. If you need to stand all day, anti-fatigue mats are vitally-important to health and safety, to say nothing of morale. If possible, providing a chair or stool will drastically reduce fatigue and associated injuries. Finally, fans can help immensely as well. If your work won't get blown away by them, personal fans can help cool stations down and prevent heat exhaustion. For other work that deals with chemicals, soldering, welding, or the like, exhaust fans keep the air clean and fresh for better health and safety.

CARTS & TRUCKS:

The final accessory category is actually another product category: Carts & trucks. Having a way to bring materials and goods to your workbench and taking them away is a huge part of efficient productivity. Additionally, specialized models like lift trucks, further prevent back injuries by bringing loads up to safe heights without having to bend.

04

DOES THE PERFECT WORKBENCH EXIST?

As you can see, the perfect workbench is the one that works best for you.

Some people will get lucky and find a pre-configured model that fits their needs perfectly, while others will need to take a more à la carte approach and design theirs from the floor up. Whichever is the case for you, Global Industrial has the product experts and sales support you need that can find or build you the one that fits your needs, call or click today.



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