

The Mighty Car Lift: An Introduction

Car lifts have long been one of the most important investments a professional automotive shop or garage can make. With the recent unexpected boost in automotive business sector, consumers are even more likely to repair and service their vehicles rather than purchase a new one. It's never been more important for auto body shops, quick lube stations, car dealerships and car rental businesses to have the most reliable car lifting equipment to suit the needs of their customers. Para información [en Español, clic aquí.](#)



Increasingly, car lifts are also becoming a more popular choice among dedicated hobbyists who prefer to maintain their own vehicles, as well as families looking to make the most out of their limited parking space. The efficiency, speed, safety and convenience a high-quality car lift provides is now an affordable option for the home user.

But finding the right car lift for home or professional use is still a challenging task for many consumers, mostly because it seems like the options, features and different applications multiply in number by the day. That's why we're here to offer comprehensive help with **The Best Car Lift: A Guide from BendPak**. This guide will not only give you valuable information about the different car lift styles, but also about the important role [ALI / ETL certification](#) plays in safe car lift operation, safety features, how to choose a dealer and pricing. Using this car lift buyer's guide will prepare you so that you can find the best auto lift for your home or business.

The most important thing you can do when shopping around for a new auto lift of any kind is to conduct your own car lift consumer research. Since you're reading this in-depth car lift guide, you are already on the right track.

You should get started by gaining more than a basic understanding of where the automotive lift is going to be installed. To start, this will require accurate measurements of your bay or garage, including ceiling

height. Also, decide what type of car or truck the auto lift will be lifting. Use that information to choose the prospective car lift's dimensions and weight capacity.

Additional things to look out for include concrete strength and the pounds per square inch (PSI) rating, as well as the location / rating of your power and air supply. These factors will certainly affect which car lift you should invest in.

There are also other online resources you can use to fully prepare yourself for your car lift purchase and installation. Two of them are the [Top 10 Guide to Car Lifts](#) and the [Study in Lift Design](#) website.

Now that you have prepared this general information, you're all set to answer the question, "Which car lift is right for me?" Read on, future car lift owner!

In-Depth Lift Style Comparison

Auto lifts come in a variety of styles, but most of them can be divided into one of two categories based on how they engage the vehicle: wheel engaging car lifts and frame engaging style car lifts. By far the most common auto lifts from each category are four-post lifts (wheel engaging) and two-post lifts (frame engaging). Less common car lifts are known as [specialty lifts](#) and include scissor lifts, portable lifts, mobile lifts, in-ground lifts and parking lifts. Here's a quick breakdown of each type of auto lift and what it can do for your home or business.



Four-Post Car Lifts

Four-post automotive lifts offer owners a lot of versatility when it comes to heavy lifting. In general, four-post car lifts can hold higher capacities compared to two-post lifts because of the additional support columns. They are also very user-friendly due to the drive-on and park method of mounting that is typical for wheel engaging lifts. Many quick-lube stations and muffler shops prefer a four-post car lift over any other kind of auto lift.

A [four-post car lift](#) is also particularly popular among hobbyists and home-users for home garage parking because it usually doesn't require any sort of floor anchor. Smaller capacity four-post lifts can even become portable with the addition of an optional caster package. Thanks to the solid four-column design, four-post auto lifts are also ideal for storing two vehicles when only one space is available.

On the flip side, all the additional building material in the construction means that four-post auto lifts are usually a bit pricier than their two-post brethren. And if you plan to use your four-post automotive lift for wheel service, you will probably want to invest in rolling or sliding bridge jacks to lift the wheels off the runway.

However, for capacity, mobility and storage in your car lifting solution, you can't do better than a four-post car lift.



Two-Post Car Lifts

Two-post car lifts are the most common type of frame-engaging auto lifts that you're likely to find in a professional automotive shop. With two incredibly sturdy posts and supportive stabilization arms, two-post car lifts are capable of holding a large variety of vehicles at a height that's comfortable for both the automotive technician and the DIY'er. However, the best reasons to own a two-post car lift are the reduced price compared to four-post car lifting options, the small horizontal footprint for space saving convenience and the complete, unobstructed access to the wheels.

Two-post auto lifts are either considered symmetrical or asymmetrical. Symmetrical automobile lifts are easy to identify because the posts face each other dead-on, and the support arm assemblies each hold approximately 50% of the load. Asymmetrical automotive lifts, on the other hand, feature swing arms that are not the same length in the front and back, as well as a rotated post design. The result of these two features is a shifted center of gravity (which is greatly beneficial to longer, unbalanced trucks) and better clearance for vehicle doors, giving the operator direct access to the automobile interior even when the car or truck is raised.

Both asymmetrical and symmetrical two-post garage lifts work fine with lighter vehicles, so the distinctions are mostly moot unless you are going to specialize in heavier, unbalanced vehicles. [Two-post car lifts](#) are not very common in residential garages because they are much taller than other automotive lifting options, require more attention to detail to reach designated vehicle lifting points and don't grant the vehicle stacking convenience found on four-post garage lifts. In most cases, a two-post car or truck lift is most beneficial to garages that see cars and trucks going up and down all day long.



Scissor Car Lifts

Scissor lift is a broad term that encompasses all car lifts that raise their payloads with accordion-like

mechanisms beneath the runways. Depending on the configuration of the cylinders and raising rods, a scissor lift can be described as "X" type, parallelogram type or pantograph type.

Scissor auto lifts come in a very wide range of capacities and heights to benefit both professional shops and home hobbyists. Low-rise car lifts raise up to 36-inches above the ground, [mid-rise auto lifts](#) raise between 36 inches and 48 inches and full-rise scissor lifts can go anywhere above that.

However, scissor car lifts increase in size immensely in higher weight categories. Parallelogram style scissor lifts in particular are known to be some of the heaviest lifters on the market.

Scissor car lifts can fall into either the wheel engaging or frame engaging categories. Thanks to the low-profile, vehicle mounting is generally a hassle-free operation. Little is required beyond positioning the car or truck over the scissor lift. Some slight tweaking may be necessary for frame-engaging style scissor lifts.

When not in use, scissor style car lifts retract into a low profile. This is ideal if you are a home user and want to be able to park your vehicle over the car lift when its lifting functions are not required. However, scissor style lifts never disappear completely unless installed below the floor and cannot be used to stack two vehicles in one slot. Also, because the raising mechanisms are directly below the runways, it's impossible to stand directly beneath the vehicle.

Nonetheless, scissor lifts are a popular choice among home users and professional users alike and are worth your consideration.

Portable Car Lifts

If you don't have much room in your garage or shop, space may be your primary concern when considering an automotive lift. In recent years, portable car lifts have become a viable option for those with limited space who still want to get the most out of their garage or bay.

While lower capacity four-post car lifts on casters can often serve as a portable car lift, more specialized solutions include mobile [scissor style lifts](#) on a long handle, portable frame single post lifts and light-duty two-post car lifts like the [MaxJax](#).

When it comes to portable car lifts, always be aware that you trade function for form with these smaller portable car lifts. You will be unable to lift larger, heavier vehicles. Always make sure that the car lift you're considering can handle the appropriate capacity for the vehicles you plan on lifting before looking at overall footprint.

Another space-saving option to think about is an in-ground lifting solution, which is covered in the next section.

In-Ground Car Lifts

For a long time, in-ground car lifts were considered the car and truck lifting standard for larger shops and rental businesses. The most attractive feature is the ability to keep your car lift hidden within the floor of your shop or garage when it is not in service. These auto lifts can be either elevator style or scissor lift style and are good choices for keeping the ground clear of clutter. Like scissor lifts, in-ground style car lifts can also be frame engaging or wheel engaging, depending on the design.

The added space comes at a cost, however, and in-ground lifts can be about double the price of a similar capacity two-post lifting solution. Added expenses can include cutting up and preparing the concrete for the car lift's body, which can be a sizeable investment in itself.

In the past, in-ground lifts have earned a bad reputation for being harmful to the environment and prone

to leaks. When oil leaks from the car lift, it can seep into ground water reservoirs and contaminate the water supply. Due to the tidy manner in which an in-ground lift is stored, it's very difficult to detect an oil leak.

The EPA has mandated leak safeguards around all installed in-ground lifts. In-ground lifts are the only automotive lifts that require this oil barrier and it adds considerably to the overall cost of ownership. The good news is that in recent years, environmentally safe in-ground lifting solutions have hit the market and sidestep the leakage problem completely with non-toxic hydraulic fluid.

Alignment Car Lifts

Alignment auto lifts are special class of lifting solution because they come with extra features to make it easier to perform alignment service on cars or trucks. Although alignment lifts were originally designed for automotive repair shops, dedicated hobbyists can also utilize the alignment function of these lifts.

Alignment car lifts can be any kind of the previously discussed wheel engaging auto lifts (four-post lifts, scissor lifts and in-ground lifts) as long as the car or truck tires are resting on some sort of a runway. Special turn plates and slip plates are built right into the runways, so the wheels can easily turn without resistance. For that reason, mobile column that hold each wheel in their arm assemblies cannot be alignment lifts.



Mobile Column Car Lifts

The concept is simple: if you need to lift something very large and very heavy, just add more posts! [Mobile column car lifts](#) give you the flexibility to add or subtract heavy-duty posts as needed for specific lifting projects. Advanced models even come with wireless communication features that allow one operator to simultaneously lift the platforms of up to eight independent post structures. Mobile column car lifts are currently wheel engaging, but use lifting forks instead of runways to engage the car or truck. Due to size, price and capacity, it's very unlikely that a home user would ever require a set of mobile columns.



Parking Lifts

Both public parking structures and private garages can benefit from parking lifts. Generally, parking lifts feature footprints slightly smaller than four-post car lifts, but the concept remains largely the same. The lifting platform is supported by either a single post or two posts and is designed so that another car or truck can be parked beneath it. Effectively, a single parking slot can do the job of two with a parking lift as a home garage parking solution or a public garage parking solution.

Parking lifts feature a full drive-on deck instead of two runways, so automotive service, maintenance and repair is not a viable option for this type of car lift. Exclusively a wheel engaging lifting method, parking lifts are meant only to be used for parking.

As you can see, there are a lot of different benefits to consider when buying a car lift. Knowing your space restraints, vehicle dimensions and setting a budget for yourself will go a long way towards helping you decide which auto lift style is right for you.

Next, we're going to talk about safety. After all, cars and trucks are really heavy--if you're working beneath a vehicle, you better be able to trust the automotive lift it's resting on.

Car Lift Safety Features

There's no one way to make a car lift or truck lift safer for the operator. Manufacturers of high-quality automotive lifting products are always looking for better, more secure lifting methods. As a result, many excellent automotive lift safety features are now offered to the consumer. Here are just a few examples of the great technological strides that reputable ALI / ETL certification partners have developed to keep you and your employees safe.

Two-post Car Lift Automatic Arm Restraints

Because the various car lifting solution designs can be extremely different from each other, it makes sense that some safety features are specific to only one kind of car lift. Two-post car lifts employ swing arm assemblies that allow the operator to change the arm configuration to suit a wide range of vehicles. It is important that swing arm lifts employ restraint devices to prevent arms from shifting or dislodging after a car or truck is already mounted and raised. Higher-quality two-post car lifts will feature this safety critical element; typically a gear mechanism that automatically secures the arms into place whenever the lift begins to rise. The automatic gear arm restraints will only disengage again when the lift is in a safe, lowered state. Because this process is automatic, the operator does not need to worry about forgetting to secure the arms.

Four-Post Car Lift Anti-Sway Blocks

Four-post car lifts are principally suspension lifts that rely on their columns to contain the lifting structure via cables or chains, while simultaneously bearing the load equally between them. Since the four-post car lift is not a rigid structure, it was once common for lifts to sway slightly during raising or lowering operations. Anti-sway blocks are one method of minimizing sway and maintaining proper spacing. This is especially important to ensure that safety locks are always engaged and that each post or column is holding 1/4th of the overall weight.

Four-Post Car Lift Runway Ramps and Chocks

Be sure your auto lift is equipped with manual wheel chocks as the primary means to restrain vehicles from inadvertently rolling off either end of the runways. Automatic stops on the approach end and fixed stops up front should be provided on runway lifts as a secondary means to restraint.

Hydraulic Flow Restrictor

Hydraulic car lifts that are designed with safety in mind use specialized hydraulic flow restrictors or velocity fuses integrated into the hydraulic cylinders or hydraulic circuit to control sudden, rapid decent in the event of a hydraulic component failure. These essential safety devices can dramatically reduce or stop downward travel in a free-fall situation due to a hydraulic system failure other than the cylinders themselves. When exploring lifting solutions, always make sure the car lift design features these crucial components for consistently smooth operation and no surprises.

Design That Address and Eliminates Pinch Points

Pinch points are not just mere annoyances like the name might suggest. Without supervision and careful operation, pinch points can result in damaged property and injury. Reputable manufacturers employ engineers to help identify potential pinch points for hoses and limbs, and then they remove them from the design of an auto lift.

Automatic Safety Locks

These powerful load-holding devices automatically engage and lock the lift structure as the car lift raises, preventing sudden free fall in the unlikely event of a suspension component failure. Typically, after the lift is raised to the required working height, operators are instructed to lower the lift until it is resting safely on the locks to minimize wear on suspension components. Once the locks are engaged, the car lift has to be raised slightly in order to release the safety locks. The better car lifts on the market often have locks spaced no more than five inches apart to better protect operators or bystanders. Load-holding devices should always require an independent and positive action for release, and they should always engage and reset automatically each time the lift is raised.

Slack Cable or Slack Chain Device Safety Device

As a redundant safety precaution, all professional-grade car lifts that employ either cable or chain suspension methods should incorporate a slack cable or chain device. These slack cables act as an automatic brake for the supported structure if a suspension component breaks or slackens.

Safe Systems and Procedures

When searching for a car lift, always ensure the manufacturer has a written quality assurance system of policies and procedures that are implemented and managed by quality control personnel. Safety policies and procedures should embrace safety specific subjects like organization, functions, duties and authority; policy and procedure publication, change control and record keeping; engineering drawing and specification publication, change control and record keeping; manufacturing process conformance determination, change control and record keeping; raw material and purchased part conformance determination and record keeping; component and end item conformance testing and record keeping; calibration and record keeping and traceability to the National Institute of Standards and Technology

(NIST), or other national standards, for all gauges, measuring devices, tools and instruments that affect the quality of the final product; and, control and disposition of nonconforming material.

Specialized Lifting Pads for Different Types of Vehicles

Make sure you always have the right tool for every lifting job. Vans and trucks require different adapters than cars and motorcycles. The dealer or manufacturer should have a variety of options and accessories to help customize your automotive lift to fit your specific auto lifting needs. If they don't, take it as a sign that their car lifting products might lack the proper support.

Proper Use and Safety Instructions

Always be sure that your car lift is supplied with operation, inspection, service and maintenance instructions that include specifications of the lift, lift rated load capacity, significant lift and bay dimensions, power requirements (compressed air and/or electrical), foundation and floor structural requirements. Car lift installation instructions should be clear with graphics illustrating full step-by-step assembly, exploded drawings with part numbers and descriptions, component packing list, site requirements, mounting and anchoring instructions, recommended clearance around and above lift, plan and elevation details of auto lift layout, final pre-check procedure for assembled lift, operational test & inspection and maintenance instructions.

Labeling

To raise safety awareness for all operators and bystanders, auto lifts should always include pertinent warning labels, as well as raising and lowering instructions. These labels shall be located at the point of hazard so that they will be plainly visible by the operator when he or she is in position to raise or lower the car lift's load.

In the next section, we explore how car lifts are required by the ALI / ETL to incorporate these essential safety features and more in order to receive certification.

Safe is Certified

It's truly amazing how many professionals and hobbyists are willing to put their trust into an non-certified car lift. Working beneath a raised car or truck that can weigh up to several tons is not a task that should be taken lightly. For your own health and for the well-being of others, please make sure that vehicle lift



certified safety tops your list of priorities.

ALI / ETL Certification

Few of us are able to determine the strength, quality and safety of a car lift just by looking at it. That's why the [Automotive Lift Institute's ETL certification](#) is so important to business owners and private users who want to protect employees, property and themselves from potential accidents.

The ALI is an independent third-party organization that conducts car lift safety verification and certification on behalf of auto lift consumers. The ALI / ETL certification is the only nationally recognized program that sets safety standards for all auto lifts and tests them for both compliance and performance.

If you are in the market for a new car lift, the Automotive Lift Institute is 100% on your side and will be one of your best sources of reliable, unbiased consumer information.

Car lift companies that focus on safety have a close relationship with ALI, ETL, ANSI, UL, CE, TUV, and other global certification authorities and regularly undergo intense third-party testing conducted by nationally recognized testing laboratories. Metallurgy, tensile strengths, mechanical engineering, manufacturing quality and electrical compliance are just a few of the things that these testing laboratories investigate rigorously for every car lift or truck lift that applies for certification. Only when an auto lift demonstrates consistently high marks in each category does it receive the ALI / ETL badge of approval or other renowned certifications.

However, there are other factors to consider for safe automotive lift operation, including proper installation, regular service and proper use. Check with the manufacturer to find out if they provide these important services. If they don't, ask them who does.

Non-Certified Lifts Are Never A Bargain

In some cases, ALI / ETL certification is more than important, it's mandatory. Although the ALI / ETL certification program is currently voluntary, many state, federal and local authorities have adopted the standard as a mandatory provision for commercial-use car and truck lift installations. Many lift purchasers unaware of local ordinances regarding lift certification have found their business shut down and fines imposed due to a lack of ALI / ETL certification. Fortunately for consumers, the Automotive Lift Institute keeps a public record of all [participating members](#) right on the site.

Now that you have a good idea of what makes an automotive lift safe, continue on to the next page to discover who you should buy it from.

Finding a Car Lift Dealer and Manufacturer You Can Trust

Choosing a manufacturer and dealer is a critical a step in the whole car lift purchasing process. While low-quality manufacturers or dealers might be able to offer you a cheaper price, the person you want to do business with will be able to give you a higher level of customer service, a better buying experience and a much lower overall cost of ownership.

Easy-To-Find Information

Shopping around is always an excellent strategy, regardless of anyone's guarantees. Finding key information about the manufacturer and the dealer should take little more than a Google search. If a brand name or product is worth being proud of, companies will overwhelm you with detailed information and have it prominently displayed where everyone can see it. If instead a dealer or manufacturer forces you to call in for more information, then it's likely a technique to just get you on the phone. Other information such as manufacturer of origin, company reputation, ALI / ETL membership status and customer support numbers should all be equally simple to find.

Company Longevity

Experience can also make all the difference. The longer a company has been in business, the more opportunities it has had to perfect its art and make a name for itself. The world of automotive lifts is very competitive, so the fly-by-night companies are unable stay in business long. Where does that leave all of their customers for support and parts? Don't be caught in that trap. Take a hard look at how long the company's doors have been open. That goes double for a car lift manufacturer.

See What Others Say

It's also a good idea to speak with other hobbyists or shop owners who own and operate car lifts on a daily basis. Who do they buy their automotive lifts from? Why? The internet is an incredibly powerful resource and has given voice to formally silent consumers. Searching car enthusiast and mechanic

message boards is a great strategy for getting first-hand information about the product, the dealer and the manufacturer.

Another solid strategy is to check out [Ripoff Report](#) to see if anyone you're planning on doing business with has been accused of shady dealings in the past. Ripoff Report isn't a definitive source for reliable consumer information, but it may make you think twice.

In State vs. Out Of State

Sometimes you'll find that the right dealer for you is outside of your state. Don't be intimidated; many car lift owners have discovered that there are tangible benefits to purchasing their garage equipment out of state.

When you purchase a lift outside of your state, local sales tax no longer applies to the purchase. This can mean big savings for the consumer, especially if the dealer offers free shipping.

After Sales Support

How the dealer and manufacturer act towards you after they have your money in hand is one of the most telling signs of a company's priorities. Find out how comprehensive their customer service is. Do they provide inspection and maintenance for their auto lifts, or do they refer you to someone else? These questions are important to ask before you decide to buy.

Without regular maintenance, your car lift will age three times as fast as a well-serviced unit. Shop owners know that when their automotive lift malfunctions, every minute is revenue lost. You need a dealer that recognizes the importance of timely, courteous support and will respond accordingly to each situation.

It should be noted that few dealers will service the equipment they sell. Instead, the car lift manufacturer should contract with local installers and service centers to make sure a qualified specialist is nearby to handle your maintenance needs.

The qualifications of the actual technicians who will be servicing and repairing your car lift are worth taking a look at. See if you can meet them before money changes hands. Make sure they are factory trained and close enough for quick-response, regardless of whether you're going to buy your new car lift through a distributor or a manufacturer.

You can find more great tips on choosing a [car lift dealer or manufacturer here](#).

Your Final Answer

Reputable manufacturers and dealers will provide you with nearly identical tips contained in this car lift buyer's guide. If the information doesn't match up, [buyer beware!](#) The car lift dealer or manufacturer should ask you about your specific automotive lifting needs, where you plan on installing your car lift and any special circumstances you might have before they give you their recommendation. Aggressive salesmen may try to upsell you on a much larger capacity car lift or hastily explain that their square peg fits all round holes. But by now you know better.

If possible, see if someone in the organization is willing to come out and inspect your proposed automobile lifting bay. Not only will this give the dealer a solid idea of what your specific situation is, but you'll also get to meet him or her face to face.

As soon as you have narrowed down your list of manufacturers and dealers, it's time to start gathering quotes. This is also the time to look into what is included in each proposal. Make sure you get quotes for

warranties, maintenance plans, training, installation and finally delivery from each dealer. Keep organized notes, so it's easy to compare the different prices in the next step.

Priced To Move

Realistically, the price you pay for your car lift will very rarely be the highest or lowest on your list. You want to find that perfect zone where cost and value are roughly equal. You *do* get what you pay for. Business owners know that they need to consider the overall cost of the automotive lift throughout its entire life of service. The criteria is slightly different for home users that don't plan on earning revenue off of the purchase, but trying to save a couple hundred bucks can still mean the difference between enjoying your time in the garage and a total service nightmare.

While an expensive car lift will not always mean high-quality materials, an exceptionally low-priced automotive lift will almost certainly be cheaply made. That means undersized automobile lifting cylinders, no engineering to speak of, compromised safety systems and thinner steel. These are the kinds of things that can cost a business owner untold thousands of dollars in damage or downtime.

On the other side, home users are willing to spend thousands and thousands of dollars on their beautiful automobiles, but then senselessly cut corners on the very thing that holds them up. There's nothing wrong with shopping around for a good price, but make sure you are willing to at least pay for the value that you hope to get out of your new auto lift.

Car Lift Pricing

A standard two-post car lift with a capacity of around 10,000 pounds will usually run anywhere between \$2,000 and \$3,500, which is about the same price as a lower capacity four-post auto lift. Opting for a four-post auto lifting solution in the 10,000-pound weight range will generally cost a couple hundred dollars more, but it might be worth it if you want to also stack to vehicles.

Always check to make sure that shipping and installation are included in the final quoted price for your new car lift. Standard installation should be around or under \$500 for a two-post car lifting solution and under \$1,000 for a four-post auto lift. As previously noted, in-ground car lifts and installations are by far the most expensive auto lifting option available, sometimes costing as much as \$10,000.

Once you venture into higher capacity automotive lifts--the kind that can lift a fire truck, for instance--the pricing scales considerably. Ultra-high capacity car lifts like mobile column auto lifts and huge parallelogram-style truck lifts can easily cost over \$10,000. These can both be excellent options depending on your specific needs, as long as their giant capabilities are properly utilized by equally impressive vehicle weights.

Check The Warranty

A car lift is nothing like a flat screen television or a stereo system. If there was ever a purchase that required a comprehensive warranty, an automotive lift is it.

The differences in warranty can vary considerably from one manufacturer to the other, so do not just assume everything is covered. The better warranties out there offer years of protection, but as little as three months can be sufficient to discover manufacturing flaws. Frame and construction are the strongest components of a car lift's construction, so those are usually covered under warranty for much, much longer.

Even if the repair itself is considered under warranty, extras like labor, shipping and travel can sometimes result in unforeseen fees for the customer. Carefully read the details of each warranty when making your decision.

We're almost done! In the next section, we go over some insider car lift tips that could save you some serious money and hassle.

Final Car Lift Tips

Think Vertically

It seems obvious that since an auto lift's job is to move a car or truck up higher, the buyer should check to make sure their garage or service bay can accommodate the fully raised height of the car lift with an automobile on it. But when it comes to two-post car lifts, overhead cross bars can sometimes limit your car lift's vertical capacity. Make sure to form your calculations with that cross bar in mind.

If the vehicle won't fit, see if the dealer or manufacturer has an extended height edition. Or better yet, consider a floor plate model car lift instead. Remember, the cross bar doesn't actually lend structural support to the auto lift. Its only function is to neatly guide cables from one post to the other.

The Ground Rules

Like everything else, concrete slabs have their weak points and strong points too. After you've made sure that your concrete floor can support the car lift you're considering, don't forget that it is a very bad idea to install it near a seam, slab edge or directly over a tension cable. If these mistakes won't lead to disaster, they certainly will reduce the usefulness of your new car lift.

A Little Extra Doesn't Hurt

You never know what the future holds, so it might be a good idea to step up your target capacity by 1,000 or 2,000 pounds. The difference is usually only a few hundred dollars, and it really can help you out if a client comes to you with a larger vehicle that needs service. If you're a home user, a slightly higher capacity auto lift is not only safer, but it also opens you up to bigger future projects.

Don't Be Afraid To Negotiate

Plenty of car lift dealers are willing to throw in something extra with your purchase after a little negotiation. Extra pads, pans, solid decks and casters are common accessories that you might want now or in the future, so there's no harm in trying to see if they are open to the proposition. Just don't force the issue. Some sellers are prohibited by the manufacturer from going below a certain price. If they give into your request, they could lose their standing as a distributor.

Buying Used Is Rarely A Deal

Even more so than with a used car, regular maintenance is absolutely essential to extending the functional lifetime of your car lift. While immediate savings might serve to tempt you, the inherent safety risks are usually just not worth it. Plus without a warranty, you are completely on your own if you need parts or service to get the car lift back to optimal operation. Unless you have proof that the previous owner (or owners) took excellent care of the auto lift, you should give used car lifts an immediate pass. Finally, older car lifts simply do not have the safety features that come standard with most modern high-quality automotive lifts.

In the next chapter, we'll wrap everything up with a conclusion and some final thoughts.

Car Lift Conclusions

Purchasing a new car lift is no small matter. Regardless of whether you're a shop owner or you just love working on cars in your own garage, you deserve to get more than the best car lift for you--you deserve to have a pleasant time doing it. Just by following this simple car lift guide, you're already well on your way towards having the best auto lift buying experience possible. Here's a quick recap.

Do your homework:

Get all the various measurements and stats you can BEFORE you start shopping around for a car lift. Knowing the dimensions of your work space, your vehicle's weight class and what features are most important to you will keep you firmly on track.

Choose your lift type:

There are at least nine different types of car lifts out there for you to consider. Each one comes with its own unique set of benefits. It's important to match up the lift type to your capacity needs, your work area, the type of work you perform and the vehicles you work on. Taking all these factors into consideration will make your list of optimal car lift candidates get smaller and smaller, and your choice will be much simpler.

Know you're safe:

Car lifts and truck lifts are completely safe at any maximum rated capacity as long as they have the proper safety features, are regularly serviced, pass inspection and are operated properly. The fastest way to determine if a car lift is high-quality is to check to see if it is ALI / ETL certified.

We also gave you a list of different safety features. Compare the safety features built in to each car lift that you're considering and you'll know immediately which one you'll feel the most comfortable working under.

Choosing your dealer:

By now you've got the **what**--you know exactly what kind of lift you are in the market for. Now it's time to find out **who** you want to buy it from. Call around to find out what customer service is like from both the dealer and the manufacturer. Know before hand who will be handling your installation and future service. If you get a bad feeling about someone, don't buy your car lift from them. It's that simple.

Cost vs. Price:

Getting the best deal will be completely determined in the long run by how much time, effort and headaches you avoid. Don't be tempted by inferior products offered at a lower price. Pay what a safe, secure, high-quality auto lift is actually worth to you. Also, check to see what is included in the price, like warranty and shipping--you might just end up with a steal of a deal anyways.

Final Tips:

- DON'T buy used car lifts.
- DON'T install your car lift on the edge of a concrete slab.
- DON'T forget about overhead clearance.
- DON'T forget about the cross bar on most two-post car lifts.
- DON'T be afraid to negotiate.
- DO consider upgrading your lift's capacity for extended versatility.

We hope you have found this car lift buyer's guide to be helpful. Go forth and lift.

Lift strong. Lift smart. Lift safe.