

# The Top 10 Things You Need To Know Before Buying A Lift

December 14th, 2009



It's no fun spending a small bundle of moolah on what should be one of the best purchases of your life, only to be let down by the reality of an underpowered auto lift or a disreputable automotive equipment company. Here at BendPak, we hate it when we hear about fellow auto-enthusiasts getting burned by a bad deal. That's why we devised the following checklist to help you avoid an unfavorable fate and get the car lift of your dreams.

But please, keep in mind that this is just a place to start. The first and final step will always be research. Be an informed consumer, not a victim.

## 10. Availability of information

Because research is such a large part of your decision-making process, you should be wary of car lift companies that don't offer you much in the way of product and company information. Reputable car lift companies are proud of their products, features and corporate achievements, so they publicly stand behind them. Generally, they'll want to get the word out about their products to as many people as possible. If you are attempting to research an automotive lift company and you find yourself on page six of Google with no real useful information, chances are they are hiding something. Some companies will also attempt to force you to call in for more information. More often or not, this is an attempt to sell you based on salesmanship over features. Don't be caught in the trap. When it's easy to find the information you are looking for, you can be confident you are on the right track.

## 9. Who REALLY made this lift

This one comes straight off the previous tip. There should always be a lift manufacturing company proudly placing their name on a prospective car lift. Unfortunately, many lift "brands" are just labels fabricated by small time warehouse dealers, deceptively supplying these products as their own. The car lifts are actually manufactured offshore in factory sweatshops with little or no regard to worldwide standards. If you find an auto lift that interests you, be sure to search for an informative and detailed manufacturing company website or at least a brochure. Also check to see if there are multiple dealers selling the brand in your country. Some of these shady dealers will bill themselves as "exclusive suppliers," but the truth of the matter is that if they were pedaling a truly superior product, the manufacturer would attempt to expand their business to incorporate as many dealers as possible. If you can't find solid, verifiable information relating to the actual manufacturer of any given automotive lift or if only a very limited number of dealers even sell the lift, you are probably best off searching for alternative options.

## **8. Know thy garage**

Sometimes sheer enthusiasm will overshadow what's physically feasible. It's important not to get carried away. Measure, re-measure, and re-re-measure your garage. Car lift alterations are sometimes possible, but they are rare and always costly. Double-check with local installers to find out the minimum space required to work on your new auto lift. Triple-check the physical dimensions of your favored car lift either online or over the phone. If you can, find out if anyone nearby, such as a dealership or a neighbor, already has the automotive lift you've got your eye on. Most lift owners are extremely proud of their car lifts and will probably be happy to give you a quick tour. Also, make sure you know where your electricity is, if you need a compressor to operate the locks and if your concrete can handle the bolts, should you be required to secure your auto lift to the floor. Basically, it comes down to really getting acquainted with your garage. One great way to keep track of everything is with a quick-reference notebook containing some of the more important dimensions of your garage, so that you are prepared with your install-site information at all times.

## **7. Company reputation**

When you dig deeper than the marketing hype, you'll quickly discover what others are saying about the company that makes your prospective auto lift. Online garage-themed message boards are often a fantastic resource for unfiltered opinions about your potential car lift purchase. However, it is important to realize that the condemnation or praise will often be more extreme than reality. By all means, use opinions as an additional source of information in your quest for the best car lift, but always be aware that the truth is usually somewhere in the middle. And also be on the lookout for potential shills—salesmen posing as concerned community members to make their products look better than the competition. Request proof in the form of pictures should you have any doubt about bold statements. Also, be sure to consider how long the company has been in business, as that is usually directly tied to their reputation. The longer they've been around, the more likely it is that they've taken the time to develop positive customer relationships. Established automotive lift companies also have a better chance of being around in the future to honor warranties, replace parts and generally provide solid customer service should the need arise.

## **6. The right price**

It might seem obvious, but it bears repeating. Make sure that the value that you are getting out of your car lift matches how much you are going to pay. It doesn't hurt to shop around for the best deal, as long as you stick to a pre-determined list of essentials that you are unwilling to compromise on. Remember: the best car lift for you will rarely, if ever, be the most expensive car lift or the cheapest car lift. Instead, it will be right where the cost meets the benefit—exactly where it should be. You get what you pay for and maybe a little more if you catch a retailer during a sale.

## **5. The warranty**

Even the best automotive lift in the world is still just a machine, so it's susceptible to human-error and unexpected failures (though potential devastating effects can be greatly minimized with the correct systems in place—more on that below). Honest car lift companies realize this and offer warranties on the frame, the moving parts and the labor at varying levels depending on their pricing structures. Warranties usually come standard with purchase, but can often be extended to cover years or even the entire life of the auto lift in some cases. Take this as a good sign that the car lift manufacturer not only stands behind their product, but is willing to put their money where their collective mouth is. Just don't forget to research how long an auto lift business has been around to determine if it's the real deal or all just empty promises.

#### **4. The ALI seal of approval**

The Automotive Lift Institute's certification is the only nationally recognized standard for car lifts of all designs. They are a non-partial coalition of engineers, designers, industry experts and professionals who rely on third-party laboratory testing methods to recommend and test industry-class safety measures far above those set by any government or municipal agency. What happens when you purchase a non-approved car lift? We urge you to investigate thoroughly as many business owners quickly find themselves on the short end of a long battle once their local inspectors levy penalties for non-compliance or worse yet, shut down their business entirely. Yes, it can and does happen.

Nonetheless, The Top 10 Things You Need To Know Before Buying A Lift

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BendPak's guide to finding your perfect automotive lift

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Nonetheless, ALI / ETL certification is a hot-button issue in the automotive lifting industry. It's no easy feat to join the Automotive Lift Institute, let alone build a car lift that passes certification. Aside from the expenses involved, ALI sets extremely strict UL, ETL and ANSI manufacturing safety standards that must be met in order to qualify for certification. While you're on the hunt for the perfect automotive lift, it's very likely that you'll find a plethora of non-certified lifts out on the market.

ALI standard exists for one reason: to make car lifts as safe as possible for people who aren't able to eyeball good or bad mechanical workmanship from a mile away. If you happen to be an expert on engineering, tensile strengths and redundant safety systems under load, then you might feel comfortable purchasing an automotive lift that hasn't been certified. But if you want a safe piece of garage equipment along with peace of mind, your best bet is to go with an ALI / ETL approved car lift. Remember, the largest and most respected auto lift brands in the world are members of the Automotive Lift Institute and submit to ALI testing and retesting for just about every product they develop, so clearly it's a priority to them. It's up to you to decide how big of a priority ALI / ETL certification is to you, personally. That's what will help you ultimately make your decision while you're trying to decide on which auto lift to purchase.

Naturally, we recommend that you give a strong preference to ALI / ETL certified car lifts, or at the very least, to a name you've got a good reason to trust.

For more information on BendPak's stand, read [here](#).

### 3. Customer support

This goes hand in hand with reputation. Sure, lots of car lift companies will be sweet as sugar when they are taking your cash, but where are they when something doesn't exactly go according to plan? Once again, it all goes back to research. By now, you've probably narrowed down your selection to a couple of options. Go ahead and read up on what each prospective company offers in the way of customer support, but don't forget to call into their support number, too. Once you get a hold of someone on the other end, you should be able to gauge fairly quickly their general attitude, if they have a multi-location service network geographically located across all parts of the country, if they are located in the US and their overall knowledgeability about products and services. Quiz them a little bit about their return policy, their warranties, how quickly they can get a repair part to you or have someone come out and look at your equipment should you have a problem. Let's be honest, in the event that you need to talk to someone, your patience is going to be under much more strain than when you do your test call. If you find yourself frustrated during this little exercise, chances are you're looking at the wrong company.

### 2. The features you want

If the car lift you buy doesn't have the features you wanted, what the heck did you get it for in the first place!



This requires a little bit of foresight on your part. Not only do you have to determine the heaviest thing you're likely going to need to lift, but also how closely the vehicle runs to the ground, the physical dimensions of the largest and the smallest vehicle you're going to lift and whether or not you're going to want to easily move your car lift around on casters. Your best bet for future-proofing your car lift is to go with a manufacturer who not only has the features you want, but also offers a lot of optional equipment in the event your needs change. Find out if your chosen automotive lift company offers extra tall, extra wide, short, narrow, asymmetrical and clearfloor model versions to better fit your personal automotive lifting needs. Ask if they offer truck and van adapters, telescoping arms, bridge jacks, specialized contact pads, casters and frame extensions. Your lift's ability to adapt to the new and unexpected will be the key to your satisfaction for years to come.

## 1. Real engineering

Finally, do not settle for a piece of rebranded generic junk. Make sure your prospective car lift came from the minds and hands of a dedicated team of engineers who were dead-set on making their auto lift the best it could be. If someone took pride in designing your automotive lift, chances are you'll take lots of pride in owning it. Also, lifting operation tends to be much smoother when human minds thought more about how you were going to use the lift and less about shoving a product out the door.

Follow these ten guidelines and you're practically guaranteed to end up with the car lift that's just right for you. And for some information on how BendPak stacks against the rest, check out [A Study In Lift Design](#).

Think we missed something important? What things do you think are critical to consider when buying a lift? Leave a comment with your suggestion and help out your fellow wrencher! is a hot-button issue in the automotive lifting industry. It's no easy feat to join the Automotive Lift Institute, let alone build a car lift that passes certification. Aside from the expenses involved, ALI sets extremely strict UL, ETL and ANSI manufacturing safety standards that must be met in order to qualify for certification. While you're on the hunt for the perfect automotive lift, it's very likely that you'll find a plethora of non-certified lifts out on the market.

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