



# BUYING A **TREADMILL**

## Everything You Need to Know

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# WHY ARE SO MANY PEOPLE BUYING TREADMILLS?

**O**wning a treadmill is a safe and fun way for the entire family to live a healthy and fit lifestyle. Besides improving your cardiovascular fitness and helping with weight loss, a treadmill is an amazing tool for those with physical injuries and ailments, allowing them to train for a wide range of sports and/or physical activities without putting strain on their body.

While treadmills are readily available at most gyms, having one in the comfort of your own home makes exercising more convenient and also eliminates the often-hefty costs of maintaining a monthly gym membership. This treadmill-buying guide is designed to help you choose the best treadmill for your budget and needs. Ready to get moving? Read on for all the details you need to make the right decision.

First, it's important to think about who might be using the treadmill so you can get a machine that will work for everyone. Here are the most common types of users:



**Walker**



**Speed Walker**



**Jogger**



**Runner**



**Heavy Runner**



**Multy Family**

Look for the “Best For” note on the different types of machines to see if that treadmill type will work for you and/or your family.



## HOME TREADMILLS

Intended for in-home use, these machines are a great way to get a workout in without having to hit the gym. With prices ranging from \$300-\$3,000, they're ideal for residential use because they're lighter, smaller, and more compact than commercial grade machines. It's important to check out Commercial grade machines as well, as they're becoming some of the more popular and durable treadmills for home-use.

### PROS

**LIGHTWEIGHT:** A compact design and lighter frame makes them perfect for smaller spaces. Many machines are also foldable and come complete with wheels.

**PRICE:** They're moderately inexpensive – many entry-level models run less than \$500.

### CONS

**EXTRAS:** Residential treadmills typically offer basic consoles with MP3 sound systems and LCD screens. But, if you're looking for Internet connectivity and other high-tech options, we suggest opting for a commercial grade machine.

**WARRANTY:** Few brands offer a lifetime warranty on a residential treadmill. The warranty on parts and labor can be as short as 90 days on some models, with the average being 1-2 years.

### BEST FOR

✓ All Users

 [Click here to see the best Home Treadmills](#)



# COMMERCIAL TREADMILLS

**C**ommercial Grade trainers are essentially the machines you'd see in the gym, yet among the most popular for those looking for a reliable home treadmill. Designed for all-day use, these are the most durable, versatile, and high-quality options on the market. While they run between \$800-\$4,000, they're totally worth it if you're going to use yours often.

**PROS**

**ENTERTAINMENT:** Most commercial grade models come complete with advanced entertainment features like innovative workout programs, color touch screen displays, Internet connectivity, and high-grade fans.

**Versatility:** With a longer deck (at least 60") and an average weight capacity exceeding 400lbs, they're ideal for everyone – no matter your shape or size.

**FRAME:** Because commercial trainers need hold up, they have a very sturdy frame.

**DECK:** A longer deck means a safer, more shock-absorbent workout.

**CONS**

**BULK:** Commercial treadmills are larger in size and do not fold, making them more difficult to store, transport, and keep in smaller spaces.

**PRICE:** Since commercial treadmills are typically more expensive than residential machines, it's important to determine if the extra cost is worth it by determining which extra features you will and will not use.

**BEST FOR**

- ✓ Jogger
- ✓ Runner
- ✓ Heavy Runner
- ✓ Multi-Family

  
[Click here to see the best Commercial Treadmills](#)



## COMPACT TREADMILLS

Ideal for those who have a small space to work with and/or frequently move their equipment. They're portable, easy to move from place to place, and usually come stocked with the basics, and only the basics.

### PROS

**PROBABILITY:** These machines are so slim, they can usually be stored under a bed or propped up against the wall. If you're worried about the weight, don't be – most machines come with wheels, making them easy to move from place to place.

**PRICE:** Compact treadmills are among the least expensive on the market.

### CONS

**WEAKER MOTORS:** To save on weight and space, these machines come with low-horsepower motors.

**PRICE:** Most machines have walking surfaces of 55" or less, so taller individuals may experience discomfort when using a compact trainer. Additionally, manufacturers of compact treadmills seem to skimp on cushioning, resulting in an often-uncomfortable workout.

**STABILITY:** Because they're not permanent, compact machines are often shaky.

**EXTRAS:** Compact treadmills have significantly fewer bells and whistles. That being said, if you're looking to catch a flick or listen to some tunes while you work out, we recommend looking at a commercial grade option.

### BEST FOR

✓ All Users

[Click here to see the best Compact Treadmills](#)



## INCLINE TRAINERS

Incline trainers are the hybrids of two popular workout machines: the treadmill and the stair climber. These machines allow users to exercise on a flat plane, but can also be adjusted to steep angles. They're also known to burn calories at a faster pace than the traditional treadmill.

### PROS

**EFFICIENCY:** Because these machines require a greater range of muscle motion, they show results much faster than a traditional treadmill. For example, walking at a 25% grade burns calories 3X faster than walking on a flat surface.

**EXTRAS:** Incline trainers come with motivating and super-fun workout programs. Many even boast iFit technology, making working out an entirely new (and seriously innovative) experience.

**LOW IMPACT:** The incline tracks on these machines are very well cushioned and are great for the joints.

**COMPACT DESIGN:** These machines take up less space than most treadmills because they don't need to accommodate a longer stride.

### CONS

**SHORT TRACKS:** Incline trainers have shorter tracks, which generally aren't suitable for runners with a longer stride.

### BEST FOR

- ✓ Walker
- ✓ Jogger
- ✓ Multi-Family
- ✓ Speed Walker
- ✓ Runner

  
[Click here to see the best Incline Trainers](#)



## TREADMILL DESKS

**D**esk trainers are a great way to stay healthy and productive at the same time. An ergonomically friendly alternative to sitting, most treadmill desks come with a desk, but some brands sell the bases and desks separately. Ranging anywhere from \$800-\$2,000, the average horsepower for a treadmill desk motor is 2.25 CHP. The major difference between a traditional treadmill and a treadmill desk is that a treadmill desk is not designed for running, so it will only go up to an average of 4 mph. Because they will need to run longer than a traditional treadmill, the type of motor and strength are very important.

### PROS

**ERGONOMIC DESIGN & VERSATILITY:** Nearly all treadmill desks have an adjustable desk and deck, so it's easy to position the desk at the perfect height for you. Using a treadmill desk also helps with posture, and takes the pressure off the lower back and shoulders.

**MOTOR:** Most machines feature a high torque motor that's quiet and designed to operate for extended periods of time at a lower speed. These motors typically include an average warranty of 5 years.

### CONS

**FEATURES:** Other than an adjustable height option, these machines are lacking when it comes to customizable features. Most machines feature the bare necessities and lack additional comfort features as well.

**CONSOLE:** Treadmill desks do not have traditional consoles, so it's harder to track how many steps you take or how many calories you've burned.

**WORKSPACE:** Many people find that the desk space is limited compared to a traditional desk. The average workspace is 24" deep and 48" wide, which is small considering the majority is probably taken up by a computer.

### BEST FOR

✓ Walker

  
[Click here to see the best Treadmill Desks](#)

And now, onto the features. Browse the features below to find what you need, what you want, and everything in between.



## Motor

Home treadmill motors typically range from 1.25 horsepower (HP) to 4.0 HP. Many manufacturers advertise their motors' power as "continuous horsepower" or CHP, providing a better idea than a simple horsepower rating because

it indicates the machine's capability under conditions of regular use instead of its peak capability. Motors with 1.25 HP are essentially inadequate for anything but light use by lightweight users. Walkers and joggers should opt for a 1.75 to 2.0 CHP motor, and stronger motors are highly recommended for exercisers who run rather than jog or walk. Users who weigh more than 225 pounds are highly advised to purchase machines with at least a 3.0 CHP motor.

It's also important to note that quieter motors are associated with more expensive treadmill brands. A keyword to look out for when reading about motors is "commercial quality" which essentially means that the machine will be noticeably quieter than motors intended only for home use.



## Track Speed

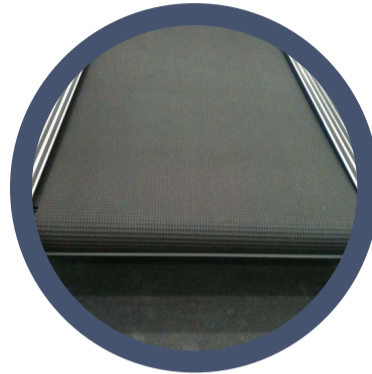
Most users should opt for a machine that supports top speeds of 10 mph. If you're training for a marathon or run like the wind, go for a machine with higher top speeds - there are ample home treadmill options available that reach 12 mph.



## Incline/Decline

Most treadmill tracks can be inclined between 10-20%, helping users burn more calories than they would if they were training on a flat surface. Most machines include a second small motor that controls the incline, but the more

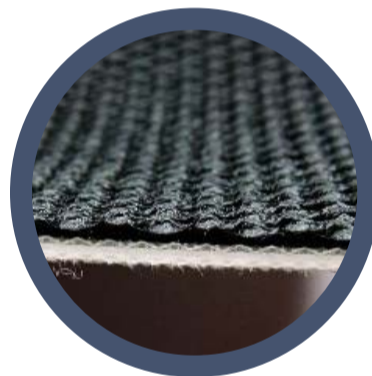
inexpensive options require manual adjustment. Some machines also offer decline options (with some declining up to -6%) if you prefer to simulate downhill running.



## Track Size

Treadmill tracks range from about 16"-20" wide and 42"-62" long. Track length may not be as important to petite walkers, but it's important to users who are tall and/or who take longer strides when running. Most walkers will be

satisfied with a 50" x 16" track, and taller people and runners should opt for a machine with a track that is at least 55" long. If you're the type who runs with your hands, we recommend purchasing a machine with a width of 20".



## Track Durability

Tread-belts that are 2-ply or 4-ply are thicker and more durable than those that are 1-ply. Thicker tread-belts are quieter, making it easier to enjoy a flick or your favorite TV show while exercising (they also won't annoy others in your home). The metal rollers that propel a track are also an

important treadmill component - wide rollers help exponentially to extend belt life.



## Track Cushioning

Track cushioning helps to protect users' joints from the impact of exercise. Compared to pounding the pavement, cushioned treadmill running reduces impact by 15-40%; it also reduces impact on walkers' and runners' bodies. Many machines

feature adjustable cushioning so that runners can choose their perfect combination of support and cushioning. And, more advanced running tracks have differential cushioning that supports the back and front foot differently, allowing the feet to get more support as they push off the track and get more cushioning as they land.



## THINGS TO CONSIDER...



### PROGRAMS

The majority of treadmills are sold with around 12-15 workout programs – with some elite models offering considerably more - designed for a variety of exercise goals such as weight loss training and endurance training. Many machines now feature advanced iFit workout programs, which can be continually upgraded, and some machines can even (virtually) take you around the world with the help of Google Maps.



### EXTRA FEATURES

Many treadmills feature extras such as console fans, MP3-players, televisions, and virtual personal training assistance, making working out a whole lot more enjoyable. We highly recommend purchasing a machine with one (or some) of the capabilities above because they'll give you more of a reason to jump on the machine! If you're looking for some very specific features, we've created a tool that will help you narrow down machines based on your preferences. [Try it out here.](#)



### WARRANTIES

As with any high-priced item, a treadmill manufacturer's warranty should be a good clue about the quality of their machines. While many warranties offer a limited 90-day warranty, there are plenty of manufacturers that back their frames and parts for years. Look for some lifetime warranties! We highly recommend purchasing one with a confidence-instilling lifetime warranty (there's nothing better than knowing you're always protected, right?).



### WEIGHT CAPACITY

With weight capabilities spanning from 250-400 pounds, there's truly a treadmill for every body type. Our recommendation? Choose a treadmill that can handle at least 50 pounds more than your body weight to reduce wear on the machine's motor and help extend its longevity.



### PORTABILITY

If you're on the hunt for something portable, you're in luck! Lower-priced treadmills are often portable and foldable, coming complete with wheels for easy mobility and storage (many can even fit in a closet or back seat of a car!). However, when purchasing a portable treadmill, it's essential to ensure that the machine is sufficiently stable when fully assembled.



### SAFETY FEATURES

It's better to be safe than sorry! Treadmill safety features such as auto-stop are vital for homes with children, elderly, or injured users.

We hope this guide has been an informative resource to help you determine your needs and choose a treadmill that'll work with you and your budget. Ready to start shopping?

**Click on one of the icons below** to get the ball rolling!



**TREADMILL RECOMMENDER**  
answer a few short questions  
and we'll recommend a  
machine for you!



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filter down to the find right  
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features you're looking for!



**BEST TREADMILLS**  
see our list of top  
rated treadmills by  
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