

## Georgian Furnishing Co., Ltd.

5400 Jefferson Hwy  
New Orleans, LA 70123

504-733-4141

[www.georgianfurnishing.com](http://www.georgianfurnishing.com)

## Insiders guide to smart furniture shopping

## Furniture & You

Buying furniture is similar to buying a piece of artwork. The first criterion is to buy something you will enjoy. And full enjoyment of your new furniture means considering your taste, your lifestyle and of course, your budget.

### Your Taste

Taste is entirely a matter of personal preference. You may delight in the traditional elegance of 18th Century styles or be most comfortable with the sleek look of contemporary. It's strictly your choice. If you're not really sure about your design preferences, look through your favorite magazines to find rooms that appeal to you. Even better, browse through the furniture selections and displays at your local home furnishing store where the staff will be happy to help you find the furniture that's right for you.

Choice of style depends on you, but your lifestyle should come into play when durability is a consideration. Consider what kind of wear and use your furniture will receive.

If you're an individual whose hobbies are music, bridge and formal entertaining, indulge yourself. Go for the white damask sofa you've always dreamed of. But if your sofa will be used for a lot of TV watching or lounging, you'll enjoy it much more (and longer) if you choose a sturdier model. When toddlers and teens are on the scene, durability becomes even more important.

Something you want to know about any piece of furniture you buy is "How long will it last?" That factor is determined largely by who uses the furniture and how they use it. The type of care an item receives and the punishment it takes will determine the length of its life. Even the sturdiest, most durable furniture can wear out sooner than expected if it receives extra hard use.

- **Your Budget**

It's never a mistake to buy the best you can afford. Like an original oil or a poster version of the same subject, the same piece of furniture comes in different versions at different prices. A small chair-side table, for example, can cost from below \$100 to well over \$1,000 and good values are to be found of all versions.

- **Here are some of the factors that affect cost:**

- **Design:** original antique, a reproduction copy, or an adaptation?
- **Materials:** the availability of some components effects cost.
- **Manufacturing Process:** handcrafted or mass-produced?
- **Detailing:** hand-carved or not?
- **Shipping & Storage:** already assembled or ready to be assembled at home?

Your store salesperson or designer will explain the features and construction that account for the price differences in the individual pieces of furniture that interest you.

- **Your Enjoyment**

You will enjoy your new furniture to the fullest when it pleases your taste, meets the specific needs of your home and fits your budget. Regardless of the style you choose or the amount you can afford to spend, **furniture gives you an exceptional value., i.e.**  
**It will be enjoyed long after a car is replaced.**

## **How to Buy Wood Furniture**

When you hear salespeople refer to "case goods", they're talking about chests, dressers, tables - living room and dining room pieces. "Case goods" is an industry term that refers to furniture that's generally constructed of wood. In actuality, today's case goods may be made totally or in part of metal, plastics or other man-made materials. Materials are, of course, a determining factor in the look of a piece and will affect durability and price.

### **Furniture Woods**

All woods used for making furniture fall into two categories:

*hardwoods* and *softwoods*, but the designation doesn't really have anything to do with how hard or how soft the wood is.

Hardwood" identifies the trees that lose their leaves seasonally and "softwood" refers to those that keep their foliage all year.

- Among the hardwoods frequently used in making furniture are ash, cherry, maple, oak, pecan, teak, rosewood, walnut, mahogany and poplar.
- In the softwood category are cedar, cypress, fir, pine and redwood.

### **Construction Techniques**

- Several different woods may be used in the same piece of furniture. For example, the term solid cherry or solid mahogany means that *all exposed parts of the piece are made of solid wood*. The frame or other parts not visible to the eye might be of another wood such as gum or poplar.
- Generally, more expensive furniture usually is made of fine hardwoods such as mahogany, walnut, cherry or of "selected" softwoods such as pine. Medium-priced furniture may have a combination of different woods on exposed surfaces.

- Because trees don't grow in the shapes and sizes required for making furniture, pieces of wood are bonded together in different ways to achieve the necessary sizes and shapes. Four types of bonding are often used:

1. Wide boards are often cut into long narrower planks and bonded back together. In solid wood furniture, strips are carefully glued together to form the tops, sides and door panels. The interior may be of another wood.

2. Shaping is achieved by gluing blocks of wood together. These blocks can be machined for a deep carved pattern or turned and shaped into a leg, pedestal or post.

3. Combination wood panels are made by mixing wood particles, chips or flakes with resins and binding agents. These sheets are formed under extreme heat and tremendous pressure making them exceptionally strong, stable and resistant to warping. Called chipboard, particleboard, fiberboard or engineered wood, this material is frequently used on the backs of cabinets and doors or as cores for tops and panels.

4. Ply construction is achieved by adding layers, placed at cross grain, to a solid wood or particleboard core. Adhesives are placed on each layer and this "sandwich" is permanently bonded under high pressure. Modern glues and manufacturing techniques have made ply construction very strong and resistant to warping.

## Veneering...An Ancient Art

Much of the **most expensive furniture** produced today owes its exceptional beauty to veneers. **Veneering is centuries old.** The Egyptians used it and Sir Thomas Chippendale was a masterful practitioner of the art. His designs from the 1700's attest to the beauty and lasting quality of fine veneers. In Chippendale's time, veneering was so costly that few could afford it, but that isn't the case today.

- **Veneer** construction is the application of thin layers of highly decorative woods on top of **solid** cores, plywood, or medium-density fiberboard.
- Veneering allows great flexibility, making it possible to match grain patterns or use in-lays to create designs that nature can't produce in the solid wood. Today, wood furniture in all price ranges is made of veneer construction which allows maximum use of beautiful, distinctive grain patterns and rare woods at affordable prices.

## Finishes...The Final Touch of Beauty

An appropriate finish adds the final touch of beauty to wood furniture. A finish which provides uniform color and adds a degree of protection generally requires the application of several coats of oil, wax, lacquer or paint to the surface.

- **Clear finishes** allow the markings and grain variations of naturally beautiful woods to show through. Tinted or opaque finishes change the color of the wood and can make two different woods appear the same. Finishes can vary the look of a piece, making it appear smooth and sophisticated or rough-hewn and rustic.

- **Distressing** is a technique for aging new furniture and heightening its rustic appeal. The wood is beaten or battered before the finish is applied. Distressed finishes tend to hide finger marks and scratches and can be an excellent choice for rooms where there is a lot of activity.
- **Painted finishes** are another popular way of adding the final touch of beauty. Painted pieces can be more expensive than those with natural finishes because paint can emphasize flaws. Extra care must be taken at the factory to make sure that imperfections are removed from the wood.

Your salesperson or designer will be glad to explain the variations as well as to fill you in on how to extend the life of your new wood furniture by pampering it with proper care.



## Checklist for Buying Wood Furniture

- › Doors and drawers fit well
- › Drawers have glides and stops
- › Drawers glide easily when pulled
- › Drawer corners are joined securely
- › Insides of drawers are smooth and snag free
- › Long shelves have center supports
- › Doors swing open easily without squeaking or rubbing
- › Long doors are attached with sturdy hinges
- › Hardware is secure and strong
- › No rough edges on hardware
- › Interior lights operate easily
- › Entertainment units have hole for electric cord
- › Heavy balanced feeling when table is rocked
- › Table leaves fit properly
- › Finish feels smooth to the touch (except distressed)
- › Distressed finish has randomly spaced dark marks
- › Pieces are level

## How to Buy Upholstery

**Beauty and comfort** are the criteria for selecting a sofa, loveseat or chair. Fabric plays a starring role in the beauty of upholstered furniture, but it's the "undercover" story that makes the comfort difference. In most upholstered furniture, you'll find three basic parts beneath the eye-catching cover. They are the frame, the supporting foundation and the cushioning and padding.

### Poised for Comfort

The frame and supporting foundation are critical to comfort because they are underpinnings for the other components. Traditionally, the *best* frames were made of kiln-dried hardwood, which resists warping. Today, frames may also be made of steel, plastic, laminated boards or a combination of materials.

- Support can be provided by webbing, sling straps, slats, or springs of various types. The design, size and amount of support or softness desired by the designer will determine which type the designer uses.
- Springs can be single coil, double cone coil, or zigzag (sinuous S-type) and can be connected with twine, wire ties or clips.
- Eight-way hand-tied coil springing has been considered a mark of quality for decades. In this method, each coil spring is placed in the seat by hand and a skilled craftsman ties the coil into place with twine and interlocks it with the other coils using an intricate set of knots. Each coil is set so it responds to body weight with the proper degree of resiliency. *Eight-way, hand-tied remains the standard of excellence for those who can afford the very best. As an alternative, some vendors use an 8-way machine tied drop in unit which saves money on the cost of labor, while providing a similar support as the hand tied product.*
- Coil springs add depth and comfort but require adequate space. There are many comfortable, sleek, slim styles using the S-type spring. It's another example of how modern technology makes it possible to have good-looking, comfortable, serviceable upholstered furniture at imminently affordable prices.

### **From Top to Bottom**

Cushioning forms the next layer in the comfort story. Cushioning materials include cotton or polyester, polyurethane foam, and of course, down. Foam and polyester fiberfill wrap are much used padding materials. These man-made materials are durable, resilient, mothproof, and mildew and fungus resistant.

There are various grades of foam which lend themselves to various style applications. HC (High Comfort) foam and HR (High Resiliency) foam are excellent choices. Foam can be used alone, as a solid unit, wrapped with a softer polyester material or chopped and blown into new shapes for arms and backs that would otherwise be difficult to pad.

### **The Cover Story**

Express your taste in the colors, patterns and textures you choose for your upholstery fabrics. The choice is virtually unlimited. But lifestyle and budget should come into play.

Basically, there are two types of fabrics; naturals and synthetics. Nature's own are cotton, linen, silk and wool. Among synthetics are acetate, acrylic, nylon, rayon and polypropylene. Often fabrics are a blend of natural and synthetic fibers combined to provide the best qualities of each, unmatched beauty and lasting durability.

Generally, fabrics with tighter weaves and durable fibers such as polypropylene or nylon stand up better to the hard use of an active household. More glamorous fabrics such as satins, damasks and brocades are dramatic and exciting, but should be reserved for seating where serviceability isn't a primary concern. Nature has given us leather, one of today's most popular upholstery materials. It now comes in a rainbow of colors and a range of textures, designs and styles from timeless traditional to avant-garde contemporary. New methods of tanning and manufacturing also have brought leather into an affordable range for many pocketbooks.

### **The Ultimate Test**

Be seated. That's the only way to tell if the sofa or chair you're considering is the one for you. Be sure the height and angle of the back and depth of the seat are suited to your size. If others will be using the seating often, they should try it, too. This is especially important when selecting a recliner or "easy" chair. It must be a perfect fit for the person who uses it most.

That's another way of saying that the feel of comfort is an individual matter. As you shop, you must sit and bounce and test the degree of softness and resiliency. Choose the feel that pleases you and matches your needs. Most important, if the seat isn't comfortable, don't buy it. Your designer can will help you find something with exactly the look you want, that's comfortable for you, and compatible with your budget.

---

### Checklist for Buying Upholstered Furniture

---

- › Seats are comfortable
- › Backs are free of bumps and hard spots
- › Frame is sturdy, doesn't creak or wobble
- › Frame sits squarely on the floor
- › Frames and corners are well padded
- › Corners are braced and glued
- › Seams and welts are straight
- › Patterns and stripes match at seams
- › Patterns are centered
- › Cushions fit snugly
- › Cushions are resilient
- › Buttons are sewn on securely
- › Mechanisms on recliners and sleeper sofas work smoothly
- › Any moving parts clear fabric to prevent tearing
- › Metal parts are smooth with no sharp edges
- › Dual purpose seating is well balanced in each position
- › It has a gold UFAC hangtag which means it is constructed to be more resistant to cigarette ignition

