



William Yeoward Palmer curved sofa, handmade using traditional methods, from €6,050, Hedgeroe.ie

HOW TO BUY A SOFA

Industry experts share their top tips for successful shopping

Do your research: "Most retailers have a website and you can use it to create your own sofa shortlist and to get an idea of the styles different suppliers stock," says Rebecca Roe, managing director, Hedgeroe Interiors.

Make a paper template: "Cut a template from newspaper in the size of the sofa you're considering, place it on the floor and see how it looks visually as well as physically," says Dorothy Power, director, Roche Bobois (Roche-bobois.com).

Measure up: "Get out the tape measure and take note of the dimensions of your room. Don't forget to mark in radiators, windows and doors and take note of how they open. Using your measurements, some retailers can do a room mock-up on screen and show you how your sofa will look in the space. The room's measurements are also helpful come delivery," says Dorothy.

Think about the kind of use the sofa will be subjected to: "A family sofa needs a sturdy frame and durable fabric. Tall people need deeper seats. A shallow seat is ideal for older people or anyone who has difficulty getting up from a sitting position," says Richie Moylan, sales advisor, EZ Living Furniture (Ezlivingfurniture.ie).

Consider your room's proportions: "In open plan spaces avoid sofas with high backs that could visually cut off the room or block out the light. In high-ceilinged rooms prevent your sofa from looking swamped by the space by opting for a statement piece in a bold colour. In small rooms a low sofa will give the impression that the ceiling is actually higher than it is," says Eamonn Harrington, sofa buyer, Harvey Norman.

Try before you buy: "Spend time testing lots of sofas for comfort before you commit. Ask about the frame, check stitching and if it has buttons, make sure they're secure. Lift the sofa up to check for wobbles or twists and check the underside for a dust sheet," says Helen Coughlan, retail director, Meadows & Byrne.

Consider customising: "If you can't find the exact sofa you want in the showroom ask the retailer if it can be customised. You may be able to change the size, shape, fabric, or legs to create a sofa that's just right for you," says Eamonn.

Don't scrimp on cost: "A sofa is a big investment and if you want it to last you need to spend money. You can buy sofas for under €500, but a good sofa will cost from €1,500 upwards," says Richie.

Factor in delivery time: "Typically delivery can take between eight to 12 weeks; customised designs will take longer," says Rebecca. "When ordering, check that the upholstery material is in stock as this can add a few extra weeks to the schedule if not. The time of year will also affect delivery, with Christmas being the busiest period for sofa retailers."

Inspect before you accept: Don't accept delivery of your sofa until you have fully inspected it out of the packaging. If someone is accepting on your behalf get them to write 'unchecked' on the delivery docket. This will let the retailer know that the homeowner has yet to inspect it. A good delivery team will take away the packaging and put the legs on your sofa," says Helen.