



HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR WALLBED: THE SIMPLE, COMPREHENSIVE, DEFINITIVE GUIDE FROM WALLBEDS DIRECT

1) WHAT IS A WALLBED?

A wallbed is a bed which can be tipped up, or pivoted away flat against a wall, when not in use, freeing up valuable extra space for other uses during the day. 'Vertical' wallbeds pivot away on end. 'Horizontal' wallbeds pivot away sideways. (See last page for tips on how to choose between the two)?

2) WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF CHOOSING A WALLBED?

Unlike many other space-saving bed designs, such as sofa beds and z-beds, wallbeds are designed to pivot flat against a wall, **without** first having to be folded in half. This gives them two major practical advantages over most other space-saving bed designs:-

i) Comfort: Because neither their bases, nor their mattresses need to be folded, well designed wallbeds can be used with a proper interior-sprung mattress of the same type and standard as those used on good quality conventional divan beds.

Advantage: A really comfortable night's sleep every night.

ii) Convenience: A good quality wallbed will have been designed in such a way that there is sufficient space to leave all the bedding, **including the pillows**, in place when the bed is pivoted away. [When the wallbed is stored, the mattress and bedding are usually held in place by means of straps].

This eliminates the need to strip the bed down each time it is put away/take up valuable storage space, elsewhere, for the bedding when not in use and to make the bed up again, every time it is required for use, as is necessary with most sofa bed and z-bed designs.

Advantage: A high standard of convenience and substantial time savings, especially if used every night.

Because well designed wallbeds will take a proper sprung mattress and can be folded away fully made up, they are ideal for REGULAR NIGHTLY USE in studio flats, for instance, or children's bed/playrooms, teenagers' bed-sitting rooms, granny flats, etc.

3) WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A WALLBED?

Whilst there are numerous wallbed designs around, many of them fail to provide the comfort, convenience and ease-of-handling available from a well designed model, even though they may look appealing in brochures.

HERE ARE THE MAIN POINTS OF WALLBED DESIGN YOU SHOULD GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO, BEFORE PURCHASING:-

i) Does it fold away complete with a proper mattress and all the bedding – including the pillows?

A good wallbed design will allow sufficient space for a deep (20cms/ 9ins.) mattress, plus winter duvet, or blankets/quilt **and** pillows.

Some wallbed designs however, in an attempt to be as compact as possible, allow little space for either mattress, or bedding and some cannot even be folded away made up. This defeats the main objective of having a wallbed in the first place!

This is especially true of the “all singing/all dancing” wallbed designs which purport to double as bookcases, or sofas. Such designs are often attractively presented in catalogues and can appear ideal, at first glance.

More careful inspection/consideration, however, reveals that many of these ‘hybrid’ designs are compromises in every way, fulfilling neither function satisfactorily. Thus the ‘bed’ part will only take a very thin mattress and little or no bedding, whilst the ‘sofa’ part requires users to sit bolt-upright at all times, or the ‘bookcase’ part has limited capacity and can carry a strong risk of the contents spilling out, as the ‘bed’ part is deployed.

Such ‘hybrid’ designs are also generally quite expensive and fail to offer good value for money, being primarily suited more to occasional, rather than regular use.

A well designed wallbed will take a top quality interior sprung mattress, will store away complete with all the bedding and will be suitable for use EVERY NIGHT.

ii) Is it counter-balanced?

Lifting a properly designed wallbed up and down should be child's play and, whilst most wallbeds are counter-balanced, some aren't and many designs can nonetheless be heavy to lift up and down, especially when used in conjunction

with a proper interior sprung mattress, due to inadequate counter-balancing.

To get around this problem, a number of wallbed manufacturers supply their products only with foam mattresses, or sometimes even without mattresses, or with poor quality (lightweight) thin 'interior sprung' mattresses, made with extremely flimsy springs, which do not provide proper, healthy support.

Although some wallbed mechanisms are counter-balanced using weights, most modern wallbeds are either counter-balanced by means of springs, or pneumatic cylinders.

Whilst an appropriate pneumatic cylinder can work extremely well, most counter-balancing mechanisms based on pneumatic cylinders only work well when used in conjunction with a lightweight mattress and bedding. The tension on pneumatic cylinders cannot be adjusted to cater for different weights of mattress/bedding and they have the additional disadvantage that they can leak over time and become ineffective, eventually needing to be replaced.

Springs represent the simplest way of counter-balancing wallbeds. Sometimes these are arranged in 'packs', which can be adjusted to some extent, to cope with different loadings – (i.e. different weights of mattress, etc.), but the simplest method is just to use more springs for heavier loadings and arrange the springs in such a way that they can easily be added or removed, to suit the situation. Good quality springs normally retain their tension almost indefinitely

A well counter-balanced wallbed can be lifted up and down effortlessly, by a child, an elderly person, or by many disabled people, even from their wheelchairs and even when used in conjunction with a heavy, conventional, orthopaedic interior-sprung mattress.

iii) Does it have a good base?

Wallbeds are available with various types of bases. Solid metal, wooden, or upholstered platform bases are not ideal for wallbeds, as they do not allow air to circulate freely around the mattress and bedding and condensation can be a problem, especially where the beds are folded away immediately after use into a tight, closed cabinet.

Many Continental European wallbed designs come with wooden slatted bases and, whilst these generally provide good lumbar support and are usually perfectly adequate for normal domestic use, wooden slats are breakable and are not recommended for more heavy-duty applications such as lettings, younger children who are likely to jump up and down on their beds, etc.

Another disadvantage of wooden slatted bases is that they are better suited to use with foam, rather than interior sprung, mattresses. This is because, depending on the size and spacing of the springs in interior sprung mattresses and of the slats on the base, a situation can arise where some of the mattress springs fall wholly within the gaps between the slats and are not therefore supported by the base. This can result in excessive wear on the mattress and poor support for the occupant(s).

A number of wallbed designs are available with steel bases of various sorts. The type consisting of bits of wire, linked together in a square pattern and connected to the frame with small springs tends to be of poor quality and be prone to sagging

Solid steel bases and rigid thick metal grid bases have no 'give' and do not therefore offer healthy support.

In our extensive experience of wallbed designs from all over the world, the most suitable base consists of a highly tensioned woven stainless steel mesh. This provides the same standards of comfort and support as good quality wooden slats, but is virtually unbreakable and can be pre-tensioned in such a way that it will NEVER sag.

Other advantages of this type of base are that it provides ideal (continuous) support for interior sprung mattresses and allows air to circulate freely around the mattress even when the bed is stored away.

The best bases combine strength and proper support for both the mattress and the occupant(s) and allow for good ventilation, when the bed is stored.

iv) Does it have automatic leg action?

Most wallbeds are equipped with retracting front legs of one sort, or another. The most practical and convenient designs include legs which open automatically as the bed is pulled down and retract again, automatically, as the bed is stowed away.

Some wallbed manufacturers incorporate quite complex automatic leg movements, which tend to be fragile and are easily broken. The best and by far the most robust method is to use a simple bar which pushes the leg open, as the bed comes down and pulls it back in again, as the bed goes up.

Many wallbed designs (especially those in which the front panel is fixed to the

bottom of the bed) do **not** offer automatic leg action.

Automatic, rather than manual, leg action is much more convenient and offers significant Health & Safety and other operating benefits. This is especially true in heavy-duty contract applications (i.e. rentals).

v) Is it quick, safe and easy to use?

Many wallbed designs are based on having the 'doors' of the cabinet in which they are housed, attached to the bottom of the bed. This looks good in catalogues, but has several practical limitations in use.

Here are some of the DISADVANTAGES of having the 'doors' (front panel) fixed underneath the bed:-

(a) You often have to tuck ALL the bedding in meticulously, on 'front panel' beds EVERY TIME you fold the bed away: By far the biggest drawback of having the 'doors' (front panel) fixed underneath the bed is that, on many such designs, before the bed can be folded away, you have to go round and tuck all the bedding in carefully, along both sides and at the foot end of the bed, otherwise the bedding will become trapped between the front panel and the sides and top of the housing, when the bed is folded away.

Catalogues featuring designs like this often only show pictures of the beds stowed (with the bedding tucked neatly away, or with no bedding), and folded down, (usually with a duvet, or bedspread deployed to cover the front panel and any unsightly 'mechanism' underneath). Such illustrations imply that you can simply take the folded down bed, as pictured, and flip it away. This is usually not the case.

(b) Fixed 'front panels' are prone to damage and can cause injury:

Because the front panels (doors) fixed underneath many wallbeds are normally somewhat larger than the wallbed mechanisms themselves, you end up with a sharp edge all the way round the bed, on which to bump your shins! It is also quite easy to damage the edges of these panels when the bed is deployed and to damage the underneath (front) of the panel, by lowering the bed onto something which has been inadvertently left in the way and which will then spoil the appearance of the 'doors' when the bed is stowed away again.

(c) 'Front panel' bed legs can be hazardous: Many wallbeds with a panel underneath have rotating front legs which stick out beyond the front panel at the foot end and are ideal for stubbing your toes on! In most cases these legs

have to be operated MANUALLY, with one hand, as you bring the bed down/stow it away again, with the other hand.

(d) 'Front panel' housing widths are not flexible: Wallbeds which take a panel underneath need to be fixed through the sides of their housings. This means that they usually have to be purchased complete with housings, or that bespoke housings have to be produced to very precise dimensions, which cannot be varied.

(e) Many 'front panel' models have weight problems: Attaching the 'doors' of the wallbed to the bottom of the bed can add very considerably to the weight. This, in turn, can result in excessive demands being made on the counter-balancing mechanism used. The outcome is often that the wallbed is suitable only for use in conjunction light-weight mattresses and bedding or that, if used with a good quality sprung mattress, it becomes heavy to lift up and down.

From a practical point of view, it is generally more satisfactory to have independent doors to conceal a wallbed, rather than doors fixed underneath the bed frame.

Here are some of the ADVANTAGES of using wallbeds which are designed to be concealed by means of independent doors:-

(a) They're much quicker to operate: Although you clearly have to open the doors before you can pull the bed down and close them again after the bed has been stowed away, this takes just seconds.

You don't have to tuck the bedding in carefully, every time you want to put the bed away, as you often do with 'front panel' designs.

These beds can be stowed away with the duvet left hanging down the sides/end of the bed (as they would be on a conventional divan bed) and can also be used with box valances and other traditional bedding such as bedspreads, etc., which can all be stowed away with the bed.

(b) They can easily be equipped with automatically opening and retracting legs:

Because there is no front panel in the way, simple, safe, automatic leg action can be provided, underneath the bed frame.

(c) They're suitable for most situations: There are very few situations in which a

wallbed cannot be incorporated into a cabinet with independent doors:

Most situations involve wallbeds incorporated into a 'run' – (i.e. a whole wall) of cabinets. Such situations lend themselves to use with wallbeds concealed by simple left- and right- hand opening doors, provided there is sufficient space to swing the doors out of the way.

If the wallbed is to be incorporated into a run of cupboards, we recommend that the doors concealing the bed open by at least 165 - 180 degrees – [i.e. flat against the adjacent cabinet(s)].

A variety of suitable hinges are readily available from hardware shops, including adapted 'concealed' (kitchen unit type) hinges.

This does not mean that you cannot access the adjacent cabinets, when the bed is down, ready for use. You simply swing the bed doors against the sides of the (lowered) wallbed, access the adjacent cabinet(s) and swing the bed doors back flat against the adjacent cabinet(s), afterwards – (all in just a few seconds).

Bi-fold doors are usually used to conceal wider (double) wallbeds. These are quite straightforward to construct – (the two panels being simply butt-hinged together from behind). They should ideally **not** be tracked, but should just be hinged off the sides of the wallbed housing, since tracked doors tend to 'bunch up' at each end and stick out at 90 degrees, in the way of getting into and out of bed, making the bed up, etc.

Even in situations where there is just room for a wallbed to be fitted between, say, a doorway and a return wall, subject to the appropriate hinges being used, independent doors are usually still the preferred choice.

(d) The size of the wallbed housing can be varied at will: As the bed does not have to be fixed through the sides of the housing, the sides can be located at whatever distance from the bed is convenient, or appropriate, which makes this type of wallbed ideal for incorporating into your own design of cabinet, to exactly suit your situation.

If you are short of space you'll select a housing which fits fairly closely around the bed. Alternatively, space permitting, you could incorporate night shelves, or even night tables and inglenooks next to the wallbed and **within** the housing – (all concealable, in seconds, by means of independent doors).

(e) There's quite a range of independent door designs to choose from: Apart

from simple left- and right-hand opening 'wardrobe' type doors and bi-fold doors (already mentioned), there are numerous other types of independent door systems to choose from. These include simple sliding doors, pivot sliding doors and other more complex tracked door systems – (not dealt with here).

Sliding doors (often sliding mirror doors which can make a small room appear much larger) are quite a popular solution to concealing wallbeds. If you are planning to use sliding doors remember that the length of wall in question will need to be more than twice the width of the bed, (e.g. you will need a 305cm/10ft. long wall in order to conceal a 137cm/4ft.6ins. wide wallbed, by means of sliding doors). This is because the doors need to slide out of the way to allow a sufficiently wide opening for the bed to be brought down. Remember also that with sliding doors, when the bed is deployed, you cannot access the adjacent cupboard space, without first putting the bed up out of the way again.

Although quite costly and relatively complicated, pivot sliding doors (of the type of used on many TV cabinets nowadays), which first open at 90 degrees and can then be pushed straight back into the housing itself, are becoming increasingly popular. Cabinets using this type of door often have 'double' sides with space in between the two, for the doors to slide back into, when open.

vi) Is it easy to install?

Just as a wallbed should be easy and convenient to use, it should also be simple and easy to fix. Many of the wallbed mechanisms on the market (mostly the ones with a panel underneath) require quite heavy-duty fixings, or complicated housings, which are beyond the skills of many DIY enthusiasts and even frighten many professionals!

Others are designed to be fixed wholly or partly to the wall. This is not a very good idea, as it usually places a significant strain on the wall in question and can render such beds unsuitable for use in conjunction with partition/stud walls, which are common nowadays.

The simplest and safest way of fixing a wallbed is usually to the floor. The best designed models can be fitted directly to the floorboards, (no need to fix into the joists), or can be fixed into concrete floors by simply drilling and plugging. Where under floor central heating or other situations prevent fixing directly into the floor, the beds can be fixed to a board which is, in turn, fixed to the skirting and to the inside bottom of the housing.

A well designed wallbed will be quick and easy to fit.

vii) Is the mechanism simple and sensibly located?

Some wallbeds have quite complicated mechanisms, so there is potentially more to go wrong. There are no hard and fast rules, but generally 'simplest' is best!

Some wallbed designs have part of their mechanism located on the outsides of the bed frames. This wastes valuable space. The best thought-out mechanisms are located underneath the bed frames, so that the overall width of the wallbeds can be kept to a minimum.

Avoid complicated mechanisms and those which are located 'outside' the bed frames and thus waste valuable space.

viii) Can the wallbed be used with a headboard?

Most 'vertical' wallbeds lend themselves to being used in conjunction with some kind of headboard. Sometimes this is a conventional headboard mounted on the wall behind, but the best headboards are operated by the bed itself and are simple to construct and use.

Headboards on wallbeds are handy for sitting up and reading, or watching TV, in bed.

ix) How quick and easy is it to secure the mattress and bedding in position, for stowing away?

Various methods can be used to hold the mattress and bedding in place when the bed is folded away. Most wallbeds use some form of strap and, again, some methods are far more practical/quicker than others.

Webbing straps with buckles which do up in the middle are best avoided as it is fiddly to do up the buckle and there are often 2 or 3 buckles involved even for a single bed. Furthermore, when not in use, these straps hang down at the sides of the bed and are quite easy to trip over.

The simplest way of retaining the mattress and bedding in position, is by means of flexible (e.g. rubber) retaining straps which are attached permanently to the head end of the bed and are simply stretched across and hooked on to the foot end, when the bed is ready to be stowed away.

Only one strap is needed to hold the mattress and bedding in place on single beds (2 straps on double beds) and, when not in use, the loose (hook) end of the strap can be stored at the head end of the bed where it is safely out of the way and cannot be trodden on, or tripped over.

When it's time to stow the bed away, well thought-out bedding retaining straps can be deployed in literally seconds.

4) 'HORIZONTAL' OR 'VERTICAL' – HOW TO DECIDE:

Wallbeds come in both 'horizontal' (sideways folding) and 'vertical' versions, here are some tips on how to choose between the two:-

In general, the rule of thumb is to opt for a 'vertical' wallbed unless there is a really good reason for choosing a 'horizontal' wallbed instead. This is because 'vertical' wallbeds have a number of advantages over 'horizontal' wallbeds, namely:-

i) 'Vertical' wallbeds use up less space along the wall, as they fold away widthwise, up the wall, as opposed to lengthwise, along the wall. They are therefore generally better suited to incorporation into a run of cabinets, along an entire wall, for instance. 'Horizontal' wallbeds can also be incorporated into a run of cabinets, but this is more awkward to do.

ii) A 'Vertical' wallbed is usually accessible from both sides and from the end, making it easy to make up in the morning and enabling the two occupants of double 'vertical' wallbeds, to get 'in and out' on their respective sides.

'Horizontal' wallbeds are more difficult to make up, as you only have access to the two ends and one side at best and, if the 'inside' member of a couple needs to get out of bed at night, they will have to either climb off the end of the bed, or over their partner to get out and subsequently back in again.

iii) Because 'Vertical' wallbeds have their head end against the wall, they are usually suitable for use with some sort of headboard. Unless 'Horizontal' wallbeds are sited in the corner of a room, they cannot be used in conjunction with a headboard – (other than one which clips on when the bed is down and is removed again before the bed is folded away).

There are however a few situations in which 'Horizontal' wallbeds 'have the edge'. These include narrow box rooms, dining rooms and rooms with sloping ceilings: - If you want to fit a wallbed in the middle of a wall, in a narrow room, a 'Horizontal' bed is the only option. The incorporation of a single 'Horizontal' bed

into a sideboard-type cabinet in a dining room is quite popular, particularly as the bed can usually be lowered, without the need to move the table and chairs.

The other situation in which a 'Horizontal' wallbed is the preferred option is where there is a sloping ceiling (in loft conversions, for instance) and there is insufficient height for a 'Vertical' wallbed.

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