

# Folding & Activity Tables

## Q1. What is the difference between a folding table and an activity table?

**A:** In commercial furniture terminology, "folding table" most commonly refers to a table where the legs fold flat against the underside of the table top, allowing the entire unit to be stored in a compact profile and deployed without tools. "Activity table" is a broader category term that can describe any table used in multi-purpose activity settings — cafeterias, recreation rooms, daycare facilities, community centers — and may include both folding and non-folding table designs. In practice, most commercial activity tables are also folding tables, as the deployment flexibility of the folding design is central to the multi-use application the tables serve. The distinction matters most in procurement because an "activity table" specification in an educational or recreational setting may include non-folding tables with fixed legs that are designed for permanency in a single configured space, whereas a "folding table" specification implies the ability to store the table out of the way when the space serves a different function. Clarify the intended use case — does the space need to be fully cleared and reconfigured, or does the table stay in a roughly consistent location and the activity designation simply refers to the type of use? This determines whether you need a folding leg design or whether a fixed-leg activity table design is appropriate. In recreational and childcare contexts, "activity table" often implies a table at a children's height (20 to 24 inches), in a durable, easy-to-clean construction, used for crafts, meals, and learning activities. These tables may be folding or non-folding. In corporate and institutional contexts, "activity table" typically refers to a banquet- or standard-height folding table used in multi-purpose room configurations. Always clarify the specific height, construction, and deployment requirements before using either term in a commercial procurement specification to avoid confusion between these very different product categories.

## Q2. How do I determine how many folding tables I need for a given space?

**A:** Begin with the most space-intensive configuration the room will be asked to accommodate. If a 2,000-square-foot multi-purpose room must serve a seated banquet for 150 persons, calculate the table and chair count required for that configuration: at standard banquet 60-by-30-inch tables with 8 seats per table, you need approximately 19 tables for 152 seats. Add 10 to 15% beyond the minimum required for the largest configuration to provide buffer for broken or being-repaired tables and for configuration variations that may require more tables. Consider whether the tables will ever be used in multiple simultaneous configurations — some tables set up for one event while others are in storage from a previous event. If the venue hosts overlapping events or transitions without a full reset between uses, having excess table inventory equal to 125 to 150% of the maximum single-configuration requirement is appropriate. Calculate the storage space required for the full inventory before committing to a quantity; running out of storage space after purchase is a common and frustrating problem for facilities that purchase more tables than their storage infrastructure can accommodate. Also plan for table accessories that must be stored and deployed with the tables: table pads, linen clips, power strips or charging units for tech-equipped configurations, and signage holders. These accessories multiply the effective storage requirement beyond the table footprint alone. A comprehensive inventory plan that accounts for tables plus all accessories gives a more accurate picture of total storage space requirements than a table-only count.

### **Q3. What surface material should I specify for a commercial folding table?**

**A:** The surface material decision depends on four factors: aesthetic requirements, durability requirements, cleaning and sanitization needs, and the environment (indoor vs. outdoor, climate-controlled vs. uncontrolled). For corporate, education, and institutional environments where a professional appearance is required, high-pressure laminate over an engineered wood core is the standard. HPL provides a wide range of surface appearances (wood grain, solid color, pattern), durability appropriate for commercial use, and compatibility with standard cleaning agents. Specify NEMA LD3 Class II or higher for commercial-grade laminate performance. For food service, events, recreation, and outdoor applications where staining, moisture, and impact resistance are higher priorities than aesthetic refinement, molded polyethylene or thermoplastic tops are the more appropriate choice. These tops are impervious to the spills, stains, and rough handling that would damage laminate-core tables in the same environment. They are available in a limited range of colors (typically neutral institutional colors rather than custom design options) but provide significantly longer service life in high-abuse applications. For temporary use or applications where table replacement is frequent — rental inventory, short-duration events, or environments where tables are routinely moved on rough surfaces — prioritize robustness over aesthetic refinement. Edge construction is the first failure point on laminate-top folding tables: sharp impacts on exposed laminate edges cause chipping, cracking, and delamination that is cosmetically damaging even if the table is still structurally sound. Specify tables with substantial edge banding (minimum 3mm PVC or solid-wood edge treatment) for any environment where tables will experience regular edge-to-edge or edge-to-wall contact during setup and breakdown.

### **Q4. What weight capacity do I need for different table applications?**

**A:** Load capacity requirements for folding tables vary significantly by application. For standard banquet dining — plates, glassware, serving dishes, centerpieces — a distributed load capacity of 200 to 250 pounds across the full 60-by-30-inch surface is adequate for typical use. Most quality commercial folding banquet tables are rated at or above this level. For applications where heavier loads are expected — catering buffets with stacked dishes and serving equipment, display tables with heavy merchandise, tables loaded with AV or production equipment — specify tables rated for 300 to 400 pounds distributed load. Concentrated point loads are a separate specification consideration from distributed loads. A heavy monitor on a small footprint, a commercial food processor, or a piece of laboratory equipment concentrates significant weight over a small contact area. The table surface must resist concentrated loads without local deflection or surface failure at the load point. Request the manufacturer's concentrated point load rating (typically applied at the center of the table surface) and compare it to the heaviest single item the table will need to support. If concentrated loads are a regular concern, specify a table with a denser core material (particleboard core rather than honeycomb core) for better point-load resistance, even at the cost of additional table weight. Stacking — placing tables on top of each other during transport or storage — is not a specified load condition in most table standards but is a practical occurrence at facilities with stacking table carts. Tables designed for stacking have reinforced corners and frame designs that distribute the stacked load to the table's structural elements rather than to the surface. Specify tables with stacking compatibility (confirmed by the manufacturer) if stacking is part of the intended storage method. Stacking tables not designed for stacking causes surface damage and progressive frame deformation that shortens service life significantly.

**Q5. How should I specify table carts, and how many do I need?**

**A:** Table carts should be specified at the same time as the tables and from the same manufacturer or a manufacturer that certifies compatibility. A cart designed for a specific table's folded dimensions will hold the table securely, allow efficient loading and unloading, and move the table without damaging the surface. A non-compatible cart may hold the table loosely, causing it to slide and impact other tables during transport, or may not accommodate the table's folded profile at all. Calculate cart quantity based on table inventory and the maximum number of tables that need to be simultaneously in transit. If you have 100 tables and a cart holds 12 tables, you need approximately 9 carts to transport the full inventory simultaneously. In practice, 9 to 10 carts for 100 tables is the right quantity for a large multi-purpose facility; smaller facilities can use fewer carts but should have at least 2 to ensure that table movement is never stalled waiting for a cart to make a round trip. Add one spare cart per 50 tables as a buffer for carts in maintenance or repair. Cart quality is as important as table quality in a high-volume deployment environment. A cart with weak welds, poorly graded casters, or inadequate table retention will fail prematurely and create operational disruptions and potential injury risks when tables shift during transport. Specify carts with full-perimeter steel frame construction, commercial-grade swivel casters rated for the loaded cart weight, and a positive retention mechanism (strap, bar, or frame element) that prevents tables from sliding during movement. Caster lock capability is important for carts that will be parked on sloped floors or in any position where unsecured rolling could cause the cart to move unexpectedly.

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