

Office Chairs

These are the 5 most commonly asked questions about office chairs for commercial office environments, with straightforward answers to help you make a confident, well-informed purchase decision.

Top 5 Questions — Office Chairs

1

What is the difference between a task chair and an executive chair?

A task chair is designed for sustained daily use — 6 to 8 hours of computer work — and prioritizes full ergonomic adjustability over aesthetics. Task chairs typically feature a mid-back or high-back design, full lumbar support, 4D armrests, and a seat slider for depth adjustment. An executive chair is designed for private offices and managerial roles, offering a high-back design with premium upholstery (leather or bonded leather), a headrest, and a more visually commanding appearance. Executive chairs often sacrifice some adjustability range for aesthetics and may not be as well-suited for intensive 8-hour computer work. For employees at desks all day, a task chair is the better ergonomic choice; executive chairs are appropriate for private offices where image matters and sustained computer use is balanced with calls, meetings, and reading.

2

What ergonomic adjustments should a commercial office chair have?

A commercial-grade chair intended for daily use should have at minimum: pneumatic seat height adjustment (gas cylinder, 17–22 inch range), adjustable lumbar support (up/down positioning to target the lower back curve), seat depth adjustment (seat slider that lets 2–3 fingers fit between the seat edge and back of the knee), armrest adjustment (4D — height, width, depth, and pivot), and backrest tilt with tension control and multi-position tilt lock. Additional adjustments found on premium models include forward seat tilt (reduces thigh pressure during forward work), adjustable headrest, and independently reclining backrest. Chairs without seat depth adjustment force users to either perch on the front edge or lose contact with the backrest, both of which undermine lumbar support over an 8-hour workday.

3**What does BIFMA certification mean for an office chair?**

BIFMA certification means the chair has been tested and validated under the ANSI/BIFMA x5.1 standard, which covers structural integrity under repeated load cycling in a commercial environment. The standard tests include seat load (front durability), backrest load, drop tests, and armrest strength — all simulating the daily stresses of commercial use. BIFMA-certified chairs are designed for 24,000+ hours of use. Non-certified chairs may be rated for residential use only, which assumes far lower daily cycle counts and shorter product life. For any commercial office purchase, BIFMA certification is the minimum threshold that distinguishes a commercial-grade product from a residential one — always verify certification before purchasing chairs for a business environment.

4**What type of casters should I specify for my office chairs?**

Caster selection depends entirely on floor type. Hard casters (nylon or hard plastic wheels) are designed for carpeted floors — their harder surface rolls smoothly through carpet fibers. Soft casters (polyurethane or rubber wheels) are designed for hard floors — wood, tile, polished concrete, and luxury vinyl plank — and prevent scratching and surface damage. Specifying hard casters on a hard floor will damage the floor surface over time; soft casters on heavy carpet create resistance and make the chair difficult to move. If your office has both carpet and hard flooring, soft polyurethane casters work adequately on both surfaces. Confirm the floor type at each workstation before placing an order, as caster type is typically factory-set and not easily changed after delivery.

5**How do I choose between a mesh back and an upholstered back office chair?**

Mesh-back chairs are the preferred choice for warm environments, long work sessions, and users who run warm — the open weave allows continuous airflow through the back, which significantly reduces the heat and moisture buildup that occurs with foam-and-fabric upholstery during extended sitting. Mesh backs also hold their shape better than foam over time, as foam compresses and loses support after years of use. Upholstered (fabric or leather) backs provide a softer, more cushioned feel and a more traditional aesthetic, and are preferred for executive environments or conference rooms where the look matters. For daily 6–8 hour computer work, mesh is the ergonomic choice; for private offices and meeting rooms where appearance is important and session length varies, upholstered is appropriate.

Have more questions? Our office furniture specialists are ready to help.

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