

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK

10 QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU BUY A RECEPTION DESK

A reception desk is the first physical interaction a visitor has with your organization. It shapes perception instantly — and it has to function well for the staff using it every day. Reception desks are also among the most complex furniture purchases because they must balance ADA accessibility, aesthetics, storage, cable management, and ergonomics simultaneously. These 10 questions ensure you get all of it right.

1. Does the desk configuration include an ADA-compliant transaction counter?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that accessible customer service counters have a section no higher than 36" from the finished floor and at least 36" wide, with a clear floor space of 30" x 48" in front of it. If your organization serves the public or clients, ADA compliance is a legal requirement, not a preference. Confirm the desk configuration includes a dedicated accessible counter section and that its height is documented at 36" or below in the product specifications.

2. What is the standard transaction counter height, and how does it relate to staff working height?

The standard reception transaction counter — the raised surface where visitors sign in, review documents, or exchange items — is typically 42"–44" high. The staff-side working surface behind it is standard desk height: 29"–30". These two surfaces must work together: the elevated transaction counter should not block line-of-sight between seated staff and standing visitors. Confirm the elevation differential and verify it allows comfortable visual communication at both heights.

3. What is the overall footprint, and does it fit my entry with clearance?

Reception desks range from compact L-shapes at 60" x 60" to large curved configurations exceeding 10 feet in any single dimension. Measure your entry with precision: doorway widths, HVAC register locations, ceiling height if the desk includes a tall header panel, and egress clearance (ADA requires a minimum 36" clear path). Reception desk components are typically large panel sections shipped freight — delivery access must be confirmed before ordering.

4. How is cable management handled for computers, phones, and monitors?

Reception staff run a computer, multiline phone, one or two monitors, a credit card terminal, and USB devices simultaneously. Ask where grommets are positioned on both the work surface and modesty panel, whether a wire chase or raceway is integrated into the structure, and how power reaches the desk from the wall. Surface-run cabling at a reception desk is a professional presentation failure.

5. Is the desk modular, and can it be reconfigured as the office changes?

Many commercial reception desks are modular: a primary section, return, transaction counter, and optional side wings that can be reconfigured, expanded, or relocated without replacing the entire desk. Freestanding one-piece units cost less but offer no flexibility. If your space may change in the next 3–5 years, modular construction is worth

the premium.

6. What material is the exterior panel, and how will it hold up to public contact?

Reception desk exteriors absorb daily knocks, scuffs, and cart bumps. TFL is most commonly used for durability and price. HPL panel exteriors are also a strong option for high-traffic environments. Veneer is attractive but may experience edge chipping in busy reception areas. Ask about exterior panel material specifically — the work surface spec alone does not tell you what the front-facing panels are made of.

7. Does the desk provide adequate under-counter storage for staff?

A reception desk that looks impressive but provides no practical storage forces staff to keep supplies, paperwork, and equipment on the visible work surface — which undermines both the appearance and the efficiency of the reception function. Confirm the storage configuration: pedestal drawers, file drawers, open shelving behind the modesty panel, or lockable cabinets. At minimum, a reception desk should include one locking file drawer and adequate open storage for daily-use supplies.

8. What is the desk's header or privacy panel height, if included?

Some reception desk configurations include a tall back panel or header element that creates visual separation between the entry and the office behind it. Header panel heights typically range from 48" to 72" and are sometimes fabric-wrapped for acoustic benefit. If you intend the reception area to provide visual privacy for the work area behind it, confirm the header panel height in the standing sightline context — a 48" panel provides limited privacy when staff are not seated.

9. Is professional installation required, and what does it involve?

Reception desks are typically the most complex furniture installation in any office project. Multiple panels, an elevated transaction counter, and cable management must all align within tight tolerances. Plan for a crew of 2–3 people working 3–6 hours; professional installation typically runs \$300–\$800+. Confirm the dealer offers this service and budget for it upfront.

10. What does the warranty cover?

We offer a Free Lifetime Warranty that covers any manufacturer defect. Normal wear and tear, patron abuse, or damage is not covered. For reception desks that see heavy daily traffic, our Free Lifetime Warranty at FindOfficeFurniture.com gives you the confidence to invest in a quality piece knowing manufacturer defects are covered.

Visit FindOfficeFurniture.com for our complete Reception Desk Buyer's Guide, with ADA planning resources, size calculators, and configuration options. Call 888-719-4960 to speak with a specialist about your specific entry layout.

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