

TABLE

TALK



**PORTABLE TABLES:
Assessing your
massage table needs**



It's time for you to look for a new massage table.

Where do you start?



Heritage Table



Melody Chair

It is important to understand the relative merits of a range of massage table characteristics and differences. The team at Custom Craftworks put together a list of the significance of features, trade-offs, costs, benefits and other issues (quality, durability, performance) related to choosing an appropriate table.

TABLE

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FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Price

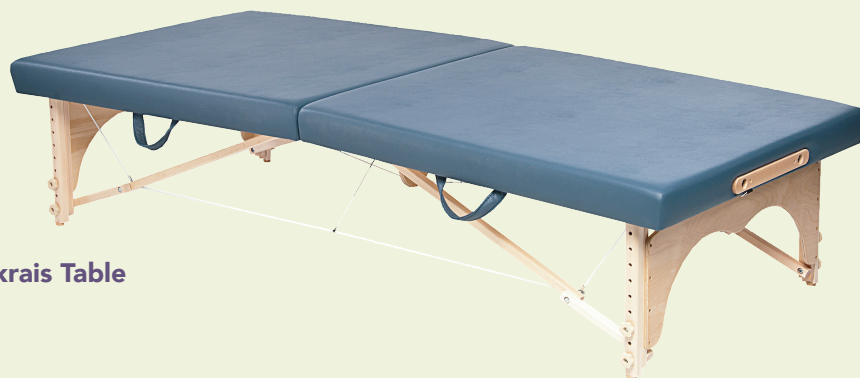


Questions to Consider:

- Is there a meaningful relationship between price and quality?
- What is the real cost of a massage table?
- Which table will best help therapists build a successful practice?
- Which table will help make the best first impression on clients?
- Which table will help therapists deliver their best work?

There is a direct relationship between price and quality of massage tables. Building a high-quality table requires a well-conceived design, the use of appropriate materials and skilled workmanship. To achieve cost savings, companies often compromise on materials and workmanship. The differences in table quality can significantly affect the experience of both clients and therapists.

To build a successful practice one must give clients an experience that invites them back. Every component of a therapist's work, from the uniqueness of touch to the comfort and safety of the equipment, leaves an impression. An unstable, uncomfortable or squeaky table detracts from the client's experience. If a client (who might otherwise become a regular) chooses not to return, it will cost the therapist hundreds if not thousands of dollars in potential earnings.



Feldenkrais Table

Safety



Questions to Consider:

- How does one identify a safe table?
- Are there objective indicators of table safety?

Many companies assign a “weight capacity” to their tables and doing so developed a series of tests specifically for massage tables. Companies subject massage tables to a variety of different tests, the test considered most significant is intended to reveal a table’s “dynamic load” capacity. This is the capacity of the table to withstand a dropped weight from a specific height (simulating the effect of a table undergoing the rigorous movements that accompany massage.)

Therapists make a commitment to client safety when they put a client on their table. The implication is that the equipment the massage therapist uses will safely and securely support the client without fail. Choosing a high quality, professional table is the first step in providing such assurance. The subsequent steps require the therapist to properly set-up and maintain the table. With adequate care, a professional-grade massage table will safely perform in a practice over many years. The best tables can perform for the length of a therapist’s career.

Stability



Questions to Consider:

- Does the stability of a table contribute to a client’s experience?
- Does stability impact the amount of energy a therapist expends during a treatment?
- Does increased stability add to the weight of the table?



Stability affects a massage treatment in two ways. For clients, stability or “containment of movement” inspires confidence and a feeling of safety. Feeling safe is a prerequisite to “letting go” and the disengagement of the sympathetic nervous system. For therapists, containment of movement means greater stroke efficiency and less fatigue of their hands, wrists, arms and shoulders. Therapists intend their energy to affect muscles and joints. If the table flexes or moves laterally excessively, then energy is wasted. With few exceptions, reinforcing tables to minimize movement and enhance stability adds to the weight of the table. A well-designed table offers gains in stability with minimal additional weight.

Comfort

Questions to Consider:

- How important is comfort in a therapy treatment?
- What factors influence comfort in a table?
- Why is foam density an important consideration in comfort and longevity?



Delivering an experience of total relaxation to clients is the first step toward a great treatment, client satisfaction and retention. A well-designed foam system should offer firm support for the skeletal structure and moderately firm support to accommodate the soft tissues. Foam systems that use light density foams offer an initial feeling of plush softness, but have thinner cell walls that break down much faster. These systems quickly lose memory and full loft, compromising the longevity of the table.

Weight

Questions to Consider:

- Are you planning to do “outcall” work in your practice?
- Will outcalls be primarily an initial marketing strategy to build a clientele base or an ongoing component of your business plan?
- What else do you plan to bring along? (Linens, oils, music, body tools, etc.)
- Should you consider a table cart for transporting your table and all your supplies you need in one trip?
- What are the potential tradeoffs in choosing a “super light” table?

If you are set up in one location most of the time, table weight is not a factor. However, if you do a lot of outcall work, ease of transport is more important. There are two ways to achieve this. One approach is to use a table cart and roll the table to the client's door.



Noise



Questions to Consider:

- What is the impact of noise during a massage therapy treatment?
- What does squeaking reflect about a table?

Often overlooked as a factor in client satisfaction, noise adds to the environmental clutter. It puts obstacles in the way of entry into deep relaxation. Not only does table noise distract, it can also raise questions in the client's mind about the safety of the table. Until clients are assured of safety, a part of their consciousness carries the concern and is unable to let go.

In an article in *Massage & Bodywork*, Nina McIntosh writes, "If anything disrupts the quiet of a session... clients should be given a discount...we're responsible for providing a relaxing environment." The point is not to give discounts, but to secure a quiet and relaxing environment for your clients. The success of a treatment — and a practice — rides on it.

Because noise is created when table parts rub together, a more solidly built table offers greater opportunity for silence (not to mention reliability and client security.)



Luxor Table

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Originally founded in 1986, Custom Craftworks supports the vital work of professional manual therapists and educators in the massage, therapy and holistic health fields by designing, building and sourcing the best quality massage tables, chairs, equipment and accessories available.



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