



How to Buy the Right Shovel

Buying the right shovel is the most important decision you can make when it comes to snow removal equipment. It is imperative that you buy a shovel specifically designed for snow removal rather than just using any shovel you have available. Different snow shovels will be better designed for people of varying heights, as well as for varying physical strengths. Thus, when buying your shovel, it is necessary to consider who will be using the shovel most often and buy one best suited for that specific individual.

Be sure that the shovel is the right length for you; with the blade on the ground, the snow shovel should come up to approximately your chest height. A longer shovel decreases the strain on the back because you aren't required to bend as far, but a shorter shovel makes the efficiency of lifting the snow easier. For this reason, chest height is a guide; try the shovel out and pick one that feels right for you. During the lifting portion of the trial, move one hand down closer to the blade while keeping the other hand on the handle in order to decrease the lever arm. Some snow shovels are designed with a bend in the shaft to decrease the strain on the back when lifting. These shovels are an option but may not feel right for everyone, so be sure to try the shovel out and consider what is most important in your individual situation.

The blade of the snow shovel is generally made of either steel, aluminum, or plastic and each material has its own benefits. Steel is very durable and good for cutting through ice, but it is heavy. Aluminum is lighter and also strong and durable but can bend more easily. Plastic is lightweight but can shatter more easily if used under harsher conditions such as when breaking up ice. Many snow shovels are made from plastic but have a steel reinforced edge, which improves their durability and allows you to also use it to break up light ice. Heavier ice should be broken up with an ice chipper instead. Blades with a slight curve in them allow you to lift more snow as well as push the snow into one place before having to lift it. Special snow scoop shovels are designed specifically to only push light snow, so if your climate deals mainly with this type of snowfall, you may want to consider a snow scoop rather than a snow shovel. Choosing a wide versus a narrow blade will depend on your physical capabilities to lift the blade when it is full of snow. Ensure the blade you choose has been treated with an enamel type spray, which will stop the snow from sticking to it. If you do notice that the snow is starting to stick to the blade, you can use a non-stick cooking spray on the blade.

Again, in order to find a shovel that is the right weight for your physique and physical fitness, it is best to trial the shovel in the shop. Ensure you can easily lift the shovel with proper body mechanics and remember that the weight of the shovel is only a portion of what you will be lifting once it is packed with snow.

Snow shovel handles are made from either wood, fiberglass or metal and are a triangular or D shape with a slight upwards curve. The shape of the handle allows for easier gripping and the curve allows you to bend your back less as you shovel. Find a handle that is comfortable for the shape and fit of your hand. Trying out the handle with your shoveling gloves on can give you an even better idea of comfort.