

A Buyer's Checklist for Purchasing Battery Chargers



This checklist provides you with advice on the key elements to consider when purchasing a battery charger. Over one hundred consumers, each with more than three years experience with battery chargers, provided the advice on the following pages.

When purchasing a product you may not find the perfect match, however, if you have done your homework, you will know which product is the best match for your needs and lifestyle.

Here are some questions to consider before shopping for a battery charger or any other assistive technology product.

What's available?

Do your homework to find out what technology is available. Check products in ABLEDATA (a list of over 20,000 devices). Contact your State Tech Act project for information. Visit your local Independent Living Center and talk to experienced users. Read consumer-oriented magazines (See the "Resources" section on the last page).

What am I looking for?

Make a list of what features are most important to you in selecting a battery charger and why. Read the following checklist and ask yourself... is this the right device for me?

Did I consider the details?

Check out the little things before rather than after you buy. For example, will the vendor give you a loaner if your charger needs repair? Is the operating manual difficult to read and understand. The following pages contain many important details.

Where do I get it?

Check out suppliers before you buy. Look for a vendor who listens to you with respect and courtesy, is willing to work with you to find the right product, and who will stand behind the product in the future.

Do I have the best match?

Check your homework from question one, the features most important to you in question two, and the availability of products from your local vendor in question three, to see if you have a match.

Now you are ready to go make a purchase.



REMEMBER...

You are the customer, and you have the right to be treated with every consideration. If you are well-prepared, know about the options available, and have a good idea of what you want, you can more easily develop a good working relationship with the supplier. Above all, you find and choose the product that best matches your needs.

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The following checklist provides you with advice on the details that have proven to be most important to experienced users of battery chargers. Take the checklist with you to make sure you consider all of the most important features.

IS IT SAFE?

- Y N Does the battery charger reduce voltage or shut off when too hot or over-loaded?
- Y N Does the battery charger alert you for malfunctions with a noise and/or a light?
- Y N Is the battery charger able to charge both gel and lead-acid batteries?
- Y N Are safety warnings clearly marked on the battery charger case?
- Y N Are safety hazards explained in the battery charger manual?
- Y N Does the charger have a large and easy-to-read voltage/charging gauge?

IS IT RELIABLE?

- Y N Does the battery charger have accessible fuses, reset switch or automatic reset?
- Y N Does the battery charger have a warranty which guarantees immediate replacement in the event of malfunction?
- Y N Can the charger be returned to the vendor for repair and/or replacement?
- Y N Will the vendor provide a loaner battery charger immediately?
- Y N Does the voltage/charging gauge display the same information as on the wheelchair's power meter?
- Y N Does the battery charger warranty extend beyond one to two years?

IS IT EASY TO USE?

- Y N Does the manual clearly detail how to operate battery charger?
- Y N Are the battery connectors on both chair and charger easily accessible for hook-up?
- Y N Does the charger automatically shut off when overheating or malfunctioning?
- Y N Is the charger equipped with "smart charging electronics" to protect it from damage and extend its life? These are sensors that monitor the level of charge and change the charging pattern accordingly.

IS IT EASY TO MAINTAIN & REPAIR?

- Y N Does the manual clearly describe when charger requires maintenance?
- Y N Does the manual clearly explain how to maintain the charger?
- Y N Is the maintenance schedule marked on the charger case?

IS IT EASY TO LEARN?

- Y N Does the manual clearly diagram and explain how a charger works?
- Y N Does the manual clearly identify every gauge and explains its purpose?
- Y N Does the manual clearly explain how to set up charger for operation?
- Y N Does the manual clearly explain operating conditions and environment?
- Y N Does the manual clearly detail differences in operation for lead acid and gel batteries?
- Y N Does the manual have information on charging time?

IS IT EFFECTIVE?

- Y N Is a comprehensive instruction manual provided with battery charger?
- Y N Is the battery charger efficient (e.g. charging 80% of rated capacity within eight hours.)?
- Y N Does the charger run quietly (turn it off and listen for noise level)?

IS IT AFFORDABLE?

- Y N If purchasing a new wheelchair or scooter, is the battery charger included in the price or is it is a separate purchase?

IS IT PORTABLE?

- Y N Does the battery charger have a carrying handle?
- Y N Is the battery charger light enough to move or carry with one hand?

Resources

ABLEDATA

ABLEDATA a database of over 20,000 assistive technology devices, including product descriptions, vendor addresses and prices:

ABLEDATA

8455 Colesville Road, Suite 935, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3319

Telephone: 800 227-0216,
201 608-8998 (in Maryland)

TDD: 301 608-8912; Fax: 310 608-8958

WWW: <http://www.abledata.com/index.htm>

RESNA Technical Assistance Project

Under the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988, every U.S. State and Territory has a program that provides people with information about what assistive devices exist, and how to acquire them. To find the program in your State or Territory, contact:

RESNA Technical Assistance Project.

1700 North Moore Street, Suite 1540;
Arlington, VA 22209-1903

Phone: 703 524-6686;

TTY: 703 524-6639; Fax: 703 524-6630.

WWW: <http://www.org/resna/reshome.htm>

Independent Living Centers (ILCs)

ILCs are consumer-staffed-and-directed human service agencies assisting individuals to maximize their independence and achieve a satisfying life in the community, regardless

of age or type of disability. Over 400 centers across the U.S. provide the core services of peer counseling, independent living skills instruction, information and referral, and advocacy. For your closest ILC, call the:

Independent Living Research and Training Center on Independent Living at The Institute for Rehabilitation Research (TIRR)

Houston, Texas

Telephone: 713-520-2032;

TTY: 713-520-5136

WWW: <http://www.ilru.org>

Consumer Magazines

Accent on Living

P.O. box 700

Bloomington, IL 61702-0700

Enable Magazine

3657 Cortez Rd. West

Bradenton, FL 34210

Telephone: 888-4ENABLE

Mainstream Magazine

P.O. Box 370598,

San Diego, CA 92137-0598

Telephone: 619-234-3138

Sports 'n Spokes

5201 North 19th Avenue, Suite 111,

Phoenix, AZ 85015-2994

Telephone: 602-224-0500

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