

SHELTER

BUYER'S GUIDE



Bringing People Together

Gone are the days of rickety old wooden gazebos in the local park. Today's shelters are not only amazingly engineered structures with capabilities such as lighting, electricity, water misters and fans for cooling, and concealed bolts and hardware, they are also beautifully crafted aesthetic architecture that enhances the landscape and brings elegance to a space. Shelters offer options to families for a picnic, a gathering place for snacks after a soccer team's big game, birthday parties, or a simple place to sit and be outdoors.



Split Tier Rectangle Shelter with Site Amenities

In essence, shelters bring people together by creating a welcoming environment. Like our other **Buyer's Guides** in our **Resources** page, we've created this guide to assist you in your process of purchasing new shelter equipment. If you have any questions, please let us know. We'll be pleased to assist.

Shelter structures are very similar to shade structures in their overall considerations. While shelters are typically made of steel and shades have fabric component, they're similar in that selecting the proper type, style, and size of shelter for your area has many important questions. For example, items such as material construction, warranties, experience of contractor and manufacturer, wind ratings, engineering drawings and permits, and budget should all be discussed.

STEP 1

The first step in this process is to decide what you want to accomplish. In other words, when the project is finished, what should be the end result? The key is to ask a lot of questions at the beginning. These questions will include:

- What size space is needed? (small shelter for only several people, large outdoor seating area)
- Is this new shelter or will it complement existing shelters? (matching others, or from scratch)
- What shapes of shelter will enhance the aesthetics of the area? (Square, Pergola, Octagon, custom)
- Are there any special weather elements that should be considered? (excessive wind, snow, heat)
- Are there any possible difficulties for shelter support columns? (in-ground, surface mount)
- Are there any required permits, licensing, inspections, or drawings needed? (city / county / state)
- Who will install the shelter structure? (self-install, our installers, another subcontractor)
- What is the approximate budget available? (this is important in order to allocate correctly)
- What is the general time frame for project completion? (next month, next fall, next year)
- Are there ornamental considerations? (cupolas, accent braces, decorative railing)
- Are there any accessories to be added? (electrical outlets, gutters, etc.)

STEP 2

Much like any other initial step, some of the information in Step 1 may require you to seek additional guidance with one of our experts. Once you have a general idea of the end results from Step 1, the second step in this process is to determine the type and size of shelter that will work best in your situation. As a general rule the larger and more complex a shelter structure is, the more engineering and budget is required. This should not be a deterrent, as we can assist you with this. We simply feel like it's important to understand at the beginning. As you're making these decisions, our experts can visit your site to help you maximize your available space, as well as creating effective use of visual design.

Size and height of the shelter is also an important consideration when determining the end result. For example, the standard eave height for a shelter is 8ft. However, there may be

considerations which require a taller eave, or two and three tiers. This is important for purposes of structural stability, usable space, and matching the size of the structure with the area. As an example, a small 10ft square shelter sitting in the middle of several acres may appear too small for the space. By contrast, a large 24ftx64ft gable shelter may be overwhelming in a small city park. Our professionals can help you with this step to ensure maximum coverage and visual aesthetics in your area.



Bus Stop Arched Shelter

STEP 3

The third step is the consideration of any accessory elements. This will include items such as electrical outlet access, ornamental railings or wind braces, cupolas, weather vanes, lighting access, additional tiers, etc. This is also the time to consider if any material will cover the inside of the roof, such as tongue and groove sub-roofing. This can greatly add to noise cancellation, in addition to bringing a beautiful option to the shelter. Considerations such as these add to the functionality and additional uses of the shelter as well. For example, with options such as lighting and electrical access, a picnic shelter by day can be transformed into a band concert area at night. Please consult with our experts to make sure these factors are considered in your design.



Curved Pergola with Brick Footers

STEP 4



Custom Two-Tier Shelter with Ornamental Top Braces and Stone Columns

The fourth step is to determine what engineering and permitting will need to be done in order to complete your shelter. In some areas, a shelter can be installed with no permits, drawings, or special inspections required. In most others, however, shelters are considered an accessory structure or a stand-alone structure that may require a permit, footer inspection, and stamped engineered drawings. The key is to determine what requirements are specific to the building codes in your location. This will typically involve applying for a permit with the city and/or county, submitting a site plan and drawings certified by an engineer that has specifics related to footers, structural strength, loads, shear, etc., and arranging an inspection with the appropriate city or county inspector to verify construction is progressing correctly. If your location does require additional engineering, our experts can walk with you through this step, and even work with your local government to arrange inspections and ensure all paperwork is correct.

STEP 5



Custom Two-Tier Shelter with Peak Entrance

The fifth step in the process is to consider the contractor you will use. There are many shelter manufacturers available, as well as companies that sell shelters. However, our experience has shown over the years that choosing a higher quality product and a more experienced company to work with pays off in larger value, maximization of budget and space, and fewer frustrations with engineering and installation. Shelter structures bring people together, and it is wise to consider using an experienced company to work with you through your project. As you research manufacturers and contractors, be sure to get a copy of the warranty and be

familiar with what it includes and the time frame. The industry standard is typically 10 years on structural integrity, with 5 years on the coatings.

The other aspect of working with a contractor is the installation. Some companies merely sell shelters, but do not install them. Or they may simply hire someone else who only does it part time. Depending on the size and scope of the project, some shelters can be installed by one or two semi-experienced individuals (a small simple shelter with little to no engineering); whereas, others will require an experienced multi-person crew and equipment such as cranes to erect the structure. Having this done right by an experienced company is a necessity.

STEP 6

The sixth step in the process is the approximate allocation of the total budget to each component in the project. Having a good idea of what can be expected with regards to how much of the total budget to allocate to each specific section can save many surprises later in the project. Similar to shades, it is not uncommon for purchasers to underestimate the engineering involved in a shelter. Accordingly, this takes a little time and budget to ensure all requirements are followed. Therefore, we recommend using these approximate percentages to allocate your total budget with. Disclaimer: These are simply generic recommendations based on our experience. There are numerous factors that may change these numbers based on your specific situation. We only present this as a guide, and our team can help you maximize your design and budget to find additional cost savings and more value.

- **Equipment** – 50% - 60% of total budget (includes structure materials and add-ons)
- **Freight & Delivery** – 5% - 15% (depends on location, time of year, multiple items on same truck, etc)
- **Installation** – 0% - 40% (depends on size / type of equipment, special tools needed (cranes), location)
- **Sales Tax** – 0% - 10% - (depends on tax exempt status, city and county taxes, special assessments)
- **Engineering** – 0% - 20% (depends on required permits, licenses, or drawings by city/state)



Single Tier Wooden Shelter with Cupola

STEP 7

The final step in the process is having an accurate expectation of the timeframe required to bring your vision and ideas into reality. Knowing in what time frame the project can expect to be completed makes for an easier process for all concerned. Like the percentages above for budget allocation, these are approximations based on the average time it takes for most projects. Of course, some projects move faster, others move slower depending on situational specifics. Our goal is to give you a realistic planning tool for your project.

- **Initial Information** – 2 days (this is information from Step 1. This may take time for you to decide)
- **Concept Idea** – 3-5 days (this will be adjusted based on revisions and size of project.)
- **Preliminary Drawings** – 1-3 weeks (these structures are more regulated by construction laws and may require extra time for an engineer to verify drawings and permits, especially if a city requires it)
- **Freight and Delivery** – 1-2 days (depends on factory schedule, destination, available trucks, etc)
- **Manufacturing** – 4-6 weeks (depends on time of year, size of project)
- **Installation** – 1-3 weeks (depends on size of project, time of year, readiness of site for install, etc)



Single Tier Structure with Ornamental Finish and Cupola

As you can see, there are many variables within one project, depending on the scope and size. Some items may apply; others do not. This is where you will find great value in the experience of our design professionals, as they can help monitor progress of your project, and we will keep you informed every step of the way. With that in mind, for most shelter projects that do not require special permitting or licenses, a realistic expectation of time frame would be approximately 8-10 weeks from initial drawings to completed install.

CONCLUSION

We hope this information has helped you gain a greater understanding of the shelter purchasing process. Children's Specialties has been designing and completing projects like yours for almost three decades. From small, simple shelters, to large custom projects for outdoor amphitheatres, our company and manufacturer's creativity and experience will serve you well and give you the confidence that your project will be handled by professionals. We would be honored to assist you with your project. Please contact us today.



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