

# Shade Buyer's Guide



*Custom Hyperbolic Sail Shade*

The sun can get hot. Having a shady area isn't simply a luxury. It's a necessity. Shade additions are rapidly becoming one of the most sought after products to complete play and recreation areas, not only for the relief from the sun's heat and harmful UV rays, but also for the beautiful aesthetics that these options add to an area. In addition, shade creates a welcoming environment for families, and brings people together. Like our other **Buyer's Guides** on our **Resources** page, we've created this guide to assist you in your process of purchasing new shade equipment. If you have any questions, please let us know. We'll be pleased to help.

Selecting the proper type, style, and size of shade for your area has many considerations. For example, items such as material construction, warranties, experience of contractor and manufacturer, wind ratings, engineering drawings and permits, and budget should all be considered. We'll address each of these items to assist you in your selection.

**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:

- How much shade is needed? (small area for a pool, large outdoor seating, sports application)
- Is this new shade or a continuation of existing shade structures? (tying into others, or from scratch)
- What shapes of shade structures will enhance the aesthetics of the area? (umbrellas, sails, custom)
- Will the shade be permanent, or need to be removed at the end of a season? (pools, restaurants, parks)
- Are there any special weather elements that should be considered? (excessive wind, snow, heat)
- Are there any possible difficulties for shade support columns? (in-ground, surface mount, cables)
- Are there any required permits, licensing, inspections, or drawings needed? (city / county / state)
- Who will install the shade 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)

**Step 2)** 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 shade that will work best in your situation. As a general rule, the larger and more complex a shade structure is, the more budget is required. If you are preferring to emphasize function over aesthetics, shade types in standard geometric shapes such as rectangles, squares, and umbrellas typically provide the most shade value for the dollar. By contrast, shapes such as hexagons, octagons, sails,

and custom designs also provide a great shade option, while emphasizing visual appeal as well. 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 shade is also an important consideration when determining the end result. For example, several pool umbrellas or a cantilever shade may only require an 8ft or 9 ft eave for proper clearance; whereas, a rectangle shade covering a set of swings or playground may need a 12ft or higher eave to have proper clearance. Taking the overall size into consideration factors greatly into the amount of "usable shade" in the structure. As a rule, unless the sun is directly overhead, the size of the shade will vary with the amount of actual "usable shade." The amount of shade that is cast by the structure constantly changes throughout the day, and it's important to make sure that your shade is large enough to still provide the shade you want as the sun moves throughout the day. Our professionals can help you with this step to ensure maximum shade coverage in your area.



*Large square shade over a playground*

**Step 3)** The third step is the consideration of weather elements. This is important if the shade will be consistently exposed to excessive heat, extra salt in the air near oceans, snow and ice weight, or excessive winds. These factors should not only be considered from a use and style perspective, but also from a warranty and manufacturer selection perspective. There are shade manufacturers who simply have better quality construction and materials, and shortchanging this area can lead to frustration and damaged shade by having lesser quality materials.



*Restaurant seating area with multi-dome rectangle shade*

If your shade will be used in an area that receives more than normal weather elements such as heat, wind, or snow, please consult with our experts to make sure these factors are considered in the design. We partner with the leading manufacturers that hold the industry standards related to wind ratings, snow loads, and UV protection.

**Step 4)** The fourth step is to determine what engineering and permitting will need to be done in order to complete your shade. In many areas, a shade can be installed with no permits, drawings, or special inspections required. In others, shades 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)** The fifth step in the process is to consider the contractor you will use. As we discussed earlier, there are many shade manufacturers available, as well as companies that sell shade. 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 shade value, maximization of budget and space, and fewer frustrations with engineering and installation. Shade structures bring people together, and it is wise to consider using an experienced company to work with you through your project.



*Outdoor lounge seating shade in metropolitan area.*

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 shade fabric, with wind ratings of at least Hurricane Force 1 sustained winds (approx. 76 mph), and up to 90 mph bursts.

The other aspect of working with a contractor is the installation. Some companies merely sell shade, but do not install it. Or they may simply hire someone else who only does it part time. Depending on the size and scope of the project, some shades can be installed by one or two inexperienced individuals (a small umbrella shade); 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.



*Triangle sail shade in apartment complex play area.*

**Step 6)** The sixth step in the process is the approximate allocation of the total budget to each component in the project. Even though the project may only be related to shade, 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. One mistake we see frequently is for a project to have underestimated the amount necessary for engineering and installation.

These two sections can be a large portion of the total budget, depending on requirements, and we feel like it's better to understand that at the beginning. 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 shade value.

- Equipment – 50% - 60% of total budget (includes shade structure and fabric)
- 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% - 15% (depends on required permits, licenses, or drawings by city/state)

**Step 7)** The final step in the process is having an accurate expectation of the timeframe required for your new shade structure to be completed. 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.



*Cantilever shade in Homeowner association pool area*

- **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)

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 shade projects that do not require special permitting or licenses, a realistic expectation of time frame would be approximately 8-10 weeks from initial concept to completed install. This time frame will be increased for larger projects or more detailed requirements related to engineering, city/county inspections, or custom projects.

## Conclusion

We hope this information has helped you gain a greater understanding of the shade purchasing process. Children's Specialties has been designing and completing projects like yours for almost three decades. From small backyard umbrella shades, to large custom projects for outdoor lounge seating in metropolitan cities, 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.

## Children's Specialties

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