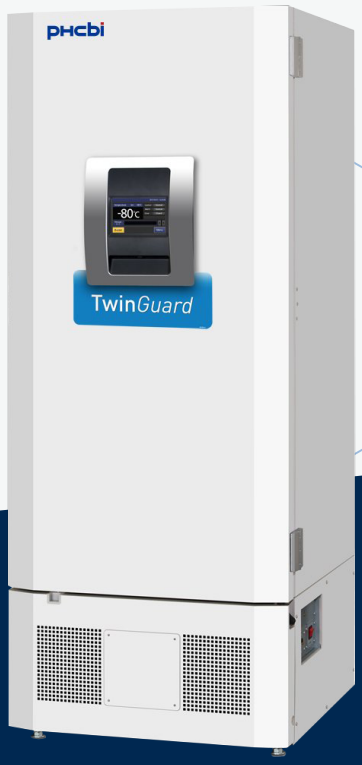
D.A.I. SCIENTIFIC EQUIPMENT




# 10 Questions to Ask Before Buying Lab Equipment

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

# You've finally received approval to buy that piece of lab equipment!

But there are a few things to keep in mind before you place your order. For example, have you thought about how you will get your equipment into the building? Are you looking for something energy-efficient or equipped with monitoring systems? What are the cost considerations?

**We know there are a lot of options out there, which is why it's essential to know what to ask — before making that purchase.**

Whether you need one piece of equipment or you're looking to outfit a new lab, consider these 10 important questions as you research possible products and providers.

Taking a scientific approach to procuring equipment makes sense, because you want to have as much information as possible in order to make the right decisions for your lab.

# 1. What are the space considerations in my lab?

One of the first steps is to measure the space in your lab where your new equipment will reside. It's important to accurately document the height, width, and depth of the space and match it to the dimensions of your lab equipment to ensure there are no surprises when the equipment arrives.

In addition to dimensions, here are some other considerations when it comes to lab space:

- Does your space have proper service connections? (plumbing, electrical, air, etc.) near where your equipment will be located?
- Can you easily open the door to a piece of lab equipment without any obstruction?
- Do you have the space you need to load the unit with materials or equipment?
- Do you have the proper space for your work?
- Have you assessed the overall space for the workflow of your lab? (For example, when you load and unload a piece of equipment, where do the samples wait, and where do they go after unloading?)
- What space is required for the handling of different types of materials?
- For your glassware washers and autoclaves, do you need to make space for carts and carriages?

QUESTION 1

# 2. Can I easily transport my lab equipment into the building?

For large equipment, you not only want to make sure you can fit the unit in your lab, but more important, you want to make sure you can transport the equipment in the building and to your lab. Here are some questions to keep in mind:

- Can the equipment fit through the hallways and doors?
- Can it fit into an elevator or up stairs?
- Are there any low ceiling points to keep in mind?
- Are there any spots where fixtures may stick out, such as door knobs, lights, etc.?


A trained sales specialist can help you through this process and will answer any questions you may have about space dimensions and transporting equipment from the truck to your lab.

You always need to think about how the equipment will be transported into the building. Specifically, are there any low ceiling points to keep in mind?

When it comes to equipment delivery, there are two options available.

In the first scenario, the equipment will be delivered to the freight dock. At that point, you are responsible for unpacking and moving the equipment to its final resting space in your lab.

The second option is inside delivery — otherwise known as the "white glove" scenario. This involves the equipment being shipped to a local moving company where it is unpacked and inspected for damage. The mover will then contact you to schedule the actual delivery time, and the movers will physically deliver the equipment to its final spot in your lab.

If you're unsure what type of delivery method is right for you, it's best to consult with your sales specialist.

QUESTION 2

# 3. What are the resources I need to consider?

It's important to plan for service connections for your equipment, such as the types of electrical outlets that are needed, their location and placement, and whether those outlets need to be on emergency power, if it's available.

Does your equipment need to be hooked up to any building service, such as water, vacuum, air, or gas? If so, is the equipment to facilitate these resources already in place, or do you need a professional to come in and install what you need?

You want to make sure you have the right resources hooked up and ready to go before your equipment arrives. Your sales specialist can help ensure that you have the correct services in your lab and that they are located in the right areas for easy installation.

QUESTION 3

# 4. Is the lab equipment energy-efficient?

Laboratory refrigerators and freezers typically use a lot of energy. For example, an ultra-low temperature freezer uses the same amount of energy per day as the average household, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

If you're looking for a sustainable option, it's important to confirm that your choices have the ENERGY STAR® label, which will ensure that your units have the latest in energy-saving features. This is important because it will help lower your utility bills. "In 2018, ENERGY STAR products helped consumers save 200 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity, avoid $20 billion in energy costs, and achieve 150 million metric tons of greenhouse gas reductions," according to ENERGY STAR's website.

ENERGY STAR units reduce energy consumption through the use of more efficient compressors, advanced microprocessor controllers, and innovative refrigerants.

QUESTION 4

# 5. Are monitoring systems included?

What happens if your refrigerator or freezer starts to warm up? During the day, someone in your lab will most likely hear an alarm, but what if this takes place overnight?

Most modern units come standard with local alarms that notify the user when there's an issue. It's important to consider how you will be notified when you aren't in the lab.

Talk to your sales rep about an independent monitoring system that will not only log temperatures for reporting, but will also notify you via text, email, or a phone call if your unit is not at the correct temperature.

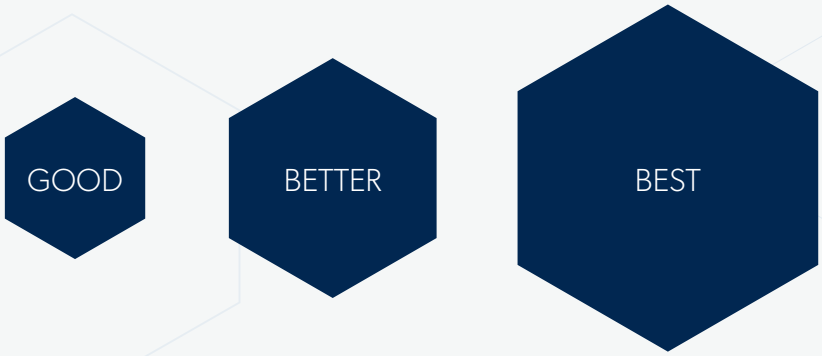
QUESTION 5

# 6. What are the cost considerations?

Many manufacturers have different models with a "good, better, best" philosophy, which allows for different budgets. In many cases, the equipment with the higher initial cost will end up being more cost-effective in the long run. This is due to the longer warranty periods, less scheduled maintenance, and a more reliable unit with less downtime. You also want to consider these other factors, which can impact the cost:

- Equipment controllers and control systems
- Automated features
- Energy efficient/sustainability features
- Custom design options
- Equipment material
- Additional accessories or features that may be included

It's important to talk to your sales rep about the lifetime cost of your capital equipment so that you can find the most cost-effective solution for your budget.




QUESTION 6

# 7. What is the quality of the equipment?

Quality. It's a term that's used a lot, and we know everyone claims to sell "quality" pieces of equipment. But why do prices vary so much? In most cases, it comes down to three reasons:

- Less features
- The manufacturing design/parts are not as robust
- Limited warranty

Your local sales rep should be able to explain these differences and help you decide if the "less features, design, warranty" is worth the lower price point. In some cases, it might be the right option, especially if you aren't using the equipment all that often or for short periods of time. That's why it's important to think about how many people are using the equipment, how often it's being used, and for what specific purposes. At the end of the day, your sales rep can help you decide what's best for your application.

QUESTION 7

# 8. What is the warranty policy?

All products have a warranty, and some come with restrictions. Typical restrictions include covering parts and not labor, which is the more expensive aspect of most repairs. Some warranties require a preventative maintenance program, and if you don't have this, your warranty is not valid.

It's important to talk about the warranty details with your sales rep. You can also ask if there's an extended warranty, which can be a wise investment if your budget allows for it.

QUESTION 8

# 9. Are service and maintenance included?

Any piece of equipment that you buy will likely need to be serviced at some point. Lab equipment is no exception. That's why when you're buying a new piece of equipment, it's important to find out how your product is supported.

One of the best ways to prevent problems and unexpected downtime is to invest in a preventative maintenance program, which can differ depending on the equipment.

For example, a preventative maintenance program for an ultra-low freezer would include making sure frost is not in the way of the door sealing properly and cleaning the compressor filters. Also, most ultra-low freezers have a battery backup on the controller in case you lose power, but at some point the battery will need to be replaced.

An autoclave preventative maintenance plan will ensure someone looks at steam traps/valves, heating coils on generators and checks for wear on electrical components.

Biosafety cabinets and hoods require certification every 6 months to a year to make sure the units are working properly. A plan would also test the airflow and check the filter for leaks.

At the end of the day, it's important to rely on your local sales specialist to help you navigate these important programs.

# 10. Does your equipment supplier offer on-site training for new lab equipment?

Have you considered who will set up your new equipment and train you and your lab technicians on how to best use it?

Many of the larger catalog companies won't help with the installation or training, and if they do offer these services, they likely come with a price.

But without the proper training, you're just reading a manual.

The right lab equipment provider will have a sales rep who will help install the equipment and provide training for you and your lab technicians. This will include instruction on proper operation, how to use the controller (and common mistakes in setting the controller), how to properly clean and maintain the equipment, and tips for keeping your equipment running for years to come.

QUESTION 10

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