

TOP QUALITY SHEDS

2026 SHED BUYER'S TOOLKIT

Size it. Site it. Price it. Buy it right.

A practical workbook for choosing the right size, material, foundation, site and budget before you spend a dollar.

SIZE PLANNER	MATERIALS	SITE & DELIVERY
FOUNDATION	TRUE COST	FINALIST SCORECARD

Independent buying guidance. Product recommendations may contain affiliate links; if you purchase through one, Top Quality Sheds may earn a commission at no additional cost to you.

How to Use This Toolkit

Work through the pages in order, then take the completed scorecard with you when you shop. Generalized permit or foundation guidance is not local approval: rules, soil, wind exposure and manufacturer requirements vary.

1. Define the job

List what the shed must hold now and what you expect to add.

2. Size with breathing room

Plan for access aisles, doors and future storage - not just today's footprint.

3. Check the property

Confirm zoning/HOA, utilities, drainage, setbacks and delivery access.

4. Compare true cost

Include base preparation, delivery, assembly, anchors, shelves and maintenance.

5. Score finalists

Compare two or three realistic sheds using the same criteria.

1. Shed Size Planner

Start with the largest or hardest-to-move items. Door width and maneuvering space can matter as much as floor area.

Item to store	Approx. footprint	Qty.	Easy access?
Riding mower / zero-turn			
Push mower / snow blower			
Bicycles / e-bikes			
Lawn & garden tools			
Seasonal bins / décor			
Workbench / hobby area			
Other			

My target shed size: _____ Minimum door opening: _____

Future items I expect to add: _____

Practical test: outline candidate dimensions on the ground with stakes, chalk or a garden hose. Walk the footprint and imagine opening doors and moving the largest item in and out.

2. Material Comparison

Factor	Resin / Plastic	Metal	Wood
Maintenance	Low	Low to moderate	Moderate to high
Customization	Limited	Moderate	High
Workshop/office fit	Product-dependent	Possible; finish-out matters	Often flexible
Common strengths	Low maintenance; corrosion resistance	Competitive shell cost; quick assembly	Customization; appearance; finish options
Questions	Anchoring? Floor included? Shelving?	Condensation? Anchoring? Base/floor?	Maintenance? Moisture? Foundation?

Bottom line: choose the material that fits your use, climate, maintenance tolerance, site and budget. Do not choose from appearance alone.

3. Property, Permit & Delivery Checklist

Permit thresholds and setbacks vary by jurisdiction. Even a shed that does not require a building permit can still be subject to zoning, HOA, utility, anchoring or electrical rules.

- Called city/county building or zoning office
- Checked HOA / deed restrictions
- Confirmed property lines and setbacks
- Located underground utilities before digging
- Checked drainage and low spots after rain
- Measured gate width and entire delivery path
- Checked overhead wires, branches and eaves
- Confirmed installer/truck turning room
- Confirmed shed height is acceptable
- Asked whether electrical/plumbing changes approval requirements

Building/zoning contact: _____ Phone/email: _____

Permit / zoning notes: _____

4. Foundation & Site-Prep Planner

A shed needs a stable, level, well-drained base appropriate for the specific product and site. Follow the manufacturer's requirements and local rules.

Option	Useful when	Questions to resolve
Compacted gravel pad	Drainage and a serviceable base are priorities	Depth? Border? Geotextile? Extension beyond shed?
Concrete slab	Heavy use or manufacturer calls for it	Thickness/reinforcement? Frost? Permit? Anchoring?
Skids / blocks / piers	Manufacturer-approved portable installations	Spacing? Soil bearing? Frost/heave? Tie-down?

Chosen base: _____ Installer / DIY: _____ Estimated cost: \$ _____

Manufacturer foundation requirements verified? YES / NO

5. True-Cost Budget Worksheet

The advertised shed price is only one line item. Compare finalists using installed, usable cost.

Cost item	Estimate	Final
Shed / kit price	\$	\$
Sales tax	\$	\$
Freight / delivery	\$	\$
Site clearing / grading	\$	\$
Foundation / base	\$	\$
Assembly / installation	\$	\$
Anchors / tie-downs	\$	\$
Shelving / ramps / accessories	\$	\$
Paint / sealant / maintenance	\$	\$
Permit / HOA fees	\$	\$
TOTAL	\$	\$

Budget ceiling: \$_____ Contingency reserved: \$_____

6. Finalist Comparison Scorecard

Give each shed a 1-5 score. Weight what matters most to you. A cheaper shed is not necessarily the better value once site prep, delivery, warranty and usable space are considered.

Criteria	Weight	Shed A	Shed B	Shed C
Usable size / layout				
Door access				
Material / durability				
Warranty				
Foundation compatibility				
Delivery / installation				
Maintenance				
Total installed cost				
Appearance				
Overall confidence				

Winner / next action: _____

7. Seven Expensive Mistakes to Avoid

1. Buying only for today's storage - leave room for access and likely future equipment.
2. Ordering before checking local rules - confirm zoning, HOA and permit requirements before committing.
3. Ignoring the base - poor site prep can undermine doors, floors and long-term performance.
4. Forgetting delivery access - measure gates, turns, overhead clearance and the path to the pad.
5. Comparing sticker price instead of installed cost - include freight, base, assembly, accessories and maintenance.
6. Overlooking door dimensions - measure the widest/tallest item that must pass through the opening.
7. Skipping warranty details - know what is covered and whether installation/foundation conditions affect coverage.

READY TO COMPARE SHEDS?

Visit TopQualitySheds.com for buying guides, size planning, material comparisons and current commercial links as affiliate relationships are activated.

Important: This toolkit is general educational information, not engineering, legal, zoning or permitting advice. Verify local requirements and manufacturer instructions for your specific shed and property.