



10 COMMANDMENTS OF BUYING A HOT TUB

**Follow these rules to ensure a happy
relationship with your dealer and
your purchase**

10 THOU SHALT HAVE YOUR LOCATION CHECKED OUT IN PERSON

Your hot tub dealer will most likely offer a site survey before delivery, and you should definitely take them up on it. There are many things to consider when installing a hot tub — things you may not realize, but an experienced professional will know. Electrical requirements, soil conditions, access to the service panel — even overhanging trees — can all play a part in longtime satisfaction and use of your hot tub. Make sure you get most of these things figured out before the concrete pad is poured and hot tub arrives.

READ MORE
ABOUT HOT TUB
INSTALLATIONS
ON PAGE 36.



DEPENDING ON
THE SIZE AND
MATERIALS THAT
MAKE UP YOUR
HOT TUB, IT CAN
WEIGH 200 TO 950
POUNDS WHEN
DRY. AFTER THE
WATER HAS BEEN
ADDED, IT CAN
WEIGH 2,000 TO
5,000 POUNDS.

Photo: Master Spas

9

THOU SHALT HAVE A STRONG, FLAT SURFACE

When filled full with water, hot tubs are heavy — and nothing shows how level something is more than water. The last thing you want is to see your hot tub slowly dip to one side. Not only will you have an uneven water surface, but also it could compromise the structure of your hot tub and possibly invalidate your warranty. Make sure you have a solid, flat surface that will withstand time.

8 THOU SHALT KNOW YOUR WARRANTY

Similar to the purchase of any major appliance or even vehicle, make sure you understand exactly what is covered under your warranty. Most hot tub manufacturers offer different warranties for different aspects of the spa. For example, you may get a lifetime warranty on the hot tub shell and surface: This would cover any major failures of your acrylic or rotomold surface that would cause leaks or disruption in use. In addition, the dealer may offer a separate five-year warranty on the hot tub equipment, like the pump and heater, and yet another five-year warranty on the spa cabinet. In some cases, like the uneven surface mentioned above, how you care for your hot tub could invalidate your warranty. If you don't treat your water properly and that causes some of the equipment to malfunction, you may be liable. Your dealer can also explain any trip charges or services for which you would be responsible.

CHECK OUT OUR
HOT TUB AND SWIM
SPA COMPARISONS,
STARTING ON PAGE 16,
TO SEE WHAT KIND
OF WARRANTIES
ARE OFFERED.



THOU SHALT KNOW WHAT IT WILL COST TO OPERATE

Today's hot tubs are designed to be energy-efficient, and manufacturers are always striving to increase performance in this way. How much it will cost to run your hot tub depends on, among other things, local energy rates, the ambient temperature, the size of your hot tub, how much you use your hot tub and the temperature of your spa water. To keep costs as low as possible, there are a few

things you can do: First, be sure to purchase a fully insulated hot tub with a high R-value (read more about the different types of insulation on page 13). Second, make sure your hot tub comes with a heavy-duty cover that also has a high R-value.

Heat in your spa can be lost through a poorly made cover, meaning your hot tub must run more often and for longer time periods to keep it at the appropriate temperature. Third, look for hot tubs with efficient components. For instance, many manufacturers now offer multiple pumps for different aspects of the hot tub. For instance, a low-energy circulation pump may keep the water constantly moving through the filtration system, while another pump may only be used when you turn the jets on. LED or fiber-optic lighting will also keep operating costs low, as will using the hot tub's efficiency settings. Finally, remember that running your hot tub isn't the only cost of ownership. Besides regularly purchasing chemicals, the cover and other components will at some point need to be replaced.

TO DETERMINE WHAT YOU WILL PAY ON AVERAGE PER MONTH, MULTIPLY THE KILOWATT HOURS IT TAKES TO OPERATE YOUR HOT TUB BY THE RATE YOU PAY PER KILOWATT HOUR. SEVERAL ENERGY CALCULATORS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE.



6

THOU SHALT TEST BEFORE YOU BUY

After researching hot tub brands, dealerships and features, go see some tubs in person.

Two of the most important things to determine are whether the hot tub is comfortable and who will be using it most. Further assessing your wants and needs will help you determine whether you want things like a stereo, a waterfall or LED lights, or if you should focus on a hot tub that offers the most potential therapy.

"This is a fun purchase, but it's big," says Thom Halvorsen, CEO of Spas of Arizona, a Phoenix-based dealership in business more than 30 years. "I tell customers you have to be thrilled with what you get. So, don't even look at the prices; just go in and out of the tubs. See what's different about everything; see how the seats feel."

Many retailers also will let you wet test a hot tub. You and your family can get into a running hot tub to see how all the jets feel and seat configurations work for your needs. If the model you're eyeing isn't available for a wet test, you can often test a similar model. If getting into a swimsuit in the middle of a retail store isn't your cup of tea, ask if you can come back after hours. Larger dealerships may have separate wet-test rooms for complete privacy.

5

THOU SHALT NOT LEAVE THE STORE WITHOUT THE PROPER ACCESSORIES

Everyone's been in a situation where you start to wonder if the salesman is trying to talk you into something. Do I really need the upgraded running boards? But when it comes to a hot tub, there are certain accessories that make your hot tub safer and more user-friendly. Many of these will depend on whether the hot tub is on a patio or sunk into a deck: Address how you will get in and out of the tub, how you will get the cover off and where you will store it. Hot tubs are too tall to safely get in and out of without steps. Your dealer will have slip-resistant steps that you can purchase, or they can recommend options for a built-in look. It may not seem like an issue when you're standing on the showroom floor, but getting a hot tub cover off can be cumbersome. Fortunately, there are dozens of cover lift options. Your dealer can help you determine which one will work best for your installation and tub location.



Photo: Michael Phelps Signature Swim Spas by Master Spas

4 THOU SHALT KNOW WHY YOU WANT A HOT TUB AND HOW YOU'LL USE IT

That might sound silly at first, but knowing why you want a hot tub and how you will use it can help you and your dealer quickly determine which tub will make you happiest. Who will be using it most of the time? Do you plan on hosting hot tub parties? Will your children be using it regularly? Do you want to use the hot tub for pain relief for a certain body part?

3

THOU SHALT UNDERSTAND WATER MAINTENANCE AND FIND A SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Caring for your hot tub water is a commitment you must be prepared to make before you buy a spa. Modern hot tubs offer a plethora of built-in water care systems that make this process simple and hassle-free, but you still must be vigilant in checking and maintaining your water balance.

Out-of-balance water and dirty filters are common culprits for a hot tub on the fritz.

Before you choose which model and options you want, think about the time you can devote to this essential task. You may want to invest in a built-in system, whether it be salt, UV-C, ozone, a mineral purifier or — some combination of those — that does a lot of the work for you. But even if you can't afford to add a water-care system, basic hot tubs are easy to treat when you are faithful to testing and balancing your water.



2

THOU SHALT LOVE THY DEALER

There are many great hot tub brands, and there might be one that offers features you can't live without. But what may be more important than your actual hot tub is your relationship with your dealer. Not only will your hot tub purchase require return trips to the store for chemicals, filters and other accessories, but you're also purchasing your dealer's knowledge. Hot tub retailers have seen it all, and while you might be in a panic that for some reason your hot tub just won't turn on, a quick call to your dealer could solve it in a simple step. When you're shopping around for a dealer, how they behave during the sale will give you the best indication of how you will get along afterwards. Also find out: How long have they been in business? New doesn't necessarily mean bad, but an established business that's kept its doors open for years can only do that if they have happy customers. Are they a member of any local or national groups, like the chamber of commerce or Better Business Bureau, and any industry associations like the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals. Companies that participate in these groups often will be attending seminars to further their industry education and business acumen. If the business sponsors local charities or if the owner serves on local community boards, you can be sure they know their reputation matters.



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THOU SHALT SIT BACK AND ENJOY

A frequently used hot tub is a happy hot tub — and makes for a content, relaxed you.

Photo: Hot Spring Spas

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DEALER

FOR MANY FIRST-TIME BUYERS, THE DECISION TO PURCHASE A SPA COMES WITH DAYDREAMS ABOUT HOW IT WILL ENHANCE THEIR LIVES. FOR THE BUSINESS OF SPA SHOPPING, HOWEVER, BUYERS SHOULD HAVE THEIR FEET FIRMLY ON THE GROUND. USE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE WHEN INTERVIEWING YOUR LOCAL HOT TUB RETAILER.

COSTS

- 1) What does the cost of my spa include? (Cover, stairs, chemicals, accessories, etc.)
- 2) Does my installation include delivery and setup?
- 3) How much will this spa add to my utility bills?

MY PROPERTY

- 4) Are there municipal codes that require an alteration of my property?
- 5) Do you conduct an in-home site inspection for spa placement?
- 6) Who is responsible for damage to the access area in the house or the neighbor's property during the spa's installation?
- 7) On what type of surface should my spa be placed? Do you assist in that installation?
- 8) What are the electrical requirements for my spa?

WARRANTY & SERVICE

- 9) What customer service do you offer after the sale?
- 10) What exclusions do you have in your warranty?
- 11) If I have a warranty problem, does the dealer or manufacturer service the spa?
- 12) How long have you been carrying this spa brand, and why did you decide to carry it?

DETAILS

- 13) What safety features come with the spa?
- 14) How noisy is the spa when it runs full speed?
- 15) What can I expect during freezing and thawing conditions?
- 16) What type of insulation does the spa have?
- 17) Are you TradeCertified™?