

**Do It Right The First Time!**

# **Don't Get Taken!**

**10 Things You Need To Know Before Buying A Walk-In-Bathtub From ANY Company!**

*"This report can save you a bundle!"*

*- James Andrews*



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## What Kind Of Tub Is Right For You?

Different styles of tubs are designed for different size people and for different sized bathrooms. There are larger tubs for larger customers, with larger bathrooms, midsize tubs for a person of average size, taller tubs for taller customers and more compact model tubs, for smaller customers with smaller bathrooms.

You will also have the option of either a left hand door or right hand door, and in some cases either a white or soft cream colored tub. You may have the choice between a tub with either a shorter or taller step in as well as 4 different jetting options. As if that weren't enough, you will need to choose between 3 different manufacturing styles...acrylic, spray-on fiberglass or hand laid, woven sheet fiberglass. And finally, you will need to choose between either an inward or an outward swinging door. Confused yet? Don't worry about it, this brief guide will help you to determine what is best for you. You will also learn about where to buy your walk-in-tub & who will handle installation.

So, first off, if the information in this report seems overwhelming, it may be best for you to just have a professional come to your home and advise you. They will take all the key measurements to determine what will fit the space & what will best suit your needs.

### **How To Determine Tub Size**

An in-home consultant will start by measuring every doorway leading from your nearest exterior door, right through to your bathroom door. This will tell them whether or not their installation team will need to widen any doorways in order to bring the new tub in or the old tub out.

They will measure the clearances between any sinks, toilets or other permanent cabinets, etc. and the neighboring walls, again, to determine if anything will need to be moved in order to complete an installation.

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Finally they will measure the space where you intend to put the new tub. If the space is rather tight, they may also determine whether or not it would make sense to move or remove any walls.

Now they will know which of the available models will be able to be installed.

Next they will ask for the height & weight of the largest user of the new tub & assess the current and most likely future mobility of the most physically challenged user. This will further narrow the available models to the 1 or 2 that would be the best fit for that particular client.

### **Door Placement**

With the exception of installations for either wheelchair accessible tubs or showers, the side for door placement will be opposite any existing sinks, toilets, or other permanent structures. For example, if when you walk in to your bathroom, the toilet is right next to the tub, and is on the right hand side, then the door for your tub would have to be placed on the left to allow for safe entry. Otherwise, you would have to literally climb over the toilet to get to the door of the tub. Incidentally, if your tub door is on the left, then the plumbing for your tub & shower must also be on the left. A common bathroom layout will be to have the water source for the bath, toilet & sink all on the same wall. If that is the case for your bathroom, then the plumbing for your tub/shower will have also to be reversed (moved to the other side), in order for your new tub to be installed.

### **Color**

In terms of tub color, usually, you will want to match the color of your nearest sink or toilet. If the toilet is closer to the tub than the sink & is white, you will want to go with a white tub. Also, many manufacturers make only white for many models & have a small subset of tubs available in a soft cream color.

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## **Step-In Height**

As a general rule, the shorter the step-in the better. Some tubs are just made with a slightly higher step in than others, but most tubs will have 6" or 8" step-ins, so even the highest step-ins will be no higher than a single stair. For people who might have a difficulty with those heights, any durable medical equipment store can sell you steps by the inch. For example, if you are limited to stepping up 3" & you have a 6" step-in, simply by a 3" step & place it in front of the door for your tub with a 6" step-in. Then you will be stepping up only 3" two times.

For those who would have difficulty with even a few inches, you may want to consider a slide-in tub, which would solve that issue for you.

## **Inward Swinging Door Vs. Outward Swinging Door**

In most cases we recommend the inward swinging door, as this is the ADA compliant setup and also works in any size bathroom. By contrast, an outward swinging door will need to have space between the tub and the nearest fixture (ie: a toilet) to allow for the radius of the swinging door. If a toilet or sink were close by, an outward swinging door may not work in your bathroom at all, however outward swinging doors are commonly used for wheelchair accessible tubs or bariatric models.

In the next section we will discuss the various manufacturing methods available.

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## What Is The Tub Made Of?

Tubs can be made of a few different types of material; acrylic (heat formed plastic), spray-on fiberglass, or hand laid, woven sheet, marine-grade fiberglass with a triple gel coat for shine and durability.

### **The Frame**

Unlike conventional tubs, walk-in-tubs are commonly framed with stainless steel. There are, however some low-end tubs that are not framed this way. If you purchase a walk-in-tub that does not have a stainless steel frame, you are just asking for problems with cracking & leaks. Additionally, any tub with a stainless steel frame should have 6 levelers to make sure that the tub will drain properly.

### **Hand laid, woven sheet, marine-grade fiberglass**

This is the highest quality and longest lasting method of manufacture for a walk-in-tub. It is actually the same process used to manufacture boats & is the only type of tub we recommend for heavier users. It's rigidity will reduce the likelihood of a door warping over time & beginning to leak. In addition, the triple gel coat top-layer finish will ensure durability of the shiny, scratch-resistant surface.

### **Acrylic**

While some acrylic tubs have a fiberglass base (for strength), an acrylic tub is just heat-formed plastic & will never have the same structural integrity of a multi-layer woven sheet fiberglass tub. Still, it is a great 2<sup>nd</sup> choice for a walk-in-tub's manufacturing style. Like woven sheet fiberglass tubs with the triple gel coat finish, higher quality acrylic tubs are not prone to scratching or chipping and should maintain a beautiful appearance for years.

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### **Spray-on fiberglass**

Spray-on fiberglass is a very cheap way of manufacturing so is a common process for the very low-end tubs you can find at big box retailers. It is the least durable of all manufacturing processes & will last the shortest amount of time before needing to be replaced. If the user is on an extremely tight budget, is not concerned about other users after they are gone, is not concerned about resale value of their home, is extremely light weight & is unlikely to have a need for the tub for more than a couple of years, than a spray-on fiberglass tub may fit the bill. However, it is the poorest quality & if at all possible, it is highly recommended to go with a tub that is made with one of the other two manufacturing styles.

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## Brands Of Pumps

Before buying a Walk In Bathtub, you should always find out who makes the jetting system that comes with your tub. The preferred systems are UL listed and made in North America, by either CG Air (for air jet systems) or American Whirlpool (for water jet systems).

There are other companies that make decent pumps, but if a company does not know or refuses to tell you where the pump is made, then chances are it was made in China and may not be UL listed.

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## Who Manufactures The Tub?

If the representative that you speak to knows the answer to this question & is allowed to tell you the truth, the answer will often surprise you. In fact, even companies like Jacuzzi and American Standard do not manufacture their own walk-in-tubs. To get the best deal on your purchase, you will want to buy manufacturer direct, so the answer to this question is very important. There are also some loopholes to be aware of. For example, the tub itself may be made in China, but if the levelers are screwed on in the US or if the holes for the jetting system are drilled here, the company can legally claim that their products are “assembled” in the USA. At best, this is stretching the truth. Some good questions to ask include:

- ♣ Who makes the jetting system? (Discussed in a later section.)
- ♣ Who drills for the jetting system & and where do they drill?
  - Ideally, this should be done here in the US, by a company with a competent quality control department who tests for function and leaks.
- ♣ Who manufactures the fixtures & do they have standard fittings?
  - Many of the walk in bathtubs will come with faucet sets, usually a 3 or 5 piece option that includes a hand held shower. Ideally, you will want a brand name hardware set.
  - Many tubs come with other accessories such as a grab bars built in, an extra safety grab bar to be wall mounted, a riser rod for your handheld shower, and a shower rod and curtain. Ideally, you will want these items to match the other hardware & to be manufactured by the same company who makes the faucet set.
  - Most walk in bathtubs come with or have the option of jetting systems. Not only does this give you significant therapeutic benefits, but it often makes this a tax write-off, since it may be considered to be durable medical equipment.

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## Who Warranties The Tub?

Make sure that if you are buying a walk-in-bathtub that you buy it from either the manufacturer or a certified sales representative for that company. Make sure that you know who the manufacturer is and that you have a phone number to contact them directly with any problems regardless of who the rep says will handle problems. Ultimately, any warranty issue will be the responsibility of the manufacturer. If you have an issue with your tub 5 or 10 years from now, will the sales person you spoke with still be around? Will their company still be around? Will the installation company still be around? And if the manufacturer is located in China as opposed to the US, how likely is it that you will get help from them? Be sure to review a copy of the warranty and look through it quickly to make sure that both the warranty and what you were told match up.

Since the installer may be a separate entity from the manufacturer, it is common for the installer to warranty the installation & for the manufacturer to warrantee the product itself.

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## What Warranty Comes With Your Tub?

Many walk-in-bathtubs today come with a lifetime warranty but you must always read the fine print on these warranties. Some companies say you must take pictures of the tub within 24 hours of receiving the walk-in-bathtub or the warranty is void. Many others have warranties that do not cover many of the parts associated with their tubs.

Make sure the tub you buy has a lifetime warranty on the door, the seal, the frame and the actual fiberglass or acrylic shell. The next thing to make sure of is that the tub comes with a warranty on the jetting system and the faucet sets. A common warranty on these products is 1 year but others do provide up to 5 year warranties on these accessories.

Another thing to make sure of is that the company not only provides parts, hopefully with quick turn around, but also covers labor, at no additional charge to you, on any item that is a manufacturer's defect. Be aware that many companies will only provide parts leaving labor costs up to you. This would be of particular concern if the failure of their product resulted in the need for labor to repair any structural, plumbing or electrical problems caused by their faulty tub.

You should also know that most companies will not provide a written warranty on accessories such as riser rods, shower rod and curtains, as these are considered to be freebies, and are not manufactured by them anyway.

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## Where Should You Buy Your Walk In Bathtub?

So you know you want a walk-in-bathtub, but you don't want to overpay and you don't want to get something cheap that starts to crack or leak in a couple years. You have already done your research & you know that there is no insurance (public or private) that covers walk-in-tubs. You've set aside the funds or have arranged for financing at your local bank. Now you just need to figure out where to get the walk-in-tub of your dreams. Here are some important things to be aware of as you decide on the vendor you want to do business with.

1. Should you shop for the cheapest walk-in-bathtub you can find?
  - a. Even a company that offers a lower cost product must produce a profit. So, the only way for a manufacturer to offer a significantly lower priced product is to have a significantly lower manufacturing cost on that product. In other words, they need to cut corners. As with any other industry, that means that the cheapest product will be the poorest quality, the most likely to have problems with cracking, warping doors, non-existent or failing jetting systems, short warranties, etc. In short, you do get what you pay for & the cost to replace a poor quality tub with a high quality tub is substantial. So, for most people, it is better to just do it right the first time.
2. Should you consider only purchasing brand name walk-in-bathtubs?
  - a. In short, no. Companies such as Premier Bathrooms, spend millions of dollars on advertising. The only way to pay for that advertising is to pass that cost on to you the consumer in the form of sharply inflated purchase prices for their products. Other companies such as American Standard or Jacuzzi don't even make all their

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own tubs. So, essentially, you pay a high premium to see their name on the box.

What you want to look at is where it's made, it's build quality & it's warranty.

### 3. Should You Buy From An Online-Only Retail Store?

You can buy the absolute cheapest, poorest quality products on the market through an online-only walk-in-bathtub vendor. Buyer beware! Many of these companies prey on seniors who don't know any better. They sell very poor quality & disappear when the tubs start to crack or leak. You've been warned.

### 4. Should You Buy From A Big Box Retail Store?

Stores such as Home Depot, BJ's or Costco do sell walk in bathtubs. However, these kinds of stores usually sell very small quantities of walk-in-bathtubs, so their staff really have very little knowledge about the market & do a rather poor job of assisting with product selection. Even with the rather small volume that they sell, in order to maximize volume, they typically offer only lower end, lower priced, lower quality walk-in-bathtubs. As these low quality products begin to fail, you can rest assured that these big-box retailers will stop carrying these product lines. Lastly, big-box retailers must turn a profit on the sale too. That means they are marking up the cost of buying factory direct, so why not just buy factory direct yourself?

### 5. Should You Buy Manufacturer Direct?

If you're looking for the highest quality, the best assistance on product selection, the most professional and attentive help with installation & the best value for your money; this is absolutely the way to go.

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## Time In Business

There are new companies popping up in this industry nearly every day. To protect yourself from a fly-by-night operation, you want to make sure you choose a company that has been making tubs for at least 5 years. After all, if they didn't make a quality product, they probably would not still be in business 5 years later.

Some companies will have a one division...sometimes a completely separate entity and company name for their sales division and another one for manufacturing. This is fairly common in the walk in bathtub industry & in some cases enables their manufacturing division to wholesale their products to other retailers. Again, be specific with your question. Their sales division may have been around for many years. Perhaps they have even been doing installations for many years, but what you want to know is how long they have been in the business of manufacturing walk in bathtubs.

To make sure you get the very best customer service, you also want to deal with a company who knows the market. In other words, if you are dealing with a company who has been building regular tubs for many years & just started making walk-in-tubs, they may not have the specialized knowledge needed to advise you on the best product for your long-term needs. They also may not design the most useful products based on your unique needs.

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## BBB and RipOff Report

The BBB and sites such as rip off report will provide a good overall background on different walk-in-bathtub companies. While it is true that no matter how wonderfully a company treats their customers, if they do high enough sales volume, they will eventually get some bad press. What is critical, however, is to find out, through these websites, how they deal with those complaints.

The best case scenario, of course, would be to deal with a company that didn't have any complaints to begin with.

In any case, before buying a walk-in-bathtub, you should always ask for references and check out consumer protection websites for reviews. The FTC (Federal Trade Commission) makes it illegal for a company to fabricate testimonials; however, some companies still do so. Therefore, you will want to check out more than 1 review site, if at all possible, to get a good sense for the quality of their products & service.

Also, some companies will allow you to speak to former customers and show you actual emails between their customers and the company. In some states, however this is a violation of privacy laws & companies are not able to provide this information to you. Therefore, doing your own online research is a great way to check out any company that you might be considering doing business with.

Lastly, be aware that some walk-in-bathtub companies create misleading “walk in bathtub review sites”, as a means of generating sales leads. You are better off doing your own independent research & hand-picking the companies you'd like to hear from than plugging in your contact information in & having their marketing team “hit you from all sides”.

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## Who Installs Your Tub?

This answer to this question will differ based on which walk-in-bathtub company you decide to go with. You can almost always choose to simply purchase the tub & get your own contractor to do the installation. However, the advantage of using a contractor that is familiar with installing a walk-in-bathtub is that they will often complete the job more quickly (in 1-2 days as opposed to 4-7 days) & with fewer surprises.

- ⤴ Online-only walk-in-bathtub companies typically do not offer any support or recommendations with regard to installers. Basically, they are only interested in talking to you until your payment clears. They then ship your tub & are on to the next sale.
- ⤴ Some companies do installations but will only warranty their tubs if they are installed by their own (often overpriced) installers.
- ⤴ Some companies send representatives to your home who may also be the installer. If they understand the unique needs of the market, they can do an excellent job in both providing you with ideal product recommendations as well as doing the actual installation.
- ⤴ Some companies keep these two departments separate (usually resulting in the best customer service). In that case they will send a representative who understands the installation process, but does not perform the installation services themselves. They will know the unique needs of the market & can do an excellent job in helping you with product selection, leaving the actual installation to a contractor (either on staff, or a recommendation to outside company that they deal with on a regular basis & who they know does a great job).

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- ⤴ If you know a general contractor or a plumber who you trust, make sure the company you bought the tub from will still warranty the product & and that they have a tech support department that your installer can speak with, if they run into any problems.

Whatever route you go, you can expect (in most areas of the country) to spend \$1500-\$3500 for an installation, depending on the unique parameters of your installation.

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## Company Information

The Bathe Safe Walk In Bathtub Company has over 15 years of manufacturing and sales experience with walk in bathtubs; we are the number one source for all of your walk in bathtubs needs. We pride ourselves, not only on manufacturing the widest range and the highest quality walk in bathtubs in the industry, but on making sure that our in-home team members & our caring support staff get you the exact product that will best suits your unique needs.

If you're ready to find out more about a walk in bathtub for you or a loved one, give us a call Today at: **(888) 675-6516** or visit: <http://www.TheWalkInBathtub.com> and fill out our online form to request a brochure or an in-home visit from one of our local representatives.

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