





Office Trailer Purchasing Guide



Introduction to the Office Trailer Buying Process

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Office trailers provide the convenience you need for administrative functions while being cost effective and mobile. They are an inexpensive solution for temporary space, ranging from a few thousand dollars for a small short-term option to tens of thousands for large, customized units for long-term support.

Installation

Office trailers are easy to set up; most sellers even provide delivery and setup offerings. Such costs range from \$1,000 to \$5,000, depending on size and distance, and can be on site in as little as 48 hours. Such convenience makes them a very viable option.

The most important decision to make is what type of trailer to buy, lease or rent. To make this decision, you'll have to consider the following:

- Space
- Usage
- Number of personnel using it
- Duration of use

Space

Where you are going to use the office trailer makes a difference. There are modular types that will fit inside a building, such a warehouse. But for the most part, office trailers are placed in an outdoor setting.

When deciding on an office trailer, consider the landscape. Is there adequate access for the trailer to be delivered and set up? Do you need it set up and torn down quickly? Advise the office trailer company of any slopes, grades or uneven ground that may need to be accounted for so they have the right supplies when they arrive.

When determining where to place the office trailer, another consideration is the power source. Is it going to be hardwired into a local utility? If so, coordinate with the utility company as well as the office trailer company when it comes to delivery and setup. If the power source is a generator, keep safety in mind.

Usage

There are a number of industries that utilize temporary office trailers, such as construction, education, healthcare, warehousing and manufacturing. This speaks to their versatility; office trailers are great for sales or administrative space, giving clerical staff and management a center base for operations, customer service and planning. Office trailers are also beneficial as a shelter and home base for workmen, giving them a place to store their gear, warm up, cool down or take breaks.

Number of people

The number of people occupying the space is the primary factor in determining the size and type of trailer to rent, lease or buy.

- The rule of thumb for determining office space is allowing 100 to 150 square feet per person.

Trailer sizes run from 8' x 16' (ideal for one person) to 24' x 64' (a conference room fitting 10 people). While you may not want to pay for extra space, ensuring adequate area to accomplish work is a huge plus for your employees. Employee comfort and retention will make up for the small additional cost in the long run.

Duration of use

The amount of time you will utilize the trailer may dictate the size and amenities that you *need* in the trailer versus what you would *want*. If you only need the trailer for a few weeks or will be moving it from site to site frequently, ensuring the trailer is easy to transport with few amenities and no costly setup / tear down features may be important. On the other hand, if the office trailer is for long-term use, selecting options that make it more like a brick and mortar building with traditional conveniences may be preferable.

This purchasing guide will give you more information on the different types of trailers, how they are used, and what questions to ask a dealer so your purchasing process goes smoothly.

Types & Trends

Office trailers are utilized in many industries to meet a wide variety of needs. We cover the most popular below.

Construction office trailer

The most popular use for temporary office trailers is a [construction trailer](#). These trailers are easy to set up, use right away, and can store or haul items in transit between sites.

As administrative offices, they give clerical employees and site management a place to do paperwork, have meetings and collaborate on the job. It decreases travel time between office and jobsite locations, increasing productivity, and allows for on-the-spot adjustments and

corrections. Many models come with built-in cabinets and standard office needs; however, you can request accessories that make sense for you, which we discuss later in this guide.

Sales offices are another popular use, allowing staff to meet potential clients and customers. You can customize your sales trailer to fit your requirements and just look for space to set it up and get started.

A properly equipped office trailer can also function as a lab, allowing soil and water testing to be done onsite. They also function as training offices, letting you train new personnel.

Industrial in-plant offices

Modular in-plant offices save up to 40% of traditional construction costs. They are even able to move within the plant when necessary to maximize space. They are heavy duty, with an aluminum framework, covered in a scratch-resistant poly coating with industrial grade doors hung in steel door frames. You can choose options that include standard or modular wiring, windows, double doors or overhead doors, and separate HVAC controls from the plant or warehouse floor.

These office trailers are ground level. There are single piece units that can be moved with a forklift that come in sections and can easily be reassembled from place to place.

Education

Education is another popular industry that utilizes office trailers as temporary space. As budgets become tighter, office trailers are a cost effective option to increase the number of classrooms, classroom space and allow for smaller class sizes. Such innovations allow more children to go to school. Smaller classrooms have been shown effective in improving learning and directing the focus of the classroom participants.



Healthcare

The healthcare field has been increasing its use of office and modular trailers. They can be temporary or permanent and used for a wide range of purposes, such as the following:

- Family health clinic
- Mobile emergency or urgent care facilities in a disaster
- Rehab centers
- Laboratories
- Physical therapy facilities
- Dialysis centers

Office trailers enable quick expansion with limitless potential in floor plans, designs and other customizations. They can also be re-purposed quickly as demands change.

Government

Office trailers are often used by the government for military forces and domestic emergency teams. Trailers can be hauled in and set up quickly into command centers, base of operations, and housing for personnel. There are customizable options including blast-proof doors and windows, collapse capabilities and mobility. Emergency departments can be onsite within hours of an emergency with gear, testing equipment, medical supplies and telecommunication equipment.

Specifications

The largest decision you will make is what size office trailer you need. Below, we discuss a variety of dimensions and floor plans.

Single-wide office trailers

Single-wide office trailers are the most common version. Width varies from 8' – 14' and length 20' to 64'. As a single unit, they require little to no assembly, can be hauled on their own chassis and set up quickly. They come in a wide variety of models, and each model offers different features, such as built-in cabinets, restrooms, closets, overhead cargo doors, office partitions and storage.

If you are going to use a single-wide trailer for administrative functions or clients and patients, there are models that feature higher quality materials for an enhanced professional atmosphere, including paneled walls and carpeting.

- Price ranges for renting start at \$2,000 and for purchasing, they start at \$22,000 new and \$12,000 used.

Multi-wide office trailers

Multi-wide models significantly enhance the width of the trailer. They provide 1344 to 2880 square feet of space in an assortment of layouts and components. They offer more customizable options than the single-wide versions and can include multiple restrooms, storage closets and flooring options to resist wear and tear. They also include built-in cabinets, desks, partitions, closets and more.

- Rental prices start at \$5,000, new at \$35,000 and used at \$23,000.

The width of the trailer is where you gain the additional square footage and greatest flexibility in how to use it. The width is also the driving factor in cost differences. This is because of the additional materials and wiring and installation required; however, it's also in part because of transportation. Roads are only wide enough to accommodate less than 10' in width at any

time, otherwise special permits are required, which will have to be paid by the renter or purchaser. Each section requires its own permit.

Once on site, there may be costs for material handling equipment, such as a crane, to offload, place and hold sections while it is being assembled. These are all factors that should be considered as you decide how large a trailer will suit your needs.

Building Components

Office trailers come with standard building components you should know about before you speak with a dealer. You can also customize some features for added benefits.

Material options

Single or multi-wide temporary office trailers have very similar stock exteriors. They typically have aluminum siding on an I-beam frame with standard drip rail gutters. This will work for most job site trailers.



However, every construction company is different and so is every job. As a result, there are temporary office trailers made of durable steel for security reasons and to protect assets. There are even models that are blast resistant for demolition job sites. On the inside, the trailers are decorated with weather resistant flooring, gypsum walls and other resilient surfaces to hold up against normal wear and tear.

Telecom setup/wiring

Communication technology keeps you connected and ahead of the curve. Fortunately, you can get an office trailer with telecommunication setup and wiring options so you don't miss a beat. Your first step is to ask the dealer if the trailer comes equipped or if they can connect you with an authorized service provider. The type of provider may depend on whether you are connecting to existing utilities or operating as a mobile site.

If you are hardwired, the local telephone or cable company is a viable option for long-term service. If you are operating as a standalone mobile site, wireless options provided by local cell phone companies may make more sense.

Whichever route you select, make sure to inform your dealer so they can voice any concerns they may have. For instance, hardwiring may require some modifications during installation. Whether you rent or buy, you can void your contract or warranty if unauthorized personnel perform repairs, services or modifications to the trailer. So be sure to clear it with the dealer first.

Climate control

Not all trailers are created equal when it comes to heating and cooling. Many models come *without* climate control so be sure to ask for heating or air conditioning units if you want them. The size and design of the trailer will play a part in your decision.

For instance, if the trailer has multiple rooms, you may need a diffuser to separate the air into different areas of the trailer. That may not be necessary in smaller, single or compartmentalized trailers. The dealer can advise you on that as well.

Built in options:

- Wall mounts
- Baseboards
- Centralized HVAC controls.

Portable options:

- Window air conditioning units
- Propane heaters

Restrooms

Many construction sites opt for separate [portable toilet service](#), especially if the trailer moves from site to site. Placing portable toilets around the jobsite makes it more convenient for those working outdoors; in addition, separate facilities reduce traffic in the job trailer, cutting down on distractions and increasing productivity.

If there are employees strictly working in the office trailer, having a restroom inside increases their comfort and productivity. Office trailer restrooms are available in most single wide trailers 10' x 40' feet and up. If the dealer offers customized floor plans for smaller trailers, ask if a restroom can be incorporated into the design. When deciding on the extensiveness of your restroom facilities, consider the following:

- Are you going to be able to hook into an existing sewer line?
- If not, what options do you have for fresh water, disposal and toiletry systems?
- Do you need fresh water but have a sewer line?
- Will you have a water connection but no sewer for an existing bathroom?

Any portable interior option is going to require room in the design for the holding tanks of fresh and waste water.

You can choose from basic options up to "luxury" packages. There are companies that offer the installation of a fully-functioning portable restroom comprised of portable fresh water, grey water and black water tanks, as well as porcelain toilets and sinks, giving your temporary office trailer restroom a "permanent" look and feel while staying completely mobile. You can arrange

delivery of fresh water, removal of the grey and black and routine maintenance checks for leaks and other problems. Systems are odor free so other than the extra coordination, you would never know the restroom was considered portable. You can add hand dryers, hot water and soap or hand sanitizer dispensers too.

Including a restroom can affect the monthly lease or rental price by \$15 to \$100 a month, depending on the trailer size and type of restroom. That may or may not include delivery and removal charges of fresh and waste water so be sure to clarify those terms with the dealer. If you purchase a trailer with restrooms, it can add \$500 to \$3,000 to the price plus you would pay for the delivery of fresh water and removal of waste.

Security

Securing tools and important documentation after hours is an important consideration. Do the doors on the trailer lock? How many keys can you get? What other options are there? Extra security includes:

- Interior window bars
- Steel doors
- Exterior door lights
- Locks with a deadbolt
- Latch guard plate for extra security.

Do their furniture packages include safes? If you need a safe, what you do you need to do to install it in your trailer? You can also inquire about security fencing to protect the outlying area.

For jobs that require an even higher level of security, consider office trailers with high security door systems or all steel container models. For steel storage containers, there are high end locking systems, such as a tri-cam locking system with interlocking bars on the inside.

Accessories & Customizations

While selecting the right size trailer with the right building components are the first steps, addressing additional factors with accessories and customizations is next on the list. In the case of construction office trailers, these additional items make it look better, improve access and climate control, and make optimal use of the space inside.

Skirting

Skirting is what hides the tires, braces, poles, wires, pipes and leveling feet that hold the trailer up, secure it in place and provide amenities. It wraps around the bottom of the trailer with one edge on the ground. It also improves insulation and conserves energy.

- New skirting costs approximately \$400 per 12' x 24' standard trailer.

Steps, decking and awnings

Few temporary office trailers will have doors or other entry points at ground level. As a result, you will need steps. Steps can be provided by the dealer; just double check to be sure they meet OSHA requirements for building access.

- A good steady set of steps ranges from \$100 to \$250 depending on height and rails.

Decking allows for easier access with a platform in front of entry and exit doors. It may be necessary if someone is carrying supplies or tools in and out of the trailer frequently. It also makes the temporary facility look more permanent, adding a professional air that is especially important if your client or customers may be on site for meetings.

- A small deck for a standard trailer is \$500 to \$800 and can be constructed for easy hauling from site to site with the trailer.

Awnings enhance the appearance of an office trailer. They also help control the climate inside the trailer by shading the windows from direct sun shining inside. An awning for an average size window costs approximately \$50 to \$150 per window.

Ramps and accessibility

The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) has stringent requirements in terms of building codes for ramps. If you use a ramp, it has to be handicap accessible. This requires landings to be at predetermined lengths, have specific supports and be wide enough along the path of travel with adequate turning space for a wheelchair. Be sure that you are aware of the building codes for the area you are placing your temporary facility as there may be additional considerations.

Shelving

One of the additional benefits of having an enclosed and secure facility is the ability to use any excess space for storage. You can add shelving for storage purposes in the floor layout. There are many types of shelving from wood to platform to wire rack. Racks and shelving can run from \$50 to \$350 for 100 square feet, depending on material choice.

Questions to Ask a Dealer

When you are talking to a dealer about buying or renting an office trailer, there are items to ask about other than just size and price. There are many details that you can discover to help make sure you get a trailer capable of maximum utilization while minimizing excess cost.

Hidden fees

Be sure to inquire about hidden or additional fees:



- Does their quoted price include setup charges or removal charges?
- What are the charges for transporting it to the job site?
- Can you haul it yourself, especially if buying?

Ask about insurance. Are you required to carry any type of insurance on the office trailer if you are renting it? Or do they cover it and it is included in the quoted price?

Finally, ask about surcharges or administrative fees for paperwork, title or deed registration and financing related obligations, if you financed directly through the dealer.

Rental packages

If you are renting, ask about packages. Many rental dealers offer furniture or office equipment packages for temporary office space. Packages could include: desks, lockers, chairs, file cabinets, a break room table, drafting tables and more. Rental packages vary. Below are two examples:

- **Singlewide trailer:** \$50 a month for folding chairs and a table
- **Multi-wide trailer:** \$1,200 a month for desks, office chairs and a fully furnished break room

Building codes and permits

Dealers should be familiar with building code requirements and permits within their state and even a few hundred miles from their location. Do not be afraid to ask the tough questions.

Questions to ask:

- Are the trailers properly equipped to meet the area's rules and regulations for such facilities?
- Are they OSHA compliant?
- Will the trailers come with fire extinguishers and smoke alarms?

If time is important to your job or project, ask questions about clear and established timelines for buying options, leasing options and renting options. For instance, if you are renting for a short duration and an office trailer onsite meets your needs, with or without the furniture package, the trailer can be on your jobsite within 48 hours in most cases.

If you are leasing for a longer term and have specific requirements in the type of trailer that ideally meets your needs, it could take up to a week for the trailer to arrive at your place of business and be installed.

Buying a trailer can take the longest, especially if you are ordering amenities or accessories. Such items may be produced on demand or have to be ordered in from another location. Plan a long lead time for purchases and check in frequently with your dealer to make sure you are on track.

These timelines assume you have addressed financing and payment prior to selecting a trailer. If you are coordinating financing at the same time as purchase, lease or rent, it may take longer as information is passed back and forth and you await approval.

Temporary office trailers provide convenience and cost avoidance benefits that make them a viable option in today's increasing fast-paced and flexible world.

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