

## To Lift or Not Lift That Is The Question!

With the price of car lifts dropping under \$2000. in the last few years, many are considering the purchase of a car lift for two general reasons, storage and/or maintenance.

When choosing a lift, you essentially have four basic types of lifts: four post, two post, in-ground, and single post lifts. While each has its own advantages and disadvantages, it is unlikely that the homeowner will have an in-ground lift and therefore that type won't be considered here. Nor will specialty scissor lifts, portable lifts, or other hybrids be discussed.

### Four Post Lifts

Some of the advantages of a four post lift are: 1) storage (you can park a second car under the lifted car), 2) the fact that this type of lift typically does not have to be anchored to the ground, and 3) that the four post "footprint" is generally smaller than a two post lift. Another couple small advantages of the four post lift are that most four post lifts have caster sets available which allow you to roll the lift around the garage, and if you are putting a second car under the lifted car, most four post lifts have drip trays to catch the wayward carbon footprints of our British cars. Another advantage to storing a car on a four post lift is that it doesn't leave the car with the suspension hanging down over a long period of time. However, maintenance on a four post lift is not as convenient as on a two post because you are forced to work around the ramps and in some instances will have to use a jacking tray to elevate the car off the ramps to perform maintenance.



### Two Post Lifts

The main advantage of a two post lift is that this is the easiest lift to perform vehicle maintenance on. You do not have the ramps of a four post lift to work around, nor the need for a jacking tray. Disadvantages of the two post lift include: 1) the need to bolt the lift to the ground, 2) sometimes two post lifts can require a thicker concrete base depending upon the capacity of the lift, 3) they are not as good for long term storage, and 4) they usually have a larger footprint than the four post. Also, when used for "stacked" car storage, there is no easy way to catch or prevent drippings from the lifted car reaching the bottom car.



### Single Post Lifts

Single post lifts are a more recent development in car storage and maintenance. The single post lift has the advantages of long term storage for cars since the cars are parked on ramps, and this type of lift generally does not require being bolted to the floor. However, this type of lift is the worst for vehicle maintenance as they have two obstacles to overcome, the ramps and the support beams that do the lifting. Not to mention that their cost still is several times higher than two or four post lifts.



Now that you have mentally decided upon what type of lift that you want, **PLEASE** consider the following as well.

-While various manufacturers and their salespeople will tell you that their lift is the best and that the other companies are a piece of junk, listen to what the sales people have to say, discount the rhetoric, and you will eventually come away with kernels of information to help form your decision.

-When researching the web about a particular lift, you will find people on the various bulletin boards who will swear by a lift and those who will swear at it. Remember that everyone comes from a different perspective; it's the old Ford vs Chev argument. Try to separate the truth from the opinion.

-Pay attention to the necessary power requirements of each lift. Some come with 110v, some with 220v, and some with your choice of electrical power.

-Pay attention to the necessary anchoring requirements of each lift. Most lifts require that you have a 4 inch concrete slab. This will cover the majority of home use lifts.

-Many lift users will remind you to pay attention to the quality of the steel that is used to manufacture the lifts. As with anything, there are varying thicknesses and steel grades amongst the manufacturers.

-Check with the manufacturer about replacement parts. Having a lift is meaningless if you can't replace a worn or broken part.

-If you are not comfortable about installing a lift yourself, check to see if a local contactor is available to install it for you. This service may cost you several hundred dollars. Also check transportation costs to get the lift to your house.

-Regardless of what type of lift you choose, do your homework on all the brands in that category. You may find that the lift that you are looking at is actually a spin off of another company. For example, Direct Lift is a spin off using Rotary Lifts engineering.

-Find out if the lift is ANSI/ALI certified and ETL approved. This can either be done through the manufacturer, or by checking the <http://www.autolift.org/> website. Some manufacturers will discount the need to certify a lift, usually because their lift isn't certified. My thinking leans towards safety. I want a properly engineered lift that has redundant safety features so that I do not have worry while I am under the lift.

-See if demonstration lifts are available in the area to go inspect.

So, which lift should you buy? There is no perfect answer for everyone. Individual needs are diverse and dependent upon garage space, needs, personal desires, and available funds. Personally I chose a 4 post lift that allowed me to put 3 cars in a two car garage. If I had more room to store cars and was more interested in a maintenance only lift, I would have made a different decision. Maybe someday I'll have that heated 8 bay garage with 13 foot ceilings.