

# company's coming

In the season for welcoming guests, sleeper sofas adapt perfectly

**W**hen the holidays approach, it seems I never have sufficient sleeping accommodations for the steady stream of friends and family who come to visit. This year, however, I was determined to be prepared. I considered buying a futon mattress that could be rolled up and hidden in a closet when not in use, but that was a solution too reminiscent of college life. And as I'd logged too many sleepless nights on the pullout sofas of well-intentioned hosts, I wanted to avoid those same sagging-mattress and punishing-springs mistakes. So I launched my investigation.

**On the sofa trail** I concentrated on sleeper sofas, which have the greatest comfort potential and number of design options. Unlike their boxy predecessors, today's sofabeds come in various sizes and styles, from chair-and-a-half to queen, from classic to contemporary. The first and most important thing I learned about choosing a convertible was to think *mattress*: at least 5 inches

thick and with a coil innerspring (the element that keeps a mattress from falling through the couch frame). For comfort, fillings such as cotton or polyester wrap around the coils, with layers of fabric and padding providing surface cushioning. **Frame game** Though support and comfort were my greatest concerns, I also wanted my couch to be durable. Look for kiln-dried hardwood frames like oak rather than pine or spruce, I was told. According to Margi Daniels, ASID, the design consultant for La-Z-Boy, a good frame also needs the smoothest of extension mechanisms to allow the bed to glide in and out in one fluid motion. She recommended checking the fully extended mechanism for rough edges that could tear up bedding.

As with all sofas, a sleeper sofa's fab-

ric plays a major role in dictating the price, with cotton and polyester usually at the low end, silk, velvet and leather at the high. Options such as contrast welting, nail-head trim and other dress-maker details raise the cost as well.

I dutifully tested each sofa by sitting on the cushions and then lying down on the bed, calculating the comfort level and amount of support of each.

**And the winner is . . .** I decided on a full-size, country-style sleeper covered with a beige cotton blend and finished with kick pleats. I just hope it's not so comfortable that my guests overextend their stay. —Dina M. Roth



This 86-inch sofa sits three and sleeps two.

## Sleep in heavenly peace: Offer overnight visitors one of these five options



### SLEEPER

This Daphne sofa from La-Z-Boy has a chair-and-a-half mattress that sleeps one; \$799 (in denim), 800-625-3246.

### FUTON

The frame on L.L. Bean's futon sofa slides down into a bed; \$655 for frame, mattress and pad, 800-809-7057.



### FOLDOUT

This foam two-seater, Håby from Ikea, flips out into a full-size mattress; \$249, 800-434-4532.

### DAYBED


Toss some pillows against the metal frame of this Tromsnes daybed for an instant sofa; Ikea, \$229.



### TRUNDLE BED

A drawer front camouflages Ethan Allen's trundle; \$1,448 for upper-and-lower-bed set, 800-228-9229.



					
	<b>sleeper</b>	<b>futon</b>	<b>foldout</b>	<b>daybed</b>	<b>trundle bed</b>
<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	An 18th-century space-saving innovation, the sofabed has an extension mechanism that reveals a mattress tucked inside.	Japanese for "mattress," a futon is usually made of cotton and foam and used on a folding wood frame for dual-use flexibility.	Often made of polyurethane foam that has been covered with fabric, the base cushions of the couch fold out to form a bed for two.	A twin-size mattress framed by a headboard, a footboard and at times a backboard. Originally intended for midday naps, it's now a guest berth as well.	A bed with a concealed mattress underneath that pulls or rolls out. Some, called "high-risers," lift to normal bed height when extended.
<b>PROS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Available in several sizes, many styles.</li> <li>● Instead of sitting on—and wearing out—the mattress, you sit on cushions supported by a wood frame.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mattresses are available in hypo-allergenic fill.</li> <li>● Slipcovers zip off for laundering and relatively inexpensive reupholstering.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Same space-saving features as a sleeper but at a lower price.</li> <li>● Lightweight, easy to move.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fancier models can be used decoratively.</li> <li>● Good for small or awkward spaces.</li> <li>● Nothing to pull out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Two twin beds take up the daytime floor space of only one.</li> <li>● Perfect for a child's sleepover guests.</li> </ul>
<b>CONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Internal mechanism makes this less comfortable than a dedicated sofa.</li> <li>● Metal frame can be a toe stubber when bed is pulled out in a tight space.</li> <li>● Heavy; hard to move.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cotton compresses over time, becoming hard and lumpy.</li> <li>● Fans of springy mattresses may find even new cotton ones to be too firm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No innerspring mattress to provide back support.</li> <li>● Foam breaks down, starts to sag.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accommodates only one person.</li> <li>● Mattress takes wear from daytime use as a sofa.</li> <li>● Hard to sit back on as a sofa because of the mattress's width.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Leaves the second sleeper very close to the floor.</li> <li>● High-risers tend to be more boxy than other daybed options.</li> <li>● Metal latch that releases high-riser can pinch fingers.</li> </ul>
<b>COST</b>	\$600 to \$15,000, depending on fabric, mattress, frame quality.	About \$150 to \$1,800 for frame, mattress and nonslip pad.	\$200 to \$500.	Basic metal, \$200 to \$500. More detailed, up to \$5,000 or more.	Trundle, \$750 to \$3,500. High-riser mechanism, \$150.
<b>BUYING TIPS</b>	Consider the fit of the sofa—both open and closed—in your room. If the mattress will get frequent use, put money into a good innerspring model.	Innerspring mattress provides a soft, plush feel, unlike a traditional futon. Wards offers one for \$199, 800-438-3156.	When the bed is open, look for straight-seam stitching. Well-sewn seams indicate durability and a better-constructed piece of furniture.	Find a daybed that has bolsters rather than loose pillows for its use as a sofa. Your back will thank you.	To save money, purchase a high-riser mechanism separately, place a mattress on top and roll it under the bed.

## No room for extra furniture? Here are some stowaway sleeping solutions that provide comfort on the spot.

**Instant mattress** Whether you are trying to save space or you need yet another option for overnight guests, consider the inflatable Aero Bed (right) as a quick and simple option. Plug the mattress into a wall socket, press the One Touch button, and the bed automatically inflates in less than one minute. As the mattress has a built-in pump, you can adjust firmness to

your particular taste. Rolled up in a duffel bag, the Aero Bed tucks away in any closet. Available for \$129 to \$199 through the Sharper Image catalog; 800-344-4444.

**Back to basics** Folding cots have come a long way. J.C. Penney offers lightweight steel rollaways with automatic leg openings and innerspring mattresses; \$180 to \$220, 800-222-6161.

