



Used vs. New Forklift: A Practical Guide

Understanding the key factors that help you choose with confidence.

Choosing between a used or new forklift isn't as simple as focusing on price. It's a decision that should include uptime requirements, maintenance planning and how your equipment supports day-to-day operations.

This guide breaks down the most important factors experienced buyers consider so you can evaluate both options with a clear understanding of the trade-offs involved.

KEY FACTORS BUYERS SHOULD CONSIDER

Before choosing used or new, it helps to step back and clarify what you actually need from your equipment. These factors often shape the right decision more than brand or model year alone.

FACTOR #1

Forklift Usage and Application

How the forklift will be used day to day is one of the most important considerations.

Ask yourself:

- How frequently will the truck be used?
- What loads will it handle?
- Will it operate indoor and/or outdoors?
- Are there environmental factors like temperature, surface conditions or tight spaces?

If your application is clearly defined and involves moderate or lighter-duty use, a properly inspected used forklift can be a practical, cost-effective fit. For demanding or continuous-use environments, new equipment often provides greater durability and long-term consistency.

FACTOR #3

Timing and Equipment Availability

When the forklift is needed can be just as important as what it costs.

Ask:

- Is this a planned purchase or an immediate need?
- Can your operation wait for longer lead times?
- Do upcoming projects or changes require equipment sooner?

Used forklifts are often available sooner and can help fill immediate needs, while new equipment may be the better option when timing is flexible and specific configurations are required.

FACTOR #2

Your Budget and Total Cost of Ownership

Budget plays a role in almost every equipment decision, but it's rarely just about purchase price.

You should consider:

- Your initial investment
- Ongoing maintenance and service costs
- The cost of downtime if equipment is unavailable or unreliable

If managing upfront costs is a priority and you're comfortable planning for maintenance expenses, used equipment can provide strong value. If predictable costs, warranty coverage and long-term planning are more important, new equipment may better support those goals.

FACTOR #4

Risk Tolerance and Support

Every buyer has a different comfort level when it comes to risk.

Think about what matters most to you:

- Warranty coverage
- Predictable maintenance costs
- Access to dealer support and service

If you're comfortable with some variability and prioritize flexibility or lower upfront investment, used equipment may be a good fit—especially with inspection and warranty options. If minimizing risk and maximizing predictability are priorities, new equipment often provides added confidence.



WHEN TO BUY A USED FORKLIFT

Used forklifts are often the right choice when your priorities lean toward flexibility, timing or managing upfront investment, without sacrificing dependable performance.

You Want to Get the Most Value from Remaining Equipment Life

Lower-hour used forklifts typically offer the best balance between upfront cost and remaining service life. With fewer hours on major components, these trucks can continue to perform reliably for years when properly maintained—often at a lower initial capital outlay than new equipment.

You Need Equipment Available Right Away

When uptime matters and operations can't wait, used forklifts are often available much sooner than new equipment. This makes them a practical option when you need to fill a gap quickly, support a new project or keep work moving without extended lead times.

You Don't Need Continuous, Heavy-Duty Use

If your forklift won't be running around the clock or in demanding applications, used equipment can be a strong fit. It delivers the capability you need without paying for performance or lifecycle you may never fully use.

You Want to Minimize Training and Disruption

If your operators are already familiar with a specific model or configuration, choosing a similar used forklift can make transitions smoother. This can reduce training time, limit operational disruption and help maintain productivity.

You Want to Save Capital for Other Priorities

If you're focused on keeping capital available for growth, staffing, facility improvements, or technology investments, used forklifts can reduce upfront spend while still supporting daily operations.

Tips to Evaluate Used Trucks

When considering a used forklift, buyers often:

- 1 Ask about operating hours and maintenance history
- 2 Understand how the forklift was previously used
- 3 Review inspection records and any reconditioning
- 4 Consider available warranty tier options to align with risk tolerance

WHEN TO BUY A NEW FORKLIFT

New forklifts often make the most sense when long-term performance, predictability and consistency are central to how your operation runs.

You Rely on Your Forklift for Heavy or Continuous Use

If your forklift is a critical part of daily operations—running multiple shifts or handling demanding applications—new equipment typically offers a longer service life before major repairs are needed. This can reduce interruptions and help support consistent productivity over time.

You Want the Latest Safety, Ergonomic, and Efficiency Features

New forklifts often include updated safety systems, ergonomic improvements and efficiency enhancements designed to support operators and reduce daily operating strain. For some operations, these updates can improve comfort, consistency and overall performance.

You Want Predictable Maintenance and Warranty Coverage

With new equipment, manufacturer warranty coverage can help minimize unexpected repair costs and provide more predictable maintenance planning. This can be especially valuable when equipment uptime is critical to meeting operational goals.

You're Planning for Long-Term Use and Standardization

If you're adding to an existing fleet or planning for long-term growth, new forklifts make it easier to standardize equipment across your operation. Consistency in controls, parts, and service routines can simplify training and maintenance over time.

You Want to Reduce Risk Over the Full Equipment Lifecycle

For buyers who prioritize long-term reliability and lower risk across the entire lifecycle of the truck, new equipment can provide added confidence—particularly in high-use or mission-critical applications.

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

There isn't a single "right" answer for every operation. The best decision connects equipment capability to workload, availability, and long-term operational plans.

At LiftOne, we help customers evaluate both new and used forklifts with clear, straightforward guidance—so you can choose equipment that fits how your operation runs today and supports where it's headed next.

Contact the team at LiftOne to get started today.