

How to choose the right vehicle hoist for your workshop

What you need to know to get more from your investment

Whether you're a professional garage mechanic or a home enthusiast, you're probably aware of the massive difference a workshop hoist can make to your productivity.

Car hoists can not only improve your workshop's speed, safety and efficiency, they can even provide extra car parking.

Yet unless you have a footy field of space available in your workshop, you probably only have room for just one or two hoists. That's why it's so important to choose the ideal lift for your requirements. But with so many features, options, and different applications to consider, it's understandable if you find it a challenge to know where to begin.

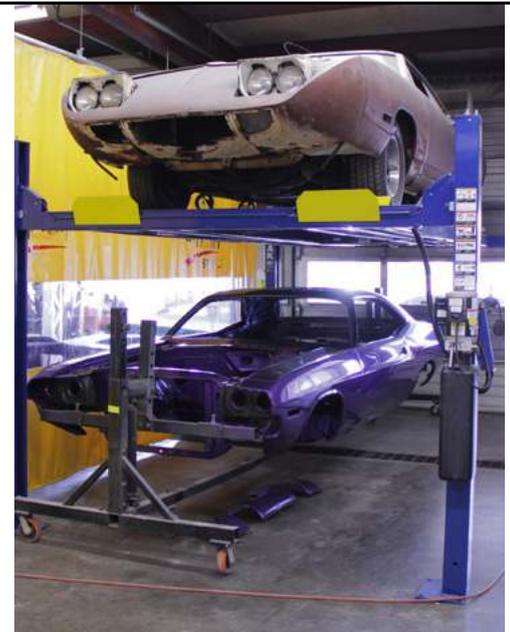


Get to know the two basic styles of vehicle hoist

Car and truck lifts come in a wide range of styles, but most of them fall into two categories based on how they engage the vehicle: whether that's by the wheels or by the frame

Within these types, the most common wheel engaging lifts are four post hoists, and the most common frame engaging lifts are two post hoists.

There's also the less common car lift styles (known as specialty lifts) such as scissor lifts, portable lifts, mobile lifts, in-ground lifts and parking lifts to think about. It's a lot to get your head around.



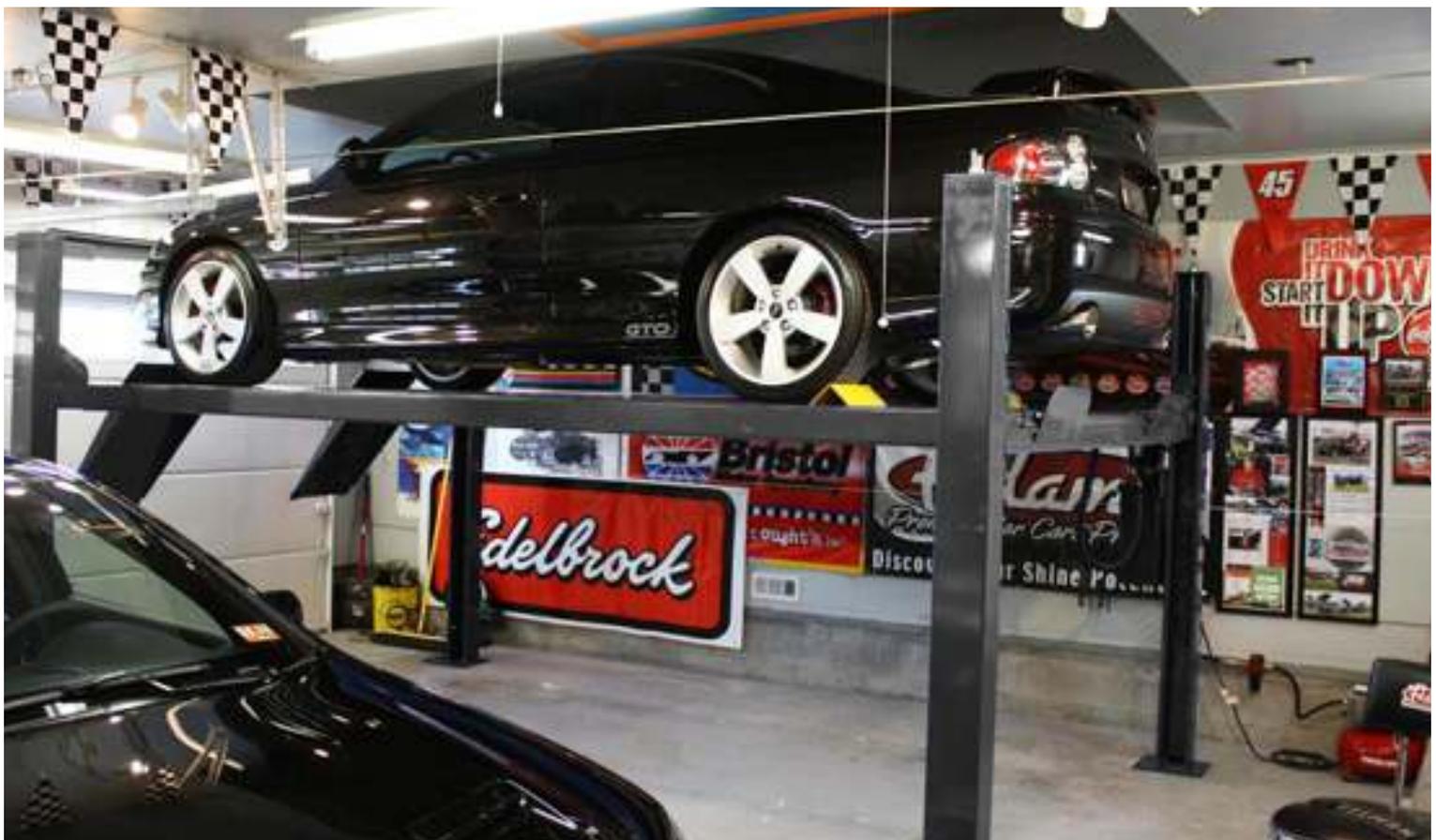
Understand your options with Garage Equipment

So how do you choose exactly the right car lift for your needs?

To help you get the best ROI from your vehicle hoist, the Garage Equipment team have put together this vehicle hoist guide. We'll take a look at each type of vehicle hoist and talk about what it can do in your home or business.

We've also summarised the pros and cons of each lift format to give you a clear snapshot of your options.

With the help of this guide, you'll be a vehicle hoist expert in no time!



Four post vehicle hoists

Capability, capacity, and storage in one tough package

If you need a versatile lift with high capacity, four post vehicle lifts are the answer.

With their additional support columns, they're capable of lifting greater capacities compared to two post hoists. And as a wheel-engaging lift, their "drive-on and park" mounting method means they're also extremely user-friendly.

Four post hoists are ideal if you do a lot of heavy engine work, transmission servicing, or full car underbody work such as exhaust replacement. If you're running a quick-lube workshop or muffler business, a four post hoist should be your ideal solution.

Home users also favour four post car lifts because they don't usually need to be anchored to the garage floor. With the addition of an optional castor wheel package, smaller capacity four post lifts can even be made portable.

A major advantage of four post hoists is that, thanks to their solid four column design, you can safely leave a vehicle parked on the hoist while you store another underneath – effectively doubling your parking space.

The downsides of four post hoists? Thanks to their sturdy construction that uses more steel, four post vehicle lifts are usually more expensive than two post versions. And if you plan to use your four post automotive lift for wheel service, you'll need additional rolling or sliding bridge jacks to lift the car's wheels off the hoist.



Four post hoists at-a-glance

PROS

- High capacity
- Easy drive-on mechanism
- Can be used for vehicle storage

CONS

- A more expensive lift option
- Require additional jacks for wheel service applications
- Require more floor space than a two post hoist

Two post vehicle hoists

Robust, flexible, and affordable

The most common type of frame-engaging car lift, two post hoists are widely used by professional workshops and home users alike.

With their two extremely sturdy posts and supportive stabilisation arms, two post car hoists can lift and hold a large variety of vehicles up at a comfortable working height. Usually more affordable than four post options, two post hoists also need less space and offer clear access to the car's wheels.

Symmetrical or asymmetrical design?

When you're choosing a two post hoist, you'll likely have the option of symmetrical and asymmetrical designs.

With a symmetrical design the vehicle is loaded evenly on the arms of the lift, while an asymmetrical design uses different length swing arms and a rotated post to handle an uneven load (such as a longer, unbalanced ute or truck). Asymmetrical hoists also allow you to open the car's doors while it's on the hoist, letting you access the interior.

On the minus side, two post hoists are much taller than other lifts and require more overhead space for installation. You also won't be able to store vehicles for extended periods on a two post lift, like you can with four post hoists.



Two post hoists at-a-glance

PROS

- A less expensive lift option
- Need only a small footprint
- Offer unobstructed access to wheels

CONS

- Taller than other lifting options
- Can't be used for extended vehicle storage

Scissor car lifts

Compact, adaptable, and easy-to-use

Scissor lifts are a broad category of lifts that can be either wheel engaging or frame engaging types. They raise the vehicle by extending an accordion-like mechanism beneath the runway.

Available in a wide range of sizes and capacities, scissor lifts can suit both professional workshops and home users. Depending on your needs, you can choose from low-rise, mid-rise, and full-rise models of scissor lift.

Thanks to their low profile, scissor lifts are easy to position vehicles on. They also let you park over them while they're not in use – a particular benefit to home workshop enthusiasts.

On the other hand, scissor lifts never completely disappear unless they're installed below the workshop floor. Because of their design, they also can't be used for storing two vehicles one above the other.



Scissor lifts at-a-glance

PROS

- Available in a wide range of models
- Easily stored
- Low profile when not in use

CONS

- A more expensive lift option
- Cannot stack two vehicles
- Don't allow technicians easy access to under the vehicle

Portable car lifts

Conveniently lift a car, wherever you are

If you're working in a smaller workshop or home garage, you might think you don't have the space for a vehicle lift. In that case, a portable car lift could be perfect for your needs.

There are many specialised portable car lifts available, from mobile scissor lifts on a long handle, to portable frame single post lifts, and portable car hoists like the incredible QuickJack system.

QuickJack can be easily stowed in the boot of most normal cars and quickly set up almost anywhere. It raises cars in the air in literally just seconds, ready for maintenance. QuickJack is a safe, durable, and convenient option when space is at a premium in your workshop.

Of course, when you opt for a portable car lift, you're really choosing convenience and mobility over outright capacity. You won't be able to lift large, heavy vehicles with a portable car lift. So before choosing this lift, think about whether you'll need the bigger capacity of a different style of car lift or hoist.



Portable car lifts at-a-glance

PROS

- Easy to store and transport
- Don't need to be permanently installed
- A cheaper car lift option

CONS

- Limited lifting capacity
- Can't lift larger cars or trucks
- Often are not full rise

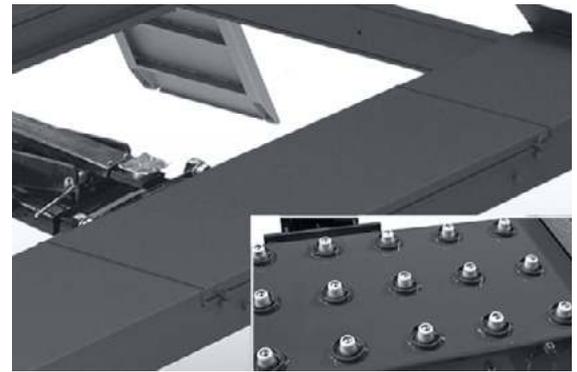
Alignment car lifts

A specialist solution for your workshop

Alignment auto lifts offer you a special type of lifting solution.

Their additional features – such as built-in turn plates and slip plates that allow the vehicle's wheels to easily turn without resistance – let you perform wheel alignment services on cars or trucks.

As a wheel engaging lift, they can be supplied in a number of formats such as four post lifts, scissor lifts and in-ground lifts.



Alignment car lifts at-a-glance

PROS

- Specialist alignment lift
- Can provide increased revenue for your workshop
- Available in four post, scissor, and in-ground formats

CONS

- Often more expensive than standard 4 post hoist due to their specialised use

Parking lifts

Multiply your workshop's car parks

If you need to increase the parking capacity of your workshop, look no further than a car parking lift.

Exclusively a wheel engaging lifting method, parking lifts raise one car up to allow another to be parked beneath. If you have enough headroom in your workshop, or space outdoors, there are even models that let you park three cars in a space that previously accommodated just one.

You should note that, because parking lifts use a full drive-on deck instead of two runways, you won't be able to carry out automotive service, maintenance or repairs with this type of car lift.

Our sister company LevantaPark can advise you on the perfect car parking lift for your building design.



Parking lifts at-a-glance

PROS

Multiply your available car parks

CONS

Can't be used for vehicle servicing or repair

Some last words on choosing your vehicle lift

Before you lock in a particular lift model, it's a good idea to think about these four points:

1) Start with the ground rules

Before you lock in your choice of lift, take a good look at the concrete slab that will support it. Make sure it's sturdy enough to support the weight of both the vehicle and the lift.

It's a good idea to locate your vehicle lift well away from any slab seams or edges – and stay away from tension cables too. Even if they don't cause a huge safety problem, they can easily reduce the usefulness of your new car lift.

2) Make sure things are looking up

Of course, your new lift's job is to raise vehicles higher and let you work on them more easily. So take the time to carefully check your workshop's available height will accommodate the car lift – AND the vehicle on it.

3) Pay a little extra now, save a big headache later

When choosing your lift capacity, don't assume the cars you service today will be the maximum weight you'll ever need to lift.

Paying a few hundred dollars more to step up your target capacity by half a tonne or a tonne can quickly pay off when customers ask you to service larger vehicles.

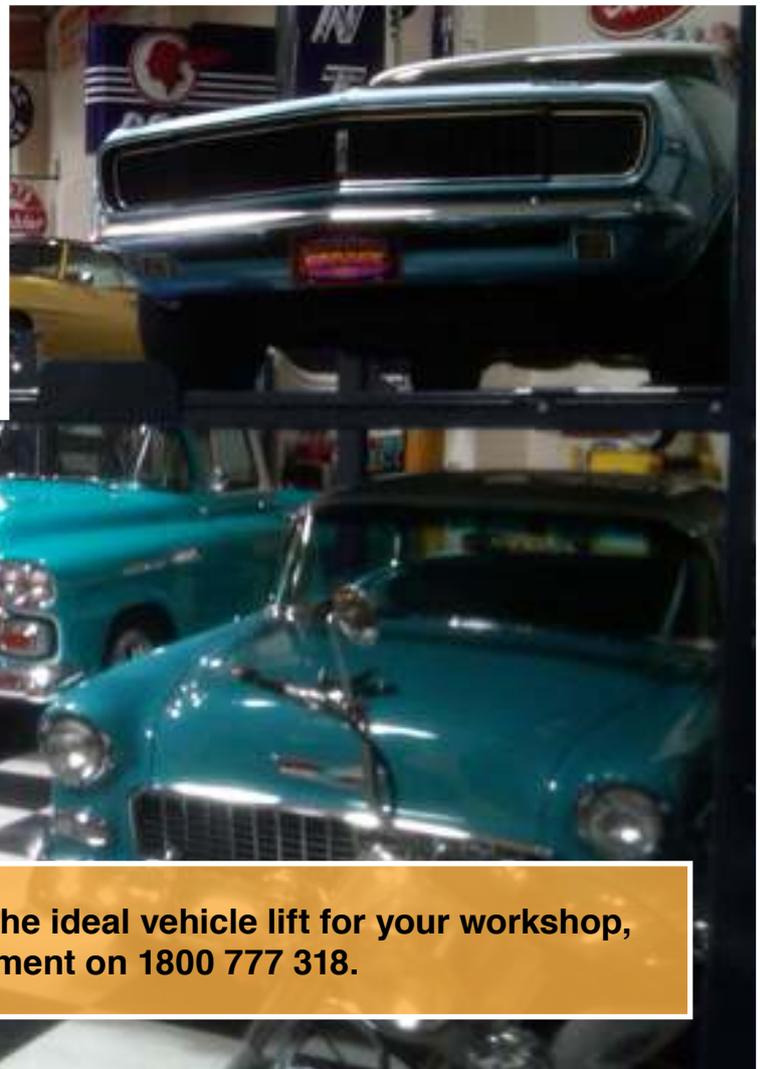
And if you're a home user, consider that a higher capacity lift is not only safer, but also lets you tackle bigger projects in future.

4) Think twice before buying a second hand hoist

Always remember that a vehicle lift is a heavy and potentially dangerous piece of equipment if used or maintained incorrectly. So if you're tempted by the apparent savings from buying a second hand hoist, think first – how has the previous owner used and maintained the lift?

The inherent safety risks of a second hand lift just aren't worth it. What's more, you won't have the backing of a warranty on your car hoist – so you're on your own if you need parts or service to get an older lift working again.

Lastly, remember that like most technology, car lifts are always evolving. You won't have access to the latest features if you opt for an older model of hoist.



For more information about choosing the ideal vehicle lift for your workshop, contact Garage Equipment on 1800 777 318.