

# Buying Guide: Garage Door Openers

## What the best garage door opener has

**Low noise.** If you're very sensitive to sound or have living space directly above or adjacent to a garage, a belt-drive, direct-drive or screw-drive model is your best choice.

**Remote-control reliability.** If you live in a densely populated area, the signals from all of your neighbors' garage door openers may interfere with your own opener. Look for a dual-frequency garage door opener, which automatically switches between two frequencies to reduce interference.

**Rolling-code security technology.** This technology selects a new, nonrepeating access code from billions of possibilities every time you use the remote control. This keeps would-be burglars guessing at your opener's code, and it also keeps your neighbor's remote control from accidentally opening your garage door.

**A keypad or touchpad for remote entry.** If this feature doesn't come standard with the unit you chose, it can generally be added as an option.

**Battery backup.** This allows you to keep using your garage door opener during power outages; however, it's a rare feature, included

only on a few higher-end models. Absent a battery backup, the garage door opener should have a manual release that will let you open and close your garage door by hand in the event of a power outage.

**Overhead lights.** Lights are standard equipment on all the garage door openers we evaluated. Look for lights that you can control independently of the door's opening or closing.

**Internet connectivity.** Smart/connected homes are becoming a thing of late. If you would like the ability to check on the status of your garage door (whether it is open or closed), or be able to open or close it remotely, a garage door opener that's compatible with some type of Internet-connected controller is a must. In some cases the compatibility will be built in, but you'll need to spring for an Internet gateway to connect to your home network. A few models have the gateway built in.

## Know before you go

**How powerful a motor do you need?** Garage doors range from lightweight, uninsulated aluminum affairs to heavy models with insulation, glass, or solid wood. While weight is a consideration, most garage doors are counterbalanced so even a 1/2 horsepower garage door opener should be sufficient for typical use. Instead, factors such as size and how often you use the garage door are more critical, makers such as Chamberlain say. The major advantage of opting for a higher horsepower opener (typically 3/4, 1 or 1 1/4 horsepower equivalent) is that it can move a door with less strain. That's a plus for heavier, larger doors, or in situations where the opener is used more often than is typically the case (for example, if you use your garage as the primary entrance to your home or have multiple drivers in your family), as putting less strain on your opener leads to smoother operation and better long term durability.

**What is HPS and HPc?** Garage door opener lifting power has traditionally been specified in horsepower, and that's fine for those that use an AC motor. However, that's not technically correct for the DC motors used in many modern garage door openers. To get around that, and to make it easier to compare the lifting power, many manufacturers have adopted horsepower equivalency ratings to specify the strength of their models, while others continue to simply just specify the power in equivalent horsepower, without full explaining what that means (presumably to not confuse things). If you see a power rating such as .75 HPS (horse power similar) or .75 HPc (horse power comparable), for example, that simply means that the garage door opener has lifting power that's comparable to a .75 HP AC opener.

**How high is your garage door?** Every garage door opener in this report can handle a 7-foot-high garage door without modification, but most require extension kits for taller doors. Expect to pay about \$50 extra for most extension kits, although in some cases you may have to choose between multiple extension kits based on your garage door's height.

**Don't scrimp on safety.** Your garage door opener controls what may be the largest, heaviest moving object in your home (a typical residential garage door can weigh up to 600 pounds), so safety is crucial. Federal law requires all garage door openers made since 1993 include sensors to prevent the door from striking anybody who may be in its path. Automatic reverse, which stops the door and lifts off any obstruction, is another common safety feature. Some garage door openers rely on sensors that stop a garage door if it comes in contact with an object. Others are supplied with sensors that shoot an invisible beam of light across your garage opening and will stop and/or reverse the door if something interrupts that beam.

**Do it yourself or hire a pro?** Regardless of type or maker, user reviews tell us that not every homeowner is fully equipped to tackle the job of installing a garage door opener themselves. For those

who do want to tackle the job, it is certainly doable for those with, at minimum, decent handyman skills. Read the instructions, then read them again and again before you start so that you understand all steps. Inventory the carton to make sure all parts are on hand before you begin as missing components is a frequent user complaint. Having a helper on hand is also a good idea. Finally, budget enough time so that the job is not rushed -- experts say to expect at least a minimum of four hours, especially if you are also removing an old opener.

If you are not comfortable with the above, the best advice is to hire a professional. If you don't already have a garage door installer in mind, many retailers can offer suggestions, and Amazon now offers installation services for many openers as an option when you order. LiftMaster garage door openers are similar to the Chamberlain garage door openers (both are made by the same company) profiled in this report. Those are sold only by installers, and could be a good alternative if you decide that a chain-drive or belt-drive Chamberlain opener is right for you. Genie also makes a line of openers for the professional installation market. You can find local pros at either the [LiftMaster](#) or [Genie](#) websites.

**Is HomeLink worth the hassle?** Many automobiles are sold with the capability of operating your garage door opener right from the dash. [HomeLink](#) is the most popular system, but reviews are full of tales of woe over getting built-in HomeLink controls to successfully communicate with a garage door opener, regardless of brand or model. Older cars are a particular problem as the system's protocols have changed over the years. Add-on modules are available from HomeLink and from garage door opener manufacturers to restore compatibility, but users often complain about the added expense, or the effort they needed to put in to learn that an adapter was required in the first place.