

# Air Conditioning Buying Guide

## Critical Questions You Need to Ask Before Purchasing an Air Conditioner

### 1: Does it need it be “high efficiency?”

If your air conditioner is older than 10 years, chances are it has a SEER (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio) of 10 or 12. Today’s minimum government standard is 13 SEER, so the efficiency of any new A/C will be much improved. For our **purposes**, we’ll say “high efficiency” starts at 16 SEER. Is it worth the extra investment? A simple rule of thumb is to consider how much longer you will be in the home. If you’re planning on staying longer than 5 years, you can recover any extra investment in energy savings.

### 2. Do I need or should consider zoning?

Zoning systems are designed for improved comfort and solve issues related to different parts of the house (ie, “My upstairs gets too hot, while my basement is freezing”). Zoning adds extra control and utilizes automatic dampers which regulate temperatures between the various levels. However, some homes will not make sense to zone because either it won’t help, or the ductwork is not conducive for retrofitting. Call Cates Heating and Cooling at 913-888-4470 for a free zoning estimate/assessment.

### **3. Should I replace my furnace at the same time as the A/C?**

Believe it or not, considering a furnace replacement at the same time as an A/C is a smart move. Since the furnace uses the air handler to “push” air throughout the house, newer furnaces will have less amp draw. The lower the amps, the lower the bills. By replacing a furnace in the summer, you can lower the A/C bill. Finally, you will realize an additional saving in installation because everything can be done at once.

### **4. What about warranties and rebates?**

Typically, the higher the SEER, the higher the warranty and prospect for manufacturer or utility rebates. These vary widely, so it’s important to do your homework or consult a professional technician who is up to date on all the programs. However, it’s critical that any warranties include LABOR, not only parts. At Cates, we provide a 10 year parts and labor warranty, which is top of the industry line. However, we find the “standard” is five years on parts and one year on labor. Consider losing a blower motor on an eight year old unit with a sub-standard warranty; you’d be out over \$1K. Cates would have covered it completely. It’s critical you ensure a solid warranty and that the company you choose will be around when or if something goes wrong.

### **5. Should I be considering add-ons such as humidifiers, thermostats, or air cleaners to improve indoor air quality (IAQ)?**

If you have been dealing with comfort issues, now would be a good time address any add-ons because of installation savings.

## 6. How can purchasing a new A/C help with health related issues related to asthma, allergies, or COPD.

Air purifiers (IAQ systems) or UV bulbs can help with allergies, mold, and kill viruses (yes, even the flu). If you need hospital quality air, you shouldn't be buying a \$20 Filtrete filter. That's not a filter for your air, it's a filter for your furnace. Air purifiers or UV bulbs are excellent add-ons for improving health issues, and should be considered when purchasing a new air conditioner.

**We hope you found this buying guide useful.**

If you're considering a new air conditioner,  
please call us at **913-888-4470** for a free estimate.

