

Selecting a Patio Umbrella. Simplified!

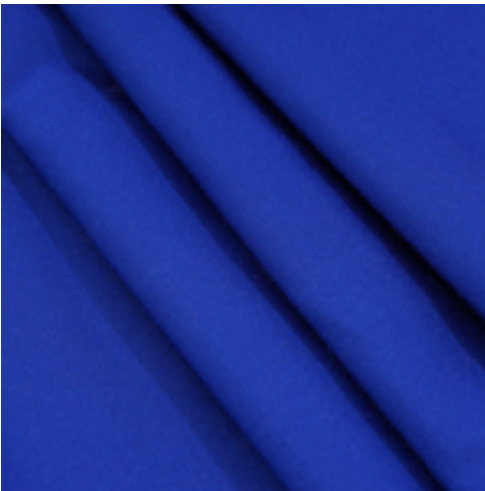
By Mark Clements



There is a great deal of confusing copy describing outdoor patio umbrellas. Umbrellas are simple products, and they are composed of 3 basic parts: the fabric canopy, the pole and ribs structure, and the crank to raise and lower the canopy. Below we have simplified the jargon, so you can compare features vs. cost. We have not discussed the crank as these are fairly standard and most cranks function well.

CANOPY QUALITY

Best – Solution-dyed acrylic fabric



- The best outdoor fabric currently available in the market
- 100% solution-dyed – the dye color is UV-treated and embedded into the fibers
- Will not fade due to sun exposure
- Water repellent fabric finish - resistant to moisture, mold, mildew, and dirt
- Extremely easy to maintain and keep clean
- Backed by a **5-year warranty** against fade, rot, and mildew
- Offered under trade names of FADEMASTER® and SUNBRELLA®

Better – Spun-poly fabric sometimes referred to as an “all-weather” fabric

- Doesn't have the strength or color fast quality of acrylic
- Will not shrink or wrinkle
- Easy to clean and maintain
- Typically backed by a **4 year warranty** against fade, rot, and mildew. Can fade faster in high (3-4) sun areas.

Good – Olefin

- Cheaper option for lower end umbrellas
- Dries quickly when wet – limited mold and mildew protection
- Easier to clean than Polyester
- Typically backed by a **2-3-year warranty** against fade, rot, and mildew

Basic – Polyester

- Low end price option that has poor UV, fade-resistance, and durability
- Typically backed by a **1-year warranty**

POLE/RIB QUALITY

Best - Aluminum material



- Lightweight, extremely strong, and durable (heavier gauge performs the best)
- Powder coated and anodized - will not rust or corrode
- Performs well even in high winds
- Requires minimal upkeep and maintenance
- Available in wide range of finish colors

Better – Hardwood material

- Attractive elegant look - can be finished to match your patio furniture
- Typically, very expensive to make because of the cost of hardwoods
- Less durable than steel or aluminum – will not bend or flex - but can snap in strong winds
- May require staining, painting, or varnish over time

Basic – Steel pole – Steel ribs

- Steel is strong and less expensive to manufacture
- The steel pole is heavier to move, and it will rust over time

The best umbrellas have a heavy gauge aluminum frames and solution dyed acrylic canopies. They cost more than other materials, but they look great and perform well for many years. The addition of solar lighting makes umbrellas even more fun.



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