Contract *versus domestic* furniture: the build checklist

There is no certificate called 'contract grade'. What separates furniture for a hotel, restaurant or office from furniture for a home is a short list of things a maker can state and prove. Ask the twelve questions below of every quote, and ask for the warranty in writing.

Compliance guidance. Fire statements follow the revised text of the 1988 Regulations on legislation.gov.uk (read 5 November 2026) and, for BS 7176, which was not read, the FIRA and British Furniture Confederation guide (2010, updated 2011). Standard editions are from listings seen on 5 November 2026 and change: check the current edition. Agree the fire route with the Responsible Person or a fire safety consultant. This is guidance, not legal or fire safety advice.

AT A GLANCE

Element	Ask the maker to state	How to verify
1. Test standard	Standard, edition, level and exact model: BS EN 16139:2025 Level 1 or 2 for non-domestic seating; BS EN 12520 is the domestic one	Full signed report from an accredited laboratory for this model
2. Fire route	Which regime applies, the hazard category set by the fire risk assessment, and the exact composite tested	Composite test reports, label, and the category in writing from the Responsible Person
3. Frame	Timber species or board type and grade, and moisture content at assembly; for metal, the section, joining method and finish	Written specification on the shop drawing; cut-away or unfinished frame
4. Joints and corners	Joint type at each junction, the adhesive, and any mechanical reinforcement such as corner blocks and screws	Joint detail on the shop drawing; unfinished frame; the test report for this model
5. Fixings and hardware	Screws, bolts and inserts; whether legs and arms can be re-tightened; castors and mechanisms, which EN 16139 leaves out	Hardware data sheet; separate test or warranty for mechanisms
6. Wall and floor fixing	For built-in seating: how it is fixed, to what, and who checks the wall	Fixing detail on the drawing; site survey
7. Seat base	Webbing, springs or deck, and how it is fixed to the frame	Section drawing; unfinished seat
8. Foam and filling	Foam type, density and hardness with the test method, fatigue evidence, and its fire certificate	Foam data sheet and the foam producer's certificate
9. Cover fabric	Abrasion result and method, light fastness, pilling and cleaning code	Fabric supplier's test report; the threshold is the designer's choice for the use
10. Finish	The finish system and its resistance to liquids, heat and scratching, by named test method	Finish test report on a sample board; cleaning agents allowed
11. Repair and spares	Whether covers and foam can be renewed, whether parts and replacement covers stay available, and for how long	Written statement from the maker
12. Warranty	What it covers (frame, mechanism, foam, finish), for how long, what it excludes, and who attends	Signed warranty document: read the scope, not just the years

Questions for the maker, not minimum builds: no frame, joint, foam or warranty figure is given because none was found in a primary source.

CRIB 5 IS NOT THE DIVIDING LINE

Ignition source 5 ('Crib 5') is part of the domestic foam test in Schedule 1 Part I of the 1988 Regulations, and of the treated-interliner test in Schedule 3. In non-domestic premises the level comes from the fire risk assessment, and BS 7176 Medium, the typical level for hotel bedrooms, restaurants and bars in the guidance read, applies source 5 to the finished composite. Ask for the hazard category and a composite test report, not for 'Crib 5'.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

BUILD STATEMENT BEFORE ORDER

Before order the supplier is to provide a written build statement for each item, stating: frame material, grade and moisture content [or metal section, joining method and finish]; joint type at each junction and any reinforcement; fixings and hardware, and whether they can be re-tightened; seat base; foam type, density and hardness with the test method; cover fabric abrasion result with the method; finish system and its tested resistance to [liquids, heat and scratching] with the methods used. The statement is to match the approved shop drawing [ref, revision].

TEST AND FIRE EVIDENCE

Seating to be tested to [BS EN 16139:2025 Level 1 / 2], supplied with the full signed test report from an accredited laboratory for the exact model and variants. Upholstered items to comply with BS 7176 for [Medium] Hazard as set by the fire risk assessment dated [date], with a test report for each upholstery composite, the foam producer's certificate and a photograph of the label. Reports to a superseded edition, or for a different model, are not accepted.

WARRANTY, REPAIR AND SPARES

The supplier's written warranty is to be submitted before order and to state, for each of [frame, mechanism, foam, cover, finish], the period, its start date, what is covered, what is excluded and who attends. The period is for the supplier to propose and the client to approve before the order is placed. The supplier is to confirm that covers can be replaced and foam renewed without replacing the frame, and that spare parts and [replacement covers] remain available for not less than [ ] years after handover.

TERMS USED

Contract furniture

Furniture made for use outside the home, in hotels, restaurants, offices and similar premises. There is no certificate called contract grade: what counts is the standard it was tested to, the fire route that applies and how it is built.

Upholstery composite

The exact combination of cover, interliner and filling that was tested together. A fire certificate only applies to that combination, so changing the foam or cover can make it invalid.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988 (SI 1988/1324): revised text read 5 November 2026: regulations 5 to 7, Schedules 1 to 5.
- BS EN 16139:2025: non-domestic seating; BSI listing, current.
- BS EN 12520:2024 and BS EN 15372:2023: domestic seating and non-domestic tables; seller listings (BSI shows the 2015 and 2016 editions withdrawn).
- BS EN 12521:2023, BS EN 14749:2016+A1:2022, BS EN 16121:2023: domestic tables and storage, non-domestic storage; BSI listings.
- Fire Safety Order 2005; FIRA and British Furniture Confederation guide (2010, updated 2011): via our BS 7176 sheet.
- Government Buying Standard for Office Furniture, version 4.0, June 2014: Appendix A, example only.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/contract-vs-domestic-furniture-checklist. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.