

How to Build a Float!



How to Build a Float for the Mardi Gras Parade

We could all spend 6 months and thousands of dollars creating our perfect, fantasy float but what can you do quickly, easily, and most importantly, most inexpensively?!

Here are our suggestions for building your own float on the back of a stakebed or flatbed truck. Be sure to keep the city regulations listed above in mind while constructing!

STRUCTURE

Traditionally, we have recommended 24' flatbed or stakebeds trucks but you may use other types of vehicles if they comply with the regulations. All vehicles with require a fire extinguisher – two if you have a generator (one in the cab & one in the back)!

*For best decor and lighting options >> consider these framing configurations:

Stakebed truck framing:

- 1. Use four posts; one in each corner.*
- 2. Add two pieces equal to the width of the truck to connect to the posts at the front and the back.*
- 3. Add one piece the length of the truck for best results, use a solid piece and create a high contrast backdrop.*

The bed or backs of any vehicles must have 4' safety rails for your riders around all exposed sides. The stakebed trucks already have this built in so if you remove their sides, you will have to build your own rails.

DESIGN IT!

What will it look like from the street?

The best advice we have for you to is to think about the “cone of vision” the parade viewer has from their vantage point on the street. These folks can see nothing in front of them that is below 45 ft. The best view they get is as they look UP as it passes.

We challenge you to go vertical with your design elements

We have got 13 feet from the ground up, for our height maximum. USE IT! There is a minimum of 1'-0" of clearance needed from the ground up to any decorations or additions to your vehicle or float and a maximum of 13'-0". From a safety standpoint, taller is better too. We don't want people to push forward to see. People that are looking up lean back a little bit instead!

DECORATING THE VEHICLE

Make your decor in advance

Design and paint homemade decor in your garage. Then, get the team to assemble and do all the touch ups on site! Staple gun the pieces to the sides of the stakebeds. Add layers for dimension & big cut out shapes as accents

Staging area opens up at 8AM – Inspection is at 6PM – THIS GIVES YOU TEN HOURS OF SETUP TIME!

Be sure to create a backdrop

Include some larger elements above the cab or in the middle of the truck bed to create a backdrop or visual focal point. All parade entries should plan to have their ENTIRE VEHICLE COMPLETELY DISGUISED! Make sure to create a mask or something clever to cover the cab but not the windows of the truck. Fire resistant or flame retardant materials are required for decorations. You can buy fire retardant spray for your homemade decor and cover the whole thing when you are done building it.

TOP IT OFF...

Try to incorporate high contrast colors in your design. Notice how these colors really stand out!

Lights are extremely important! Your entry will really POP in the dark with lots of lights as part of your decor. Light up the rails and light up your design elements. Use spots and up lighting, strands of blinking Christmas lights work great!

If your cab is enclosed...

You must provide a safe exit for your driver!

TRUCK RENTALS

Looking for a truck rental? We have been working with the guys over at Ryder Truck Rental and Maintenance! Ask for Chad or Dianne and they will give you friendly Gaslamp discount! (858-565-4221)

FLOAT DRIVERS

Need a driver for your truck/float? Call Perri over at MEK Enterprises to reserve a driver today! They will provide you with a special Mardi Gras price! (619-459-1808)

BEADS

Beads are the most important things to have on your float. Be careful when you make your purchases on line...some companies charge a bit less by the case but then they charge A LOT more on the shipping...best price we have found is at <http://www.mardigrasoutlet.com> and <http://emardigrasbeads.com/beads-throw-beads.aspx>.

Watch for two things when ordering beads:

1. Bead sizes – standard bead size is 7mm (size of a pea)
2. Necklace length – standard necklace length is 33" (hits wearer mid-chest)

As each element gets larger, the price will jump and there will be less in each case.

THROW beads: look for case specials in these sizes. Calculate 3-6 gross* for each rider to throw in the parade.

DECORATIVE beads: You'll want some cool beads to wear as well. Case beads will come in fun options like disco balls and dice for only a fraction more. People love these!

Notice how quickly the amount per case drops as you choose beads with longer necklace or more ornate decor. We like getting some cases of longer lengths to provide nice variety for your guests and maybe get one case of something more fun – like one with a medallion or graduating bead sizes or blinky ones.

**gross – a package of 12 sets of 12 necklaces each*

**PGG – (purple, green, gold)*

**shipping can be as much as 50% more for each box*

BEAD MANAGEMENT – on the night of the event, be sure to let each rider understand how many beads they get, so they don't throw too many too fast and run out. Also, a key trick is to keep the beads wrapped up in their groups of 12 and then place the whole set on your arm or bead rest** BEFORE you remove the paper.

***Bead rest? Cool little things you make out of PVC pipe to hold all your beads!*