



## Three Car Garage Plans

Did you know that '3 Car Garage' is the 5<sup>th</sup> album by the rock group Hanson? (more useless trivia)

Like 2 car garage plans, 3 car garage plans come in a wide variety of designs, styles, living arrangements and sizes. We couldn't find any data from the United States Census Bureau that tells us the average garage capacity for homes in the U.S., but we do have the information from the 2008 Experian Automotive study telling us the average family owns 2.28 vehicles. The study also states that the number of families with either 1, 2 or 3 cars in the household are fairly evenly split with slightly more households having 1 car than 2 cars, but even more households have 3 cars rather than either 1 or 2 cars. From the study:

- 1 car households - 34%
- 2 car households - 31%
- 3 car households - 35%

So it seems as though there is a pretty good reason that many people would be interested in 3 car garage plans. What should you be looking for in your 3 car garage plan? That depends mostly on your unique situation:

- replacing an existing garage or starting new
- what problem you are trying to solve
- how many vehicles you own
- your budget

Answer the following questions to help narrow down your search for a three car garage plan.

1. How much space (real estate) do you have for your 3 car garage?
2. What type vehicles are you going to park in the garage?
3. Do you need extra living space in the garage?
4. Do you need options like a workshop or extra storage space?
5. What is your budget for building a garage?
6. Do you have a unique requirement, such as boat or RV storage in the garage?

You could just start off with a random search for a three car garage plan until you find one that suits your need; there are hundreds of options available. But answering these garage plan buying questions can help you reduce your search time to find the perfect 3 car garage for your situation. It doesn't make sense to search for 3 car garage plans just to find out the one you like doesn't have the extra living quarters you so desperately need. Here are some general guidelines for what you will find during your search.

### **3 Car Garage Plan Sizes**

3 car garage plans come in a wide assortment of sizes, with almost no limit on the upper end. On the smaller side, you probably won't find many plans that measure less than 28' (8.5m) wide by 20' (6.1m) deep. A fairly typical 3 car garage plan will be about 32' (9.8m) wide by 24' (7.3m) deep. If you refer to our previous article on garage sizes, you'll find that typical vehicles range from about 15 feet (4.6 meters) long for a compact car to more than 20 feet (6.1m) long for a full size pickup truck with extended cab. Even though you may not own an extremely long SUV or pickup truck, you should also consider the re-sale value of your property, so you might want to round to the high side if you have the room to spare on your lot.

One of the decisions you'll have to make is the garage door configuration. The most common garage door sizes you will encounter are either 9' (2.7m) wide for a single entry, or 16' (4.9m) wide for a double entry. Garage doors up to 20' (6.1m) wide are available, and you could even have one custom made if you really wanted it. But for most 3 car garage plans, the decision comes down to having either 3 separate single entry doors, or 1 double entry door combined with 1 single entry door. Anything bigger than a double-wide entry door is going to start giving you fits because it will need hardware that can handle the extra weight and girth, not to mention an automatic garage door opener that can handle the load.

There are obvious and not so obvious advantages and disadvantages to either garage door configuration. Most commonly sized double-wide overhead garage doors for a 2 car entry door are 16' (4.9m) wide by 7' (2.1m) tall. Since the widest vehicles measure about 6.5' (2m) in width, you'll have about 3 feet (0.9 meters) to spare if you are parking 2 extremely wide vehicles side by side in the double-wide entry of your 3 car garage, should you choose that configuration. That doesn't leave a lot of extra room, and don't forget about those oversized side view mirrors! If you decide to go with three separate entrances for the garage, each with its own overhead door, they will typically measure 9' (2.7m) wide by 7' (2.1m) tall. Not counting extra wide mirrors, a vehicle measuring 6.5' wide (not counting the mirrors) will have about 1' 3" (a little less than 0.4m) on either side of the vehicle as you go through the single-wide entry door.

Larger 3 car garage plans can measure upwards of 40' (12.2m) wide. Garage plans that accommodate an RV can be even longer still, up to and over 50' (15.2m)! While the extra length and width might seem to be excessive in some cases that extra room can really be a blessing when it comes time to store the lawn furniture, garden tractor or motorcycles for the winter. A garage is a great place for a woodworking shop also, to keep the dust out of your house. If you ever have plans for a boat or a trailer for hauling, you might just wish you had that extra room.

### **Three Car Garage Plan Architectural Styles**

If you are looking for a specific architectural style for your three car garage plan, you will probably find something to match what you want but you will have to use the process of elimination to get there. Many websites carrying garage plans do not give you a search capability by architectural style, so you will have to just use your other criteria to first narrow the search then look at everything they have to offer that fits your needs.

Most common architectural styles are available in a 3 car garage plan:

- Modern
- Cape Cod
- Victorian
- Tudor
- Gambrel Roof
- Colonial
- Gothic

You'll just have to do your research to find the one you are looking for. In most cases you will be better off selecting something that matches the architectural style of other existing structures on your property, especially if the buildings are in close proximity to one another.

It's a good idea before you start your garage plan search to know in your mind what your major selling points are because you'll find:

- Two Story 3 Car Garage Plans
  - One Story 3 Car Garage Plans
  - 3 Car Garage Plans with Extra Storage Space
  - 3 Car Garage Plans with One Bedroom Apartments
  - 3 Car Garage Plans with Two Bedroom Apartments
  - 3 Car Garage Plans with Loft Apartments
  - 3 Car Garage Plans with Studio Apartments
  - 3 Car Garage Plans with No Living Quarters
  - 3 Car Garage Plans with Workshops
  - 3 Car Garage Plans with RV Garages
  - 3 Car Garage Plans with Storm Shelters
  - 3 Car Garage Plans with a double-wide and single-wide Overhead Door
  - 3 Car Garage Plans with 3 single-wide Overhead Doors
- and the list goes on!

### **Available Garage Plan, Garage Floor Plan and Garage Blueprint Drawing Formats**

Generally, you will be able to get your 3 car garage plan drawings in one of four formats:

- Paper prints
- CAD files
- Reproducible prints
- Downloadable files you can print yourself

Most garage plan/blueprint/floor plan websites will offer all four methods of drawing delivery. It just depends on your situation as to which type is best suited for you. If you were wondering about the difference between a print and a blueprint, well there really isn't any difference any more. Blueprints were an older method of photocopying drawings and they are not used much any more since the development of modern printing techniques and larger printers and plotters. The word blueprint was

derived from the process that actually delivered the drawings with dark blue lines on a lighter blue background. Most modern prints these days are black ink on white paper and are made by a plotter capable of printing large drawings or a printer with oversized paper printing capability. The term blueprint has held on through the years in the building trade and is used interchangeably with building plans. A 'floor plan' and a 'building plan' also generally refer to the same thing. The 'floor plan' is a subset of a garage plan drawing set, but typically is used interchangeably with the terms 'building plan' or simply 'plan'. So in a conversation discussing your 3 car garage building plans you may hear them called 'plans', 'building plans', 'floor plans' or 'blueprints' all in the same sentence.

Before ordering any garage plans, make sure you know what the publisher's return/exchange policy is. Some will let you return or exchange plans after you bought them and some will not. Due to the nature of electronic products, it is unlikely that any publisher will let you return or exchange CAD files or downloadable files but it's always better to know up front.

Here are some additional details about the drawing formats you have to choose from.

**Paper prints** - just what it sounds like. It is a set of drawings consisting of several sheets of paper, anywhere from 3 sheets to 10+ sheets, depending on the complexity of your 3 car garage plan drawings. In most cases, you will get the drawings on either 18" x 24" paper, or 24" x 36" paper. You don't want anything smaller than the 18" x 24" size since it would become too difficult to read and the smaller details would begin to run together. Paper prints are usually the cheapest method of getting your plans from the publisher. If you are not planning on making major changes to the plans then this is probably the best method for you to choose. Just order the number of sets you will need to build your garage and the plan publisher will take care of printing them for you. If you plan on making significant changes to your 3 car garage plan prior to building, this is not the drawing package you should choose since you won't be able to modify the drawings (with the exception of minor changes).

**Computer Aided Drawings (CAD)** - these are drawings that will be delivered to you either as a downloadable file, or on a disk the publisher will send to you. Either way, you will end up with the same thing, a software file that can be viewed and even modified using a CAD application program. This drawing delivery method is the way to go if you want to make extensive changes to your garage plans before you start your building project. CAD files are usually one of the more expensive options, but well worth it if you plan on changes. You will need a CAD application program such as AutoCAD to be able to open and change the file. Check with your plan publisher to see what file format they provide prior to purchasing CAD files. You will also need some way to print the files on large plotter paper when you have your changes incorporated. Again check the license rights the publisher is giving you when you buy CAD files. Generally they will only allow you to build one garage per drawing set you buy, even if you buy CAD files.

**Reproducible prints** - these are drawings delivered on special paper that can be changed by someone trained in working with architectural drawings. You will get one complete set of the drawings on either 18" x 24" paper or 24" x 36" paper, check with the publisher to find out what they supply. This type of drawing set is good if you have a moderate number of changes you wish to make to your 3 car garage plans prior to building. Using appropriate drawing tools, your architect (or other qualified individual) can change the reproducible drawing plans right on the special paper they are printed on. You then must

take the reproducible drawing to a print shop that is capable of making the paper copies you will need for your project.

**Downloadable files** - these are files you can download from the plan publisher and save to your computer. Generally, the file type is pdf, a very widely accepted and available standard type printable file. Adobe Acrobat Reader is available free and can be used to view and print the plan files. Since they are usually downloadable, this type of drawing format is generally available immediately. When you get the file downloaded, you will have to have a printer or plotter capable of printing on large paper, at least 18" wide by 24" long. Anything smaller than that will start to become unreadable. You may have to take the file to an office supply store or copying center to get it printed out.

### Summary

Drawing Type:	Paper Prints		
Pros:	Least expensive, good quality from publisher	Cons:	You can only make minor modifications

Drawing Type:	CAD		
Pros:	Can make extensive changes, stores on computer hard drive	Cons:	Special software needed to view and modify, special printer needed

Drawing Type:	Reproducible		
Pros:	Easy to make changes to drawing, can make as many copies as needed for project	Cons:	You can only make modest number of modifications, Needs special equipment to make copies

Drawing Type:	Downloadable File		
Pros:	Simple, Most Convenient, Can make as many copies as needed for project	Cons:	You can't make any modifications, Special printer needed

### **Building Tips for your 3 car garage**

**Hire a good General Contractor (GC)** - If building a garage is outside of your personal capabilities, then you will probably need a GC. This is going to be your go-to person for any of the questions you may have before, during, and after construction. A good GC will see to it that your 3 car garage project runs smoothly and is completed as promised. For more tips, read our article on How to Hire a General Contractor.

**Location, Location, Location** - Choosing the right location to build your 3 car garage is very important. There are several factors to consider, both practical and aesthetic: 1. How far from the road or your home do you want to build your garage? If it is too far from the road, you could spend hours shoveling the driveway on a snowy winter day. If it is too far from the house, consider having to trudge through the snow after you have safely parked your car for the night. Also consider the style of the 3 car garage plan you choose - you may want to try to match or complement your 3 car garage to the surrounding buildings on your property. And don't forget about running plumbing and electricity to your new garage!

**Consider adding a skylight** - While windows let wonderful amounts of natural light into your 3 car garage, they also take up valuable wall space that could be better used for storage. Windows also provide easier access for strangers to view your possessions, and even gain access to your garage. A great way to achieve more natural light with even more security than windows is with a skylight. Consult with a local builder or architect to see if a skylight is right for your 3 car garage plan.

### **Garage Trivia**

Early garages were simply re-purposed carriage houses. If you were so lucky as to be one of the rich and famous, these carriage houses evolved into not only a place to store your shiny new vehicle, but also a state-of-the-art repair shop. Some even employed a live-in mechanic to care for their vehicles.