# Choosing the right material handling system #3: How often and far do you need to move the load?

**Choosing the right material handling option for manufacturing and industrial applications is challenging. From forklifts to cranes and rails to air casters, the overabundance of options can confuse and overwhelm. Many manufacturers and industrial operations end up making a poor choice simply because it’s the easiest or most comfortable. In this series, we’re breaking down the decision into a simple and straightforward series of questions.**

**First, we looked at** [**how much the load weighs**](https://www.aerogo.com/choosing-the-right-material-handling-system-1-what-does-the-load-weigh/)**. Then, we considered** [**maneuverability and flexibility requirements**](https://www.aerogo.com/choosing-the-right-material-handling-system-2-how-much-flexibility-or-maneuverability-is-required/)**. Today, we’re looking at frequency and distance.**

## How often does the load have to be moved?

Rarely, occasionally, weekly, daily, hourly, continuously – move frequency can vary enormously between applications. One manufacturing operation, for example, might need to move a product being built *continuously* from station to station. Another might need to move the product only once a day or every few days. The key is to pinpoint the material handling solution(s) that can maximize efficiency and minimize production losses *while still* being able to accommodate the weight class of the load and the needed degree of maneuverability.

One issue to consider: cost relative to use. For example, rails and conveyors are great for high-frequency moves, but because they’re so costly to install, they’re often overkill if you only need to move the load occasionally. Another issue: time to use. Cranes and forklifts can be slow to operate, especially if there’s a wait for certified operators to become available. That can slow down production processes, so they may be less suitable for high-frequency moves.

And remember, this question intersects with previous considerations, like weight and maneuverability. By the time you’ve worked through the first couple of questions, you’ve likely already narrowed down your options. Out of what’s left, what’s best suited for the frequency of your load handling requirements?

## How far does the load need to be moved?

Frequency is complicated by distance. Are you moving the load a few feet, a thousand feet, between buildings at the same facility, or miles down the road? In general, the greater the distance, the fewer options you’ll have, and the more tradeoffs you might need to make. If the load needs to move a significant distance – like a thousand or more feet, or between separate buildings – many solutions grow impractical due to cost and/or logistical issues. For example, the cost of installing thousands of feet of conveyors is usually impractical. Even an air caster system, typically one of the most flexible options, still requires a continuous supply of air. While you can leap-frog from hose to hose, distance will complicate the moving process.

That said, this issue overlaps with previous questions. For instance, moving a super-heavy load just isn’t going to leave you many options, regardless of distance; and by the time you’ve reached this question, you might already be homing in on the most suitable solution for your situation.

See the companion chart for this question for more help in breaking down the intersection of these considerations. Start at the top of the chart and follow the path down for your particular situation. For more information about “Move Path” and “Operating Area,” see [Question #2](https://www.aerogo.com/choosing-the-right-material-handling-system-2-how-much-flexibility-or-maneuverability-is-required/) in this series.

**For more guidance on this question, please see our white paper “**[**Selecting the right load handling equipment**](https://www.aerogo.com/resource/selecting-the-right-load-handling-equipment/)**.” There, we take an in-depth look at the questions of distance and move frequency. We also assess six other questions that organizations need to ask to pick the right material handling system. Download the paper** [**here**](https://www.aerogo.com/resource/selecting-the-right-load-handling-equipment/)**.**