Aside from the stunning image quality and striking beauty, what really draws many buyers to flat panel digital television displays is their ability to go anywhere. No, not like a Jeep. Their ultra-thin cabinets, coupled with seemingly unlimited mounting options, enable you to install your new flat panel TV almost anywhere in your home. But before you or a professional installer start drilling holes, take a look at these five important considerations:

1. **Location**
   Sure, that 50-inch plasma will look awesome mounted over the fireplace mantle, but will you be able to see it from the couch without squinting or injuring your neck? Finding a great spot for your flat panel set - one that’s a good height and at the proper viewing distance - is often a balance between aesthetics and practicality. For optimum viewing, the center of the screen should be right about eye level from the primary viewing position. So in a family room, for instance, you will want the center of the screen at eye level as you sit on your favorite spot on the sofa. If this doesn’t quite fit your room design, try positioning the bottom of the screen at eye level. This compromise only requires you to look up slightly as you sit on the sofa, and it may actually provide additional visibility from a nearby room.

2. **Power**
   Sleek and beautiful, many of today’s flat panel displays could be the centerpiece of a room’s décor even if never turned on. But since you will be using this high-definition wall candy for entertainment too, you’re going to have to plug it in. The question is, where? Unless you’re lucky enough to have an electrical outlet behind the TV’s mounting location, you need to decide how you’ll power your set. One popular, low-cost option is cable management “racetracks.” These paint-able, thin plastic strips attach directly to your wall to conceal any number of power and signal cables. A major benefit of these systems is the ability to easily run new cables as you add or swap out components. However, for the cleanest, custom-installed look, you will want a power outlet and A/V connections “hardwired” directly behind your set. And don’t forget about protection. Standard surge protectors or power strips are typically too large for such installations, so consider a specially designed “flat panel TV” surge protector that’s slim enough to squeeze behind your wall-mounted digital television.

3. **Connectivity**
   With the television now the centerpiece of today’s digital lifestyle, having quick and easy access to its inputs is key. Almost all portable digital devices, from digital cameras to laptops, can connect to your TV. If you mount the TV above the fireplace, will you be able to quickly, easily and safely plug-and-play these types of devices when you want to? Work with your installer to plan how you will add additional source components or plug-and-play portable devices as you wish. For maximum connectivity and ease of use, consider using an A/V receiver to "switch" between sources. In this setup, all of your sources - such as your cable box, DVD player, game console, and digital camera - connect to the A/V receiver and a single output runs to the TV. Aside from providing good quality audio and surround sound decoding (you’ll need speakers!), this setup is preferred because it lets you leave the TV on one input and use the A/V receiver to select which source you will watch. It sure beats flipping through the inputs on the TV.

4. **Mounts**
   Wall mounts come in all shapes, sizes and capacities. Choosing the right mount can be confusing. First, make sure both your TV and the wall comply with the VESA-standard mounting holes. Almost all flat panel displays do. Second, choose a style. For the family room, you may want a mount that allows some vertical tilt, particularly if you’re mounting it a little higher than eye level. This can help you fine-tune the viewing angle and minimize glare from windows or lights. Alternatively, you may want a “low profile” mount to keep the set as close to the wall as possible. For a bedroom or master bathroom, you’ll probably want a swiveling or extending mount that will allow you to turn, swing or...
position the TV in multiple positions depending on where you are in the room. For kitchens, under-cabinet mounts let the screen fold up out of sight when you're not using it. Finally, choose a mount that can support the size and weight of your set.

5. Sound
Great audio is a key part of the home A/V experience. (It's the first letter for heaven's sake!) Yet audio is often an after thought. If you're going to tune into HDTV broadcasts, immerse yourself in a DVD movie or choose your own adventure with one of your favorite video game titles, you absolutely need to think about audio. Don't miss out on these formats' high-fidelity surround sound by using your TV's built-in speakers. So what does this have to do with where and how you mount your flat panel TV? Consider what connections and space you will need to include surround sound now or in the future. For example, have you left room on either side and above or below the screen for speakers?

So there are the five important considerations when mounting your flat panel TV. Happy hanging!

© 2008 CONSUMER ELECTRONICS ASSOCIATION. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.