Top **10** Things to Look for When Buying Takeoff Software

Interested in electronic takeoff? **Then you're among the growing number of estimators who want to increase their speed and accuracy by working directly from electronic drawings.** So what should you consider in your search for the right electronic takeoff system? Here are 10 things that top the list:

1 **Less time on multiple measurements and calculations:** Think of a wall. Why spend the time taking off the studs, insulation, and other items separately? Look for takeoff software with assemblies that combine all the parts of a building component, so you can take everything off in one step.

2 **Easy identification of drawing changes:** It can be difficult to keep up with all the design changes that occur during a project. Takeoff software should allow you to clearly see the differences between existing and revised drawings, making it much easier to perform a new takeoff.

3 **Simplified counting:** Fixtures, fire alarms, door types. There are many common items in a set of plans. Autocount (also called pattern or symbol search) is the quickest way to take them off. Essentially auto counting searches plans and generates a count on any item you select. Caution: Not all autocount features are alike; be sure to compare each product's specific capabilities.

4 **A practical way to slice and dice the estimate:** Don't be limited by the number of ways you can look at your takeoff and your estimate. The takeoff software you choose should let you easily assign work breakdown structure (WBS) codes, such as location, right during takeoff.

5 **Visual audit trail:** Feel completely confident that you haven't missed anything during takeoff. A visual audit trail highlights the areas you've already measured and saves the information for later reference.

6 **Quick project startup:** Many products recommend a lengthy PDF to TIF conversion of all drawings before you can start takeoff. A 100-page PDF could take 30 minutes or more. Look for software that can read PDFs out of the gate.

7 **Integration with estimating software:** The efficiency you gain with electronic takeoff can be quickly cancelled if you have to manually re-enter the information into your estimate. When checking out a takeoff system's integration, ask whether takeoff addendums and changes can automatically update the estimate without destroying existing pricing and other information.

8 **BIM integration:** If you're using BIM—or plan to—make sure the system you're interested in can do production-level takeoff.

9 **Easy to use:** Does the software's workflow make sense to you? Can you get to helpful instructions if you need them? Check out takeoff systems that have a free trial so you can see how the software works before you buy.

10 **Affordable:** You may not need everything a takeoff system offers right away. Consider systems that have different levels so you pay for only what you need but can upgrade to more advanced features later on.

44% of estimating software buyers list digital takeoff as top on their list for functionality.
– *Software Advice Construction Estimating Guide*

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