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Maintenance-Free vs Greasable Casters: Which Is

One-page quick reference · Full engineering guide + live tools at the QR codes below

Quick answer. Maintenance-free casters with sealed bearings win on labor cost and eliminate missed-PM failure modes, but give up 20-40% service life under harsh duty. Greasable casters with zerk fittings win for heavy shock loads and contaminated environments where scheduled re-lubrication flushes debris. Most fleets should run a mixed strategy matched to duty severity rather than standardizing on one type.

Which one wins in one paragraph

Condition	Maintenance-free wins	Greasable wins
Duty cycle	Light to medium	Heavy, shock-load, 24/7
Environment	Clean, dry, indoor	Dust, moisture, chemical exposure
PM discipline	Weak or inconsistent	Strong, scheduled, documented
Labor cost	High (\$60–\$120/hr loaded)	Moderate
Criticality	Non-critical assets	Failure-critical assets
Typical service life	2–5 yrs light; 1–2 yrs heavy	3–10 yrs with proper PM
Acquisition cost	Baseline	+5–15%

TCO category 1 — Labor cost

Duty	Grease interval	Labor per caster	Per 100 carts/year
Light commercial	Annual	5 min	~30 hrs
Medium industrial	Semi-annual	5 min	~60 hrs
Heavy industrial	Quarterly	7 min	~170 hrs
24/7 critical	Monthly	7 min	~500 hrs



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