

The Ultimate Window Buyer's Guide

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When you start shopping for replacement windows for your home, the experience can quickly become a dizzying blur of choices! That's a good thing, of course. There are so many styles, materials, glass options, grille types, custom designs, a multitude of colors, and multiple texturing choices. But, it helps to know what to look for and which questions to ask.

Here's a convenient guide to window replacement, to help you cover all the key considerations in selecting the best windows for your needs. If you need more assistance call us or fill up our online contact form and we will get back to you.

Replacement Window Styles

There is a vast array of window styles to serve different types of functionality in the various rooms and wall locations of the home and suit any style preferences. Some of today's most popular styles include double-hung, casement, awning, bow, bay, sliding, awning, picture windows, and a grand spectrum of custom-shaped windows.

- *Window Use Issues:* Think about issues that may restrict the intended use of a window you want to install in a particular location in a room. For example, a casement window over a kitchen sink or set of built-in cabinets in a rec room may be easier to crank open than reaching across to push a double-hung sash upward. Also, remember to consider the use of the outdoor space the window faces.
- *Custom Options:* Be aware that just a small number of manufacturers offer custom window designs, and some of those provide only very limited options. Just a few offer unlimited combinations of design elements to create your perfect window to enhance your home.

Replacement Window Materials

The window framing materials and glass package you select make the difference in the energy efficiency performance, and long-term durability of your new windows:

- *Wood windows:* Classic wood windows look beautiful, but they swell, crack, and rot over time. Wood frames require intensive maintenance to preserve their appearance.
- *Aluminum window:* Aluminum is good for framing large stationary windows but is a poor insulator that doesn't help in cold weather, and it oxidizes and weakens over time.
- *Vinyl windows:* Premium vinyl windows are today's most popular frame option, accounting for over 70% of all new windows, but low-grade vinyl frames lack strength.

Replacement Window Quality

Any replacement windows you have installed in your home should meet high-quality standards:

- *Energy Efficiency:* All window types and styles should bear the EnergyStar® label certifying their high level of energy efficiency.
- *Reinforcement of Frames:* All four sides of each window sash should be reinforced to prevent warping or sagging that can lead to leaks, difficulty opening and closing, and failure of locks to function.
- *Fit Into Wall Opening:* Every new replacement window should be made to fit ideally into the existing opening without using fillers unless you're changing the size or style.

Energy Efficient Window Ratings

You can expect your home comfort to increase with energy-efficient windows, and the electricity costs you will save will be more than the initial cost of the windows. Energy-efficient windows are built from high-quality framing with spacers designed to minimize heat transfer. The windows typically are double-paned glass, filled with insulative gas, and coated with low-E. A window's ratings in terms of the values below validate the window's quality:

- *U-Value:* This is the window industry's efficiency standard. The U-value measures the amount of heat lost. A lower number means higher thermal efficiency.
- *Solar Heat Gain (SHG):* SHG is the increase in the temperature of a space due to solar radiation. Low solar heat gain means higher energy efficiency.
- *Design Pressure (DP):* This is the measure of a window's capacity to withstand wind and water. A higher DP number means greater window strength.

Window Rating Authorities and Labels

Performance ratings are assessed for energy-efficient replacement windows by the EPA's ENERGY STAR® program, the [National Fenestration Rating Council®](#), and the National Accreditation and Management Institute (NAMI). These organizations provide objective window performance evaluations to help consumers ensure they're receiving quality energy-efficient products. Check for the certification labels on windows before you buy.

Window Samples Vs. Pictures in Brochures

Don't let yourself be persuaded to buy windows for your entire house sight-unseen. Insist on seeing fully functioning window samples, not just a picture in a brochure. That way, you can examine the window thoroughly before having it installed in your home. When inspecting a sample, open and close the window to test its functionality and ease of use. Test the locks too.

Replacement Window Installation

Some window companies hire outside installation contractors, making quality management more difficult. If house windows are poorly installed, they do not perform with maximum [energy efficiency](#), and their aesthetic value is diminished by frames that begin to sag or crack over time. When that happens, air leaks can develop around the incorrectly sealed frames. The windows will not provide optimum comfort in the home at that point.

Compounding the problem is that most window manufacturers do not cover issues they assume are caused during window installation. So, beware of warranty issues when using unrelated window manufacturers and installers.

Replacement Window Costs

These days, there are several window companies hawking windows for low prices. Such ads can be misleading. That's because the advertised price is often for a smaller window size or lower-quality product. Or, the price may include only a portion of the [window installation](#) cost. The actual cost can often be much higher than the advertised price.

So, remember when buying quality windows, as with any other product, that you are likely to get what you pay for. Windows become part of the structure of your home. If you want beautiful energy-efficient replacement windows built to withstand the extreme desert conditions for decades to come, be prepared to pay a little more.

See [How Much Do New Windows Cost](#) to learn what goes into window pricing, so you can most fully understand what you're paying for.

Window Manufacturers

Know who you're trusting with your money and your window project plans. Run your own check on the manufacturer (and the installer, if separate) to ensure that they are well-established and reputed for consistent product quality and service reliability. Ask the

following questions:

- Which manufacturer builds the windows you sell?
- How long has the window company been in business?
- Who will install the windows?
- Does the installer have industry certifications, accreditations, or affiliations?

- Can you have the contact information for several customer references?
- What do the company's online reviews indicate?
- Does the Better Business Bureau show complaints? What is the company's BBB rating?

Window Warranty

A warranty is as good as the company standing behind it, which is a key reason to check the Better Business Bureau report before you consider ordering windows from any company. *Before you buy*, read the warranty. Be sure the full window installation is covered. Never accept verbal promises that are not clearly spelled out in the written warranty. If it's not in writing, you should not rely on the company to follow through on the commitment to a warranty provision. If it is a manufacturer's warranty, but you bought the windows through a retailer, get clear instructions in writing about how to schedule service in case a warranty claim becomes necessary.

Your Window Replacement Project

New windows are a one-time investment for a home — but that's only true if you make sure you're getting a product with the materials, functionality, quality, and warranty you need. The right approach to a sound investment in residential windows is asking the right questions during the selection and ordering process, *before* installation.

The simplest way to ensure quality and value for your dollar tends to be to work directly with a top-quality manufacturer. Buying factory direct assures you of the lowest possible price, because:

- There is no wholesale or retail markup on the windows.
- There is more knowledgeable and motivated customer service.
- Factory-trained installers are most experienced in handling the company's product.
- There are no third-party warranty issues.

Energy Shield Offers Arizona's Best Replacement Windows

We are the southwest region's premiere energy-efficient replacement window manufacturer. Energy Shield is an Earthwise Member. We're also proud of our A+ rating with the BBB. Get substantial ITC tax incentives for energy efficient investment. See our current special discount offers. Ask about our 0% financing with approved credit.

To schedule a free in-home window and door design consultation, call Energy Shield Window & Door Company at (623) 349-7120, or contact us here on our

website anytime!
