



Window and Door Buyer's Guide

Welcome!

Wondering where to start when it comes to buying new windows and doors? Don't worry, we've got your back.

At Best Door & Window, we pride ourselves in working with folks every day to guide them toward making informed decisions. We've been in business for nearly 30 years, faithfully serving the local communities in greater central Ohio.

Let's get started!

What are the key considerations?

In our experience, the top product considerations for homeowners include:

1. Solid energy efficiency;
2. High quality;
3. Excellent selection; and
4. Strong warranties.

Let's take these one by one.

1. Energy Efficiency

Today's window shoppers are often keen to seek out energy efficiency because they are upgrading from old, drafty single-pane windows or low-quality builder-grade windows that just aren't getting the job done. The energy efficiency of modern windows not only helps keep your home comfortably cooler in summer and warmer in winter, but it will also lower your overall energy bills, further enhancing the return on your investment. Among the top factors for energy efficiency are: Low-E coated and Argon gas filled insulated glass units; deep sash pockets and robust weatherstripping to help keep the weather out; strong interlocking features to strengthen the window against wind and weather intrusion, and additional features like foam insulated frames, stainless steel glass spacers, and sash reinforcement components.

Energy efficiency is also a key factor when choosing doors for your home. This includes both entry doors and garage doors. Entry doors are almost always insulated, but asking to make sure is a good idea. Another important factor with entry doors is the robustness of the frame material. Good quality pre-hung entry doors are built with a strong rot-free frame, such as composite, and are screwed together rather than assembled with staples or other inferior fastening materials. Ensuring the entry door you choose has a strong, rot-free frame, will help ensure a solid, long-lasting door that will seal out the elements for many years to come.



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When looking at garage doors, an insulated door is the best bet. Even if you don't plan to heat your garage, these doors are built to be far stronger and they last much longer than uninsulated doors. Among insulated garage doors, there are generally 2 thicknesses – 1-3/8" and 2". And between these thicknesses there are generally 2 types of insulation – polystyrene (styrofoam inserts) and polyurethane (spray-in foam). In the range of relative energy efficiencies for these doors, a 1-3/8" thick polystyrene door has the lowest energy efficiency rating, while a 2" thick polyurethane door has the highest rating. Energy efficiency is rated by R-value, which ranges between 6 and 19, depending on the thickness of the door and the type of insulation used.

2. Quality

You don't necessarily have to sacrifice quality for cost. Yes, while it is true that higher quality almost always comes with a higher price tag, there are many great choices available at reasonable prices.

For both windows and doors, look for those with a complement of good energy efficiency features, materials and construction, and warranties (as described more elsewhere in this guide). Also, look for manufacturers that have been in business for a long time and that have solid product reviews. With today's technology and the ease of online searches, it's simple to find reviews and customer experience information for nearly any product. Of course, we strongly recommend going with a trusted local American-made product.

3. Selection

Top manufacturers and dealers will offer an extensive selection of product types, materials, features, and design options. This includes:

- a variety of styles and product types;
- a range of different, long-lasting materials with their own unique characteristics;
- energy saving, convenience, and security features; and
- color choices.

To this end, when it comes to both windows and doors, look for dealers who can bring a wide range of options to the table. Although not necessary to the buying experience, some dealers simplify things by offering a one-stop experience because they have built a portfolio of top-notch windows, entry doors, and garage doors all under one roof. As with the product, look for reputable dealers that offer good quality products – and we always recommend local!

4. Warranties

Good quality windows and doors are backed by industry-leading warranties and product support after the purchase. In addition to product warranties, look for a reputable dealer who can assist



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with warranty claims and who offers full service to help ensure a smooth process if a warranty claim is every needed.

Many of the best manufacturers offer lifetime warranties on their products or a lengthy warranty in terms of years. If you are shopping for estimates, make sure to ask the dealer about product warranties and the process for this down the road. The last thing you want is a major headache in getting a warranty claim processed and handled. A reputable dealer should be able to provide this information easily and explain how the process works if it is ever needed. Many warranties are transferrable, so if you ever sell your home, they can carry on with the buyer. This can be a nice selling point and help enhance value, if and when the time comes to sell your home.

Excellent warranties and service support will ensure your investment is safe for many years to come, so don't forget to ask about this key factor when shopping around and comparing options.

What are the different types of windows and doors?

1. Windows

Windows are broadly available in the following types: Double Hung, Slider, Casement, Picture, Awning, and Hopper.

a. Double Hung

A double hung window is the most common residential window and is so named because this window includes 2 operable sashes hung inside the frame. The top sash can be pulled down and the bottom sash can be lifted up to either vent or to tilt in and clean the windows. Double hung windows offer a good balance of energy efficiency, functionality, and style that fits most homes well. This is why these windows are a popular choice in the residential home market. Double hung windows are available in a variety of base materials, including vinyl, fiberglass, and wood. Additionally, these windows are widely available in various colors, with or without grids in the glass, and with several hardware finish options.

b. Slider

Slider windows are also a popular choice for homeowners and builders alike. Rather than sliding up and down, the sashes in these windows slide right and left. These windows are a great option for openings where the width is greater than the height; this is in contrast to a double hung window, where the ideal application is an opening with a greater height than width. Sliders are also a great option for a sunroom because they can be ordered in very large sizes, maximizing light and the view. Slider windows are available in vinyl and fiberglass and can be ordered in various colors and with or without grids.



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c. Casement

Many people refer to these windows as “crank out” style windows, but the actual name is casement. These windows are the most energy efficient type of window other than picture windows, which do not open. As a result, casement windows make a great choice where leading energy efficiency is sought, while maintaining the ability to open the windows for fresh air and ventilation. Casement windows are relatively complex mechanically, so they are on the costlier end of the spectrum versus other window types. Casement windows open by using a crank style handle and swing open either left or right — similar to how an entry door functions. Casement windows are available in vinyl, fiberglass, and wood, and they can be ordered with or without grids and with different hardware finishes.

d. Picture

A picture window is built with just a frame and glass. There are no moving parts, and the window does not open. Because of this, these windows are the most energy efficient of all the window types. Also, because they are less complex, they are generally on the lower end of the cost spectrum. These windows are popular in applications where maximum glass and view is the goal and they are often coupled with either casement or double hung windows flanking each end of a 3-window combination (i.e., the picture window is in the center of the 3 windows). Picture windows are available in vinyl, fiberglass, and wood.

e. Awning

Awning windows open by swinging up and outward from the bottom. They are commonly found in bathrooms, where there is a desire to open the window allowing for ventilation, while still maximizing protection against the elements coming in. These windows have screens on the inside because of the way they open outward and are wider than they are tall. Awning windows are available in vinyl, fiberglass, and wood.

f. Hopper

Hopper windows are very similar to an awning window, except they open from the top and swing inward rather than opening from the bottom and outward like an awning window. Hopper windows are most commonly found in basements and are wider than they are tall. Hopper windows are available in either vinyl or wood, but vinyl is the most common choice because they are normally located in a basement.



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2. Entry Doors

Residential entry doors can be divided into 2 types – fiberglass and steel. Although similar in energy efficiency and price, there are some key differences to consider with these 2 types of entry doors.

Fiberglass doors are rot free and rust free. They are incredibly durable (think of a fiberglass ladder) and can hold up to many years of use. These doors are less strong than their steel counterparts, so they may be less attractive from a security standpoint. Nonetheless, fiberglass doors are a great choice and are available in both smooth and textured versions. The textured fiberglass doors are designed to mimic the look of real wood and can be stained to a color of your choice.

Steel doors are a classic when it comes to renowned strength, durability, and value. While very strong and durable, steel doors are more susceptible to dings and dents than their fiberglass counterparts. This is especially true if the steel used to build the door is a thinner gauge. These doors are also susceptible to rust, but most door manufacturers use a hot dipped galvanized process that is extremely rust resistant and long lasting. Steel doors are also available in stainable versions that can look like wood, but the grain texture is not as realistic as the textured fiberglass versions. Steel entry doors are a great choice for many home owners, but ultimately have less options than fiberglass doors, so many times the decision comes down to the number of design choices.

3. Garage Doors

Garage doors come in many varieties, like most other exterior home products. Modern garage doors are available in basic uninsulated and insulated models. We strongly recommend an insulated version because uninsulated doors often experience structural failures with time and are less durable. Also, there is typically a small price difference to upgrade from an uninsulated door to a basic insulated door.

In addition to the choice of insulated versus uninsulated, garage doors come in many varieties of styles and colors. Everything from the basic raised panel design to the more sophisticated carriage house style doors can be ordered. These doors are available with varying colors, textures, and styles to suit nearly anyone's needs.

Modern garage doors are also available with many different window options and styles, plus decorative hardware for that perfect finishing touch. The available selection of types, styles, and options for garage doors is too numerous to cover in this guide, so contact a local dealer or do some online research to find your perfect fit. Along these lines, leading garage door manufacturers have door builder software on their websites, allowing curious shoppers to explore, build, and visualize many different options right online.



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4. Other Doors

We would be remiss if we did not at least briefly cover other door types. In addition to entry doors and garage doors, many homeowners are interested in a sliding patio door, a swinging patio door, or a storm door. Let's briefly review these other door types.

a. Sliding Patio Doors

Sliding patio doors are a great fit for patio areas, pool areas, and backyard and deck settings. These versatile doors let in lots of natural light and are built to last. Sliding patio doors are available in vinyl, fiberglass, and wood. They can be ordered in a variety of colors, with or without grids, and with different hardware finishes. Sliding patio doors come in a variety of standard sizes from 5 feet up to 12 feet, and they can be ordered in custom sizes for unique installation needs.

b. Swinging Patio Doors

Swinging patio doors are essentially two entry door slabs placed together to form a double door unit inside a single frame. These doors are available with both doors actively operating in a traditional French door configuration and in configurations where only one door swings and the other is stationary. Like sliding patio doors, these doors are typically found in deck, patio, and pool settings. Generally speaking, swinging patio doors are available in the same styles, materials, and finishing options as standard entry doors.

c. Storm Doors

Storm doors are a popular choice for many homeowners who are looking for protection for their entry door, a way to bring fresh air inside, or the ability to let in natural light. They are also available in heavy-duty versions for security.

Storm doors are available in a variety of materials, colors, and hardware options. While most commonly ordered in standard door sizes, they can be ordered in custom sizes for those unique situations.

Okay, now what?

Now that we've covered the top window and door considerations and the types of each, what are the next steps to accomplishing your goals?

While it's certainly possible to get help from folks at one of the big box home improvement stores or from one of the large sales-focused window and door companies, those companies often



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times don't form a relationship to ensure the homeowner's goals are achieved. We've heard many cautionary tales about how these companies interact with homeowners during the sales process and how they perform when it comes time to install the products purchased.

It's best to look for a reputable company you can partner with to achieve your goals and ensure you get the best result possible. This means finding a company that has a solid history of high-quality work, that offers a wide range of high-quality products, and that is willing to develop a relationship rather than just make a sale. It's also important that the company have business insurance and worker's compensation insurance, so that if anything does happen, it's covered.