

Seven Things You Must Know Before Getting Replacement Windows



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Introduction

Most people take the quality of their windows for granted. They don't realize how much a good quality window can save on utility bills every year. If your home has single pane windows, your money is literally going right out the window! These windows are extremely inefficient compared to modern double and triple paned windows.

People also tend to forget that a top quality window is safer, as it's less likely to shatter and is stronger, keeping intruders from entering your home. You want to keep your family safe, right? Of course you do.

Well the good news is that getting replacement windows isn't too difficult. Even though it's not an inexpensive improvement to your home, it will definitely pay for itself within a few years. If you plan on having your home for at least 5 more years, it's probably worth replacing all of your inefficient windows for better ones.

Even though this may seem like a daunting task, it doesn't have to be too bad. This report will help guide you through some of the most common questions people ask regarding replacement windows. By the time you're done, you'll pretty much be an expert!

First let's start with just discussing the basics of replacement windows.

What is the Difference Between Replacement Windows and Other Windows?

When it comes to windows, you essentially have two main options:

- New construction windows
- Replacement windows

New Construction Windows

Just like it sounds, a new construction window is installed when a home is first built or is being renovated. This is a fairly complicated process, and isn't recommended to try by yourself! You want a contractor, or at least a carpenter, to help you with this process.

New construction windows require a frame to be installed. This frame, if installed correctly, will last for several decades. If done incorrectly, you might find yourself replacing it within just a few years. Not something you want, right?

Replacement Windows

Replacement windows are installed to update a broken or outdated existing window. Compared to new construction windows, you'll find these to be much more affordable and easier to install. Note that replacement windows typically use the same frame as your old window. A new frame can be installed if necessary, but this increases the cost, which can add up if your home has dozens of windows!

Which Do You Need?

If you're adding a new room or set of rooms to your home, or if you're just trying to add a window to a room, you're looking at new construction windows.

But if you're like most homeowners and you're just trying to improve your home's safety and energy efficiency, you want replacement windows.

How do I Find the Best Replacement Windows Company for My Needs?

There are a lot of companies out there that can replace windows. What you'll find is that their costs will vary widely, as there are lots of different kinds of windows and services to choose from.

Luckily, there are a few things you can do to make sure you hire a good company. We can't cover every single thing in this report, so here are the main 5 things you can do to safeguard your investment.

1. Get Referrals

For thousands of years, word-of-mouth advertising has been the best form. Good companies have customers that love their products and services, and are willing to recommend that company to friends and family.

When you first start looking for a good company, talk to your loved ones who also own homes. If they've been there for a while, there's a good chance they can tell you about a window replacement company.

Even if they can't, they probably know someone who did have their windows replaced that you can talk to.

The bottom line is that the more people you talk to, the easier you can make a decision. Whether the companies you hear about did a great job or a poor one, just having an idea will help you choose between the companies in your area.

2. Do Your Research

Even though referrals are great, we recommend doing your own research as well. Google is an amazing tool for this, but you can also use sites like the Better Business Bureau, Yelp or Angie's List.

Make sure to pay the most attention to recent reviews. The company may have some great reviews from a few years ago, but maybe their service lately has been poor. Or likewise, maybe they used to have a low quality service but it has improved under new management.

Just make sure you don't go overboard with research. Take reviews with a grain of salt, because typically the only people who leave reviews online are those who either loved or hated the service. There are probably dozens or hundreds of customers who were satisfied with the work but just didn't feel a need to tell the world.

3. Check for Insurance and Guarantees

When you've selected a few companies you may want to work with, give them a call and ask if they have insurance and any kind of guarantee. Insurance is important because if there's some kind of accident, the company's insurance should cover the damages.

Guarantees are important because they help protect you in a different way. If the contractor has a 5 year guarantee and your window falls out of the frame and breaks after 3, that guarantee will make sure you get a replacement for free (or extremely inexpensively).

If a company doesn't have a guarantee or insurance, stay away!

4. Consider Helpfulness

There's more than one type of window out there. You have single, double and triple paned. Some are glass, others are vinyl.

Do you want double-hung, casement or awning windows?

Or maybe you're looking for a picture or slider window?

The point is that there are a number of options to choose from, and you may feel a bit overwhelmed trying to make the decisions yourself. Even if you want to just keep the same style as your old one, you still need to decide the materials and budget you have allocated for the project.

A good window replacement company will help you with this. They'll talk to you about your budget and current needs, and then work with you to make sure you get the best deal possible. Remember that this should be a win-win situation. You should be happy with their service and how helpful they are, and they should be happy to be paid a fair price for their service.

5. Don't Budge on Budget

Some companies will try to sell you on a set of windows that is out of your price range. Instead of helping you find something you can afford, even if that means fewer windows, they may push you to get top-of-the-line, expensive windows.

Don't budge on your budget.

As mentioned before, a good company will try to understand your situation and stay within budget. They may give you several quotes including some outside of your budget, but this is generally just to give you an idea for the difference in price from one type of window to the next.

Conclusion

The bottom line is that if you ask the right questions, stick to your budget and do your research, you will be fine.

Can I Install Replacement Windows Myself?

If you're on a tight budget, you may be tempted to replace the windows yourself. Even though that is an option, it's probably something that you should avoid if at all possible.

There are a few reasons for this.

Long Installation Times

Even though installing replacement windows isn't rocket science, there is a learning curve involved. If you aren't very handy with your hands, it will take even longer to get into the swing of things.

The first few windows you install will take a lot of time. Probably 5-6 hours per window. After the first 2-3 you will start getting faster, but it will still take a few hours at a time. If you're replacing 20-30 windows (which isn't as uncommon as you may think), you're looking at spending the equivalent of 2-3 weeks full time just installing windows!

Granted, you could do this over the course of a few months or even years, but it's generally better to just get it all done at once and be done with it.

Lack of Expert Judgment

One reason to hire an expert is to help you choose the right windows for your situation. You may think that triple pane windows sound great, until you realize how much more expensive they are. Or maybe you're leaning towards vinyl windows, but don't realize they have downsides, just like glass.

When you have an expert come out, they will help you choose the best windows for your home. They'll have experience with all kinds of windows, considering they do this day in and day out.

Service Guarantees

When you do something around the house and mess up, guess what? You've got to either fix it yourself or pay someone to fix it.

Meanwhile, what happens if you hired someone to install the windows and they mess up? Well since their work will be covered by a guarantee, they'll fix it for free.

Even though there is a chance that you'll do everything perfectly... it's a very slim chance. If you've never installed windows before, do you really think you're going to do a perfect job on a few dozen windows? At some point, something is bound to go wrong!

Settle for the "Easy Way"

This goes along with my last point. People tend to take the easy route, right? We say things like "work smarter, not harder", indicating that nobody wants to work hard if we can avoid it.

The problem is that sometimes the hard way is the *best* way. For example, many people who replace their own windows won't know (unless they do a lot of research) will use an expanding foam when they install their windows. The problem is that when this foam expands, it creates a lot of pressure which causes problems.

Other options include the kinds of tools you use, using old window frames instead of replacing bad ones, etc.

What Should I Realistically Expect to Pay?

This is always at the forefront of our minds as homeowners, right? Paying money hurts, and we always want to get a good deal when doing expensive home repairs.

What you'll find is that costs have a few main factors involved:

- Location (i.e. cost of living in your area)
- Labor
- Materials
- Setup/cleanup

Some contractors will break all of these costs out, others won't. We recommend asking them to break this out if at all possible. This helps you to see exactly where your money is going and compare apples to apples.

Regarding average costs, expect them to be anywhere from \$150 to \$500 or more per window. Most of the cost variance is driven by the quality of the window you purchase, but the other factors play a role as well.

Because of these high costs, some people choose to replace only a few windows at a time. This isn't a bad idea, just be aware that the same windows and services may be more expensive next year than they are right now.

What do I Need to Do to Prepare for Having My Windows Replaced?

There are a few things you can do to make life much easier for a contractor replacing windows for you. Or even if you decided to do it yourself, these are steps that you should definitely do.

Clear Out!

This may seem obvious, but you'd be surprised how many people forget to do this. The first step you should do is move stuff away from any windows being replaced. If only one room is being done at a time, you can just do that room and then worry about the second room later.

Tables, chairs, desks, couches - anything that is close to the window should be moved at least 4-5 feet away if possible. This reduces the risk of an accident and just makes it easier to remove the old window and install the new one.

Likewise, remember that contractors will need access to the outdoor side of your windows as well. They'll normally do this with ladders, so move away any hoses, decorations, lawn furniture, toys, or anything else outside that may be in the way.

Bare the Walls

Trust me. It's never a good idea to have stuff hanging on the walls when replacing windows. Even though it may not fall down, you never know what may happen once you start hammering. Take down anything that could break if it fell down. Don't just do this in the room with the windows being replaced, but all rooms. Hammering on one side of the house can definitely cause something in another room to fall down.

Cover Up

Replacing windows isn't the cleanest profession out there. Even though drop cloths will help keep your furniture and floor clean, they don't work perfectly.

Unless you like cleaning up dust, try to cover up everything you can in the room. It's always easier to just pick up a few dusty drop cloths than to clean upholstery or wipe down your TV and counters.

The Screening Process and Getting Bids

As mentioned earlier in this report, the best thing you can do to select a good contractor is do your research.

Once you've done your research and you're deciding between a few different contractors, keep the following things in mind.

Experience

Even though experience isn't everything, it definitely helps! Even though some of the more experienced contractors will cost more, it's worth the extra cost to make sure it's done right. Something else to keep in mind is that an experienced contractor has a better idea for how long a project will take, which kind of windows work best in your area, etc. They bring to the table more than just the knowledge of how to do the job well.

Cost

Your budget is your budget. If you have a few contractors come in over your budget and only one can meet it, then that's who you go with, assuming they're qualified to do the job right. Just keep in mind that many times you get what you pay for. If the lowest bid is 30% lower than the next competitor, that may indicate that something is wrong!

Friendliness

Do you prefer to work with people that you like or those you dislike?

Not a tough question, huh.

Every company has its own culture. Some have a very friendly culture where everyone is nice, happy to be there and love what they do. Others are doing it just for the paycheck, and they may not be the nicest people to be around.

If you call a company and they aren't very friendly with you, consider moving on. You don't have to of course, but there's a good chance that they guys who come to install the windows will have similar personalities to whoever you talked to on the phone.

Reviews and Testimonials

The greatest thing about the internet is that it allows us to quickly find any kind of information we want, right? Use that to your advantage to see what people say about these companies.

As mentioned earlier, keep in mind that only a small percentage of customers will ever leave a review or testimonial. That said, these words from previous customers can still help make or break your decision on which contractor to work with.

If all of the online reviews for one company are 2-3 stars and the other company has all 4-5 star ratings, it's an easy choice, right?

Other Important Questions to Ask About Replacement Windows

When you start talking to window contractors, it's always good to have a list of questions to ask. Here are a few of the best ones, but feel free to think of a few more.

- **Do you charge for an estimate?**
- **Is there a specific window type or brand you recommend? Why?**
- **How do you finish the interior after the window is installed?**
- **Do you have any recent projects where I can see the windows from the road?**
- **How much time will it take, from the time I order until the job's done?**
- **Do you carry insurance?**
- **Are you licensed and credentialed?**
- **What's the full name and address of the company?**
- **How long have you been in business?**
- **What kind of payment terms do you offer?**
- **If I have an issue after installation, how do I handle that?**
- **What's your workmanship warranty?**
- **Can you provide me references or referrals from previous work?**
- **Is painting part of the installation package?**
- **Do you use your own employees, or do you subcontract out the work?**
- **How do you manage customer complaints?**

Again, this is just to help get you started! In reality if you ask all of these questions, you'll be on the phone for a long time. Just pick a few you like, think of anything else you might have questions about, and then go for it.

Conclusion

It's a major project to replace the windows in your home. Even though you can opt to do it yourself, we highly recommend that you hire experts to do it for you.

At the end of the day, remember that the more work you do upfront, the less risk you have of being unsatisfied with your windows or the installation. Use the tools available to you, ask a lot of questions, and don't be afraid of saying "no" to the contractors that aren't the right fit.

Good luck, and please contact us if you have any other questions or comments.