

CONSUMER RATINGS

BEST BUYS

REPLACEMENT
WINDOWS

**7 STEPS
TO BUYING
NEW WINDOWS**

**TOP 20
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7 Steps to Buying New Windows

You have evaluated your existing windows, decided to replace them, chosen the window benefits that are most important to you and know the basics about window brands, models and styles. Now it is wise to have a sensible and simple plan of action to make your purchase.

Replacement windows are a large investment that will affect you every day for as long as you own your property - and when it is time to sell. Consumer Ratings recommends taking these 7 simple steps to help make your purchase easier and more satisfying.

- 1) Visit a Local Showroom
- 2) Ask for References
- 3) Schedule an In-home Appointment
- 4) Ask for Energy Star Ratings
- 5) Ask for Design Pressure Ratings
- 6) Ask to see the Warranty
- 7) Get a Written Contract

- 1) **Visit a Local Showroom:** Before you randomly call salespeople out to your home, visit showrooms to see full sized displays of the windows available. This will not only give you a better idea of window appearance and operation it will also give you a much better idea of how professional each company is based on the quality of their showroom and the attitude and availability of the people there to help you. If a showroom is not conveniently located, doesn't have full time hours or knowledgeable, friendly people there to serve you and a good selection of windows on display they probably don't deserve your business.

Consumer Tip:

Getting in-home estimates from several companies without visiting showrooms may seem like an easy way to shop, but it dramatically increases the chances of having to deal with a high-pressure, unprofessional salesperson.

The consumer may actually be put at a disadvantage and feel forced to make an immediate buying decision based on seeing only a small sample window, a brochure or no actual window at all.

- 2) **Ask for References:** A well established, experienced company should be prepared to show you an impressive list of references. Quality windows and professional workmanship backed by reliable service over a long period of time generates long satisfied customer lists. No lists or short lists could be a warning sign of customer dissatisfaction.

Consumer Tip:

Make sure your contractor is properly licensed and insured.

Check references and get their Better Business Bureau Rating and their affiliation status with your local Chamber of Commerce or Remodeling Association.

- 3) **Schedule an In-Home Appointment:** After you have visited showrooms and selected someone you feel comfortable working with, it is time to invite them to your home. This meeting will be an important one in your replacement window buying process.
- Be prepared to devote your full attention and sufficient time to learn about your choices and their future implications.
 - The professional window replacement expert will inspect your existing windows and evaluate your needs before making window brand, model and style recommendations for the individual window openings in your home.
 - This is your opportunity to make dramatic changes in window style, functionality – even the size of the windows in your home - so don't be afraid to speak up.
 - Be wary of a salesperson that does not make a thorough inspection of your existing windows or does not evaluate the window benefits that are most important to you.
 - After the inspection and evaluation process the window professional should be able to review their installation methods, design options and prices.
- 4) **Ask for the Energy Star Ratings:** Learn how to read Energy Star Stickers – they are like the “Miles per Gallon Sticker” for your car and will tell you how much energy one window will save compared to another.
- Comparing the Energy Star ratings for different windows should be a key part of your decision making process and will tell you how well a window will insulate against heat loss, reduce solar heat gain that increases air conditioning costs and how much visible light your window will provide to cut down on the use of lighting.
 - Energy Star rating data is available for every window made.
 - If your replacement window salesman is unwilling or unable to provide Energy Star ratings numbers they do not deserve your business.
 - Do not sign a contract that does not specifically state the Energy Star Ratings for the windows to be installed on your home, so you can verify the window ratings on your contract match the label on the windows installed on your home and not a less efficient, lower priced alternative.

Consumer Tip:

Learn how to read the Energy Star sticker and compare window energy ratings.

Read Consumer Ratings “MPG for Windows”.

- 5) **Ask for the Design Pressure Ratings (DP Ratings):** Design Pressure Ratings are like the Crash Safety Ratings for automobiles because they tell you how a window will perform when Mother Nature crashes into your home or intruders attempt to enter.
- DP Ratings measure a window's ability to resist air infiltration, water penetration, forced entry and overall structural strength.
 - Comparing the DP rating is a good way to tell how your window will perform when the wind blows, rain falls or an intruder strikes.

- If your replacement window salesman is unwilling or unable to provide Design Pressure ratings numbers for the windows they are offering you, they have not earned your business.
- You should delay your purchasing decision until you know DP Rating information because those ratings are a key to determining the level of satisfaction your purchase will provide

Consumer Tip:

Read Consumer Ratings “Crash Safety Ratings for Windows”.
Learn how windows perform when Mother Nature crashes into your home.
Learn how windows provide safety, security and resist break-in attempts.
“DP Ratings” measure Weather Resistance Security and Strength of windows.

- 6) **Ask to See the Warranty:** Ask to see the manufacturer’s written warranty for the specific product you are considering and get an explanation of that warranty for a realistic understanding of what is covered.
- Beware of the vague “Lifetime Warranty”.
 - A pro-rated parts-only “Lifetime Warranty” may not cover the cost of warranty service labor and only a small percentage of the cost of parts after a very short time.
 - A misleading “Lifetime Warranty” can increase window maintenance costs and make a low priced window very expensive over time.
 - Warranty Transferability is also important and so is coverage for glass failure and accidental glass breakage.

Consumer Tip:

Read Consumer Ratings “How Long is a Lifetime Warranty?”
Learn more about the Creditable Lifetime Warranty.

- 7) **Get a Written Contract:** Once you have agreed on the model, brand, style and options for your window replacement project have the exact price for that specific window and options you selected written up as a contract.
- Get a copy of your window contract to avoid conflicts or confusion about what is included at the time of installation.
 - Custom windows can take six to eight weeks from the time they are ordered until they are installed. It could be easy to forget what your original agreement was if it is not in writing.
 - A written contract that thoroughly covers the window brand, model, style, energy star ratings, DP ratings, design, options and installation methods can give you the ability to make a legal claim for damages if your agreement is not strictly adhered to by your installation company.

Following these 7 simple steps will help you select a window replacement product and installation company that gives you the best chances of getting the results you were expecting with this very important project. Educating yourself about how to compare window product offerings will allow you to make the best choice for you. “Consumer Ratings” provides additional information about warranty, energy ratings, structural strength and installation to help consumers compare windows before buying.