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What to Look for When Buying Windows for Your Home – A Check List

If you're thinking of purchasing new or replacement vinyl windows, here is a checklist that you can take shopping with you and some questions to ask each of the companies that you are considering getting windows from. Remember that you get what you pay for, so be sure to take time to understand what you're buying. This guide will help you find the right windows for you that will last a lifetime!

Glass and Glazing

- ✓ How many panes of glass are in the window?
- ✓ How thick is the glass?
- ✓ Are they glazed?
- ✓ What are the glazing options how do they improve energy efficiency?
- ✓ Is there a glazing seal?
- ✓ Will it last over time (yellowing, cracking, dirt, etc.)

Seals and Sweeps

- ✓ How well is the glass sealed?
- ✓ Are there any vulnerable areas where air could leak?
- ✓ Are there additional sweeps on the outside of casement windows?
- ✓ How many seals are used around the openings of the window?

Frame Construction

- ✓ Does the sash have a 'channel' that it fits into when closed?
- ✓ Are the sash parts reinforced with aluminum or steel for added strength?
- ✓ Is the sash lift separate from the window or added on?
- ✓ What type of wood is used for jambs and supports on a bay/bow window?
- ✓ Is the frame made of regrind (reused materials) or virgin (raw extracted materials) vinyl?

Air Space

- ✓ Is there adequate space in the frame to allow for dead air space (adds insulation)
- ✓ How much space is there between the glass units?
- ✓ How tightly does the sash fit into the frame? (Try to 'Rip Test'!)

Storms and Screens

- ✓ What is the screen made of?
- ✓ How will the screen handle various weather conditions?
- ✓ Is the storm in a separate track from the window?
- ✓ Are there additional seals around the storm?

Sills and Seats

- ✓ Can the sill be adjusted to fit uneven sill conditions?
- ✓ What is the seat constructed of?
- ✓ Will the seat be strong enough to withstand regular use?
- ✓ Will the wood used match the woodwork in my home?

Locks, Cranks, and Hinges

- ✓ What are the cranks, locks, and hinges made of?
- ✓ How strong is that material?
- ✓ Does the lock close the window to form a complete seal that won't leak?
- ✓ Will the crank allow the window to open 90 degrees?
- ✓ Will the window slide in the track to allow for easy cleaning? (casement)

Moisture / Fogging Prevention

- ✓ Is there a mechanism for preventing moisture between the glass and/or fogging?

Design and Look

- ✓ Can you add grids?
- ✓ Are they removable?
- ✓ Are they on the inside or outside of the glass?
- ✓ Does the window come in different colors to match your décor?
- ✓ Do you have the option of matching trim with your windows?
- ✓ Do the cranks, locks, and hinges blend into the look of the window?
- ✓ Are there various wood finishes/types to choose from? (bow/bay)

Convenience and Safety

- ✓ Do the windows / sashes come out easily to clean?
- ✓ Can you easily reach the outside glass while inside?
- ✓ Will the window open at least 90 degrees (casement) for easy emergency access?
- ✓ Are there at least two locks on the window (for security and a tight seal)?
- ✓ Is there an option for night latches?
- ✓ Is the window frame, seat, or other parts easy to clean?

Warranty / Guarantee

- ✓ How many years are your windows under warranty/guarantee?
- ✓ Is it a manufacturer's warranty or dealer warranty/guarantee?
- ✓ What exactly is covered under the warranty/guarantee?
- ✓ Who do you contact if there is a warranty/guarantee issue?
- ✓ What happens if there is a problem with your windows?