

let's remodel

# Five things to ask about windows

**Q:** We have just started looking at replacement windows and are overwhelmed by the number of choices in selecting windows. Do you have any suggestions for narrowing it down?

**A:** I believe there are five main concerns when choosing windows for your home.

■ **Wood versus vinyl.** Although wood windows cost more you are dealing with a product that allows you to stain or paint the interior to match your decor. Vinyl windows are easier to custom size fittings and are more cost effective.

■ **Casement, double hung or sliders?** Casement windows are by far the best quality and the most expensive window. Double hung windows are a good quality that will hold up to years of use and at a lesser cost than a casement window. The slider is also a good window if it has a roller system to reduce wear over time. Keep in mind that often times the style of the window will be determined by the size you need.

■ **Product quality.** You will need to



begin familiarizing yourself with the different types of glass. Due to limited space here I suggest you ask a professional contractor. They can explain the differences. I also recommend you purchase windows with a thickness of at least 7/8 inch for the best thermal efficiency. Always look at the weather seals on the product. It should have at least two, preferably three seals to reduce air infiltration. The warranty should be backed by the manufacturer and not the contractor. Be sure to find out if the warranty is transferable for an added sales

point if you sell your home. Another characteristic to look for is a sloped exterior sill and exterior drain holes to provide proper water drainage.

■ **Product installation.** Before the carpenters arrive to install the windows you should ask your contractor about the installation procedures. The carpenters, after removing the old window (and frame depending on the window of choice and the shape of the old frame), will begin fitting the windows into place. They will put new insulation around the windows. In addition, they will need to trim and caulk the exterior. They will also caulk the interior but be sure to specify if you are purchasing new trim for the interior from your contractor. Any installation crew should clean up the area after completion of the job and remove any construction debris from your property. Be sure to talk to your contractor about any preparations you need to make for the crew. If you are replacing several windows, you can expect the installation crew to be around more than one day. Discuss the use of

the home and where the workers need to park before the day of installation. This will help avoid any surprises.

■ **Choosing the contractor.** Always ask for proof that the contractor is licensed and insured. You can have the insurance company forward the information directly to you. Check all references and even ask to see the finished project. If your contractor says he can sell you any brand window on the market you may want to reconsider. Most contractors are very familiar with 2-3 different window lines and because they have worked with the same manufacturers over a long period of time, they are familiar with how to order correctly and installation procedures. Be sure to choose a contractor you are comfortable with.

Remember: You get what you pay for. The lowest bid does not mean you are getting the best deal.

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