

Eight Tips to Remodeling with Custom Windows

Dear Readers,

I wrote this report for homeowners who experience anxiety just thinking about having a home improvement contractor enter their home. This report is written to educate you about replacement windows and assist you in choosing a window contractor that will really put your interest first.

By the time you're through reading this report, you will learn:

1. How to choose the right contractor for your window project.
2. Purchasing tips that can save you thousands of dollars.
3. How a window job should be installed to ensure you get the look you wants.
4. How to avoid the biggest scams unscrupulous "contractors" try to use to browbeat you in to buying.

What follows are some of the "horror" stories I have heard from people in this area:

Mr. Smith is the neighbor of one of our clients. He related the following story - He hired a painting company to prepare and paint his house. Their price was low, and thought they would do a good job. Well, three months after the job was done, Mr. Smith noticed funny cracks and other strange things going on with the trim of his house. It turned out to be rotted wood and that the painters just painted right over, unconcerned about the consequences. The contractor was long gone, and the homeowner was not only out his initial investment, but he was faced with the question of 'what to do?' He really had a problem!

Another client told me about a well-known window company wanted twenty-three thousand dollars to replace nineteen windows! Nearly blew his socks off! The company every which way to get him to sign a contract, but was unsuccessful. I was found through a friend, and the homeowner was delighted when we proposed a job for \$14,000 less than that other company (To be fair, we didn't include the low-E/Argon option as decided by the client [A \$450 option for all 19 windows]. So, they got a beautiful job with great looking windows for almost one-third their first estimate!



Has it ever been *more* frustrating trying to figure out who you can trust to improve your home?

How can you be assured that you'll get exactly what you paid for when you spend your hard earned dollars?

The second story had a fortunate and happy ending. The first story did not, but it could have been prevented

Needless to say, there are as many good stories and bad stories as there are homeowners. We pride ourselves on being a part of the "good" stories crowd!

Here are 8 Tips on How Replacement Windows can Save you Thousands!

Tip #1 – Vinyl Windows and Doors are a great value...

One: Today's modern windows make your life much easier and safer. Modern-day mechanical components mean windows never stick or squeak. New materials like vinyl make window maintenance (like scraping, caulking, painting) a thing of the past. No more worrying about climbing up dangerous ladders or dealing with unsightly storm windows.

Two: You are safer in your home. Superior locks are screwed down into a metal sub-frame, making these locks some of the strongest ever manufactured. Innovative features such as built-in night latches allow the windows to be opened for ventilation, yet still remain locked for greater security.

Three: Today's windows are much more cost effective. New insulated glass designs, glass coatings, and improved frame insulation cut energy costs dramatically. Your home is more comfortable while actually costing you less to heat and cool.

Four: They look great!! New windows come in a variety of shapes, styles, and colors - bay windows, large bow windows, sliding windows, double-hung, and more. Even sliding patio doors are available in vinyl! All of these improve the looks of your home. You'll be proud to show-off your new windows!



Today's modern windows make your life much easier. They are safer, more cost effective, and they look great.

Tip #2 - Avoid Overpriced "National Retail Chain Contractors"

Did you know that many contractors selling replacement windows and doors aren't home improvement contractors at all? Large national and regional "retail" sales organizations have large marketing budgets and aggressive sales people to ensure they get their money's worth. What that means to the unsuspecting homeowner can range from high pressure sales tactics to downright fraud.

Worse yet, many know little about home improvements, and fail to correctly assess related issues that must be addressed in conjunction with installing the new windows.

Perhaps the worst thing about contracting with a large "retail" company is the price! In order to pay for their high sales cost and commissions, some of these companies charge double, even triple what we feel is a fair price!

Tip #3 - How To Avoid The Scams of Unscrupulous "Contractors"

One of the many ploys used by some contractors is the model home program. A 'discount' is offered in exchange for signing a 'model home window contract'. This 'special' is typically offered as a way to lower the price and induce the prospect to sign an agreement. This is an old trick, but is used by slick salespeople all the time, beware!

Another trick is the "drop". A sales person will push and push with a very high price, and then when all hope is lost will 'call the manager' and get the price lowered if the prospect will sign up immediately. This is especially tempting, but don't fall for it! The initial price is inflated so that if needed, it could be lowered, making the new price seem to be a real "bargain".

Their prices are so inflated, the "discount" is nothing more than an illusion. Plus, though they say it's a once in a lifetime opportunity, this isn't a limited offer at all. Everyone is offered the same "special" discount. Don't be fooled. If anyone ever tells you that you will qualify for an advertising discount, or drops the price (without changing the job itself) understand that they are playing games with you.



Most national retail chains rely on their names to get your money, but then leave you in the hands of subcontractors who are ill equipped to care for you properly.

As you can imagine these and other ploys are used to just get another job, any way they can. Keep your antenna up for anything that sounds fishy – because it probably is.

Tip #4 - Avoid Jack-Leg "Contractors"

Another potential problem to beware of is the jack-leg, fly-by-night "contractor". These are the 'door to door' handymen that may solicit you.

These people may not be contractors at all. Never allow them into your home unless you have checked them out thoroughly! This cannot be stressed enough. The Washington Post reported in 1997 that an elderly woman in Northern Virginia was ripped- off for tens of thousands of dollars by these types! Each year we hear about others ripped off the same way.

Remember, you can't get something for nothing! If someone gives you a "price that can't be beat," watch out! Somewhere in that agreement, you will be giving permission to be victimized, through thievery or just plain poor workmanship.

Tip #5 - How To Select The Right Window Professional

Your choice of a contractor will ultimately determine the success and enjoyment of your project. These questions will provide you with essential information in your decision-making.

1. Are you licensed? Make sure your contractor is properly licensed. The contractor should be able to produce a current M.H.I.C. (Maryland Home Improvement Contractor) license. This license ensures that the contractor meets certain standards and affords you protections in the event of problems.

2. Do you carry general liability insurance? Make sure your contractor carries this insurance. It protects you and your home in case of damage caused by the contractor and/or their employees. The insurance will cover medical expenses incurred by the homeowner resulting from accidents related to the project.



3. How long have you been in business? You should look for a business with an established business history in your community. Ask for copies of previous year's license or other proof of time in business. Have the contractor tell and show you how they do business, and how you will be assured the quality you are looking for. The more organized they are, the more likely that you will get what you are paying for.

4. What percentage of your business is repeat or referral? If a significant percentage of a contractor's business comes from repeat or referral clients, this is a good indication that the contractor performs good work and delivers satisfying service. Companies that rely on expensive advertising typically do so because their rate of referrals is very low.

5. What do you need me to do? Get all this information out front. Some contractors may require different things of you. Staying home during the project, moving delicate items in preparation for the project are among the possibilities. We ask our clients to move delicate items away from the work site.

6. What are the payment terms? The M.H.I.C. states that no more than a third of the contract price may be collected at the time of contract signing. The contract should not specify any more than this amount. Be leery if it does.

Tip #6 - How To Get High Quality Windows at a Fair Price

Ok, we all want to avoid over-priced, high-pressure retailers like the plague. But does that mean that it's ok to choose your contractor based on the lowest price?

No! This can be a big mistake!

Here's why: We've all heard the saying "You get what you pay for".

Well, contractors who give low prices often cut corners, even when you're looking. How would you know? You might not... until real problems became evident. So, why don't they just charge a fair price for a fair job?



Some contractors are more interested in getting the job than in doing the job properly. They make their money by moving fast and ignoring the details.

Furthermore, the quality of the windows themselves can vary greatly in quality. Do not be content with a home-center window. Often these are "builder" grade quality- a lower standard that is prone to failure.

Here's what you should look for as you evaluate what you are being offered:

1. Purchase insulated windows with an air space of from 3/4" to 1".

This range in thickness will provide the best in energy efficiency. Anything less, will not insulate your home properly. Many cheaper insulated windows have a metal spacer separating the panes of glass. Do not buy these windows! These windows are prone to seal failure, leading to fogging of the interior of the glass and loss of thermal efficiency. Insist on windows with either 'intercept' or silicone spacers.

2. Options such as Low-E/ argon will boost energy savings by about 20%!

This costs a little more, but is well worth the extra investment. Low-E means low emissivity. It is a coating applied to the glass which blocks ultra-violet rays from passing through. The benefit to you is lower fuel bills, and protection of furniture from fading. Argon is an inert gas that is injected into the center of the glass panes. It is heavier than air and slows the movement of energy between the panes. Ask for more details from the contractor.

3. All Vinyl Windows are not Created Equal.

There are several important distinctions that separate high quality from low quality windows.

Cheap windows use vinyl (PVC) from recycled plastics resulting in a product that is weaker than PVC made from "virgin" material. High quality windows use only "virgin" PVC.

Cheap windows are "mechanically" fastened, which means that all the joints overlap one another and are fastened with screws. High quality windows are fuse welded at the corners, providing superior strength.



Aesthetically speaking, windows with welded frames and sashes are much more attractive than their mechanically fastened counterparts.

4. A good contractor will finish off the job with the little "extras"

The exterior of the new windows should be finished off with custom capping, leaving it clean and neat. The quality of this work varies. Ask to see photos of their work to be sure that you are satisfied with their work. Also, beware that the caulking is done neatly and completely.

Like anything else, you can't get something for nothing. Be careful about choosing your window and your contractor solely upon the lowest price.

Tip #7 - Choose a Contractor that will give You a Written Material and Labor Warranty

Your job should be backed with a written warranty! Many contractors will tell that their job comes with a "Lifetime Guarantee". But be careful! What they really mean is that the manufacturer will guarantee the product against manufacturing defects for life. This is not the same thing as a written warranty!

A labor warranty ensures that any defect in workmanship is repaired or replaced by the contractor, at no expense to you! Some contractors will even replace warranted materials at no charge to their clients, Now that's a good warranty!

Tip #8 - Plan With A Professional

This is really the greatest "secret" of all! Plan your project with a qualified remodeling expert!

If you're considering remodeling with new windows or doors in the near future, sitting down and talking with a professional remodeling expert that can answer all of your questions is the best advice I know.

Finding a contractor that will listen to your every concern, and who has the experience and integrity to help you get the best value for your money is not too much to demand.

I hope that you would want to work with someone who subscribes to the principles and "secrets" discussed in this report.



As you might have guessed it, this is the only way we work at 1st Choice. We install beautiful, efficient windows at less than half the price that many large organizations charge. No joke!

You see, I believe that if I really take care of my clients, I won't have to always be marketing to "new" clients. And after more than 15 years in business, most of our new clients come through referral!

How we work:

We meet and work closely with you to understand from your viewpoint what is important and what is not. We assess your home together, and then discuss the different approaches that you decide make sense. Typically we discover that what we have is a good fit for your needs and budget. Sometimes we discover that there isn't a fit with what you desire and what we can offer, and that's OK too. A simple approach without the hassle!

If all this makes sense, and you're curious about our approach to home improvements, I invite you to call.

Sincerely,

John Rabner
Owner

