



▲ Nick Cecco, owner of HomeRite Windows and Doors, shows a double hung tilt-in window at his Waynesboro, Pa., business.

HOME TRENDS

A Sash Decision

Replacing Old Windows and Doors Adds Comfort, Efficiency, Style and More to a Home.

written by **STACEY CAMPBELL**
photography by **RIC DUGAN**

Windows perform multiple functions in a home: allowing light, ventilation and a view while simultaneously keeping out the elements, enhancing style inside and out, dampening exterior noises, serving as emergency escape

routes, and more. But due to the materials used to construct older windows, they can start to fail at several of those functions, creating discomfort and inconvenience for homeowners. The new materials and construction used in replacement windows allow homeowners to once again enjoy increased comfort and energy efficiency inside their homes, make maintenance easier, and add fea-

tures and designs that match their style and lifestyle.

Clear Benefits

"We are in the business of making people's homes energy efficient and maintenance free," says Nick Cecco, president of HomeRite Windows and Doors in Waynesboro, Pa., which serves Franklin, Washington and Frederick counties. "We install a lot of vinyl products, whether it be windows or siding. The doors we install are typically fiberglass... products that will keep homeowners from having to do upkeep," Nick says.

Homeowners choose replacement windows for a variety of reasons: They can make a home quieter, are less drafty and require less maintenance than older windows. "The main reasons that our customers are replacing their windows, one would be for better energy efficiency," Nick says. "So if they feel that they are drafty or they feel that cold coming directly through the glass, that's the No 1 reason." Most older windows use single panes of glass, which allow heat and cold to transfer. "Additionally, older windows typically don't have weather stripping around the sashes, which means air can flow in and around the sashes of the window," creating drafts, Nick says.

"I would say the most common thing we are doing is we're taking out a single-pane wood window that has a storm window on it," Nick says. In addition to weather stripping, newly installed replacement windows enhance energy efficiency by using double or triple panes of glass, most with inert gasses sealed between the panes and a Low-E coating. The gasses provide additional insulation by helping to stop the transfer of heat and cold between the two panes of glass. Consumer Reports explains that Low-E refers to a transparent coating that "improves the efficiency of the glass by reflecting heat yet letting light in. The coating is applied to the outside of glass in warmer climates to reflect the sun's heat out; in colder areas, it's applied to the inside glass to keep heat in."

According to This Old House's website, the National Fenestration Rating Council's (NFRC) rating system helps homeowners compare the energy efficiency of replacement windows via a label stating its U-value, or insulation rating (the lower, the better); its solar heat gain coefficient (SHGC), which tells how much heat it lets in; and its visible light transmittance. Energy Star-ratings are also helpful. Consumer Reports points out that Energy Star qualified windows can lower energy bills by 7 to 15 percent, a significant savings but typically not enough to quickly re-

coup the cost of replacement windows. But, new windows "can return homeowners 71 to 78 percent of the project cost upon resale," according to the National Association of Realtors 2015 Cost vs. Value Report.

And, while the increased insulation of replacement windows might not drastically reduce energy bills, it will help with noise reduction, dampening the sounds of traffic, lawn mowers, barking dogs and more, notes window manufacturer Pella's website.

Replacement windows also offer homeowners ease of maintenance and cleaning. "A lot of older windows



A window in need of a replacement. ▶

don't have the feature where they can tilt in," Nick says. "And [homeowners] want easier cleaning capabilities. Our windows all tilt in for easy cleaning," meaning even the outside of second-story or higher windows can be cleaned from inside the house. Depending on the materials selected, replacement windows can also eliminate the need for regular painting and other maintenance. "If they do have wood windows, they're probably experiencing either breakdown of the wood somewhere throughout the house, or every couple years they're having to paint the exterior," Nick says. "By going with vinyl windows, they eliminate all of that." In addition to windows and doors, HomeRite has also added roofs, decks, siding and other home exterior services since starting business in 2008. "Pretty much anything on the exterior of the home, we're looking to make maintenance-free for our clients," Nick says.

Replacement windows also can enhance a home's safety. Most windows have a night latch, a retractable lever on the inside that prevents the windows from opening more than two inches. And, older windows that don't open easily or are painted shut "can be a safety hazard, for example when trying to escape a fire," the Pella website says.

Built to Last

Homeowners will navigate a variety of choices when selecting replacement windows, beginning with a decision on materials. Vinyl, wood, composite and aluminum windows are the most common types, and each has different appealing characteristics. "I would say that vinyl windows, from an energy standpoint, are typically as good as if not better than its competitors in wood and composite," Nick says. "However, wood and composite windows are more expensive to produce, which makes the end-user's price higher."

Wood is the original window frame material. "Some people, they've got wood windows, and that's what they want to go with, so they know that going into it," Nick says. Wood is "still considered the gold standard by many professional installers and homeowners," notes This Old House. "They're strong, beautiful and relatively energy efficient." To protect them from the elements, wood windows must be painted or stained, requiring periodic homeowner maintenance. Many manufacturers offer cladding for wood windows, meaning the exterior frames are covered with vinyl, aluminum or fiberglass while the interior exposed wood can still be painted or stained. While this creates a weatherproof exterior, it also increases the cost.

"Price wise and maintenance-free wise, vinyl is typically the best option," Nick says. Vinyl-frame windows can cost as little as half the price of wood-frame windows, notes This Old House. A honeycomb of chambers inside the frame traps air



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and boosts the energy efficiency of vinyl windows. This Old House recommends looking for "joints that are heat-welded rather than joined with screws or other fasteners" as an indicator of quality vinyl windows.

Composite windows offer homeowners "something that looks like wood, but doesn't have the capability of breaking down," Nick says. Andersen windows, for example, has developed a proprietary composite window material called

Jerry Donica with HomeRite Windows and Doors caulks around new flashing for a window replaced on a home in Waynesboro, Pa. ▼



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Fibrex, “made up of reclaimed wood fiber and PVC polymer that is fused together,” is twice as strong as vinyl, performs well in extreme temperatures, and resists fading and peeling. Different manufacturers use fiberglass or other composites, materials similar to those used in car bumpers, This Old House explains.

Aluminum windows are another option, allowing high versatility in colors, shapes and design details. Though typically maintenance free, the metal frames can conduct heat easily, making them prone to condensation and feeling cold to the touch, This Old House notes. These characteristics make aluminum frames best suited for warm climates, the website says.

In addition to evaluating materials, homeowners will get to select from a variety of window types, details and features. Replacement windows can be single- or double-hung, casement, bay or bow, gliding, picture and specialty shapes, including a garden or greenhouse window. Window World describes its Garden Window as creating “a lush oasis” with “abundant room for displaying plants” in a bump-out window that provides sun from three sides. Consider the style of your home when selecting window types, This Old House recommends, and look at other homes with replacement windows to get an idea of how

the new windows might look.

Lifestyle factors can also influence replacement window features. Manufacturers such as Pella, for example, offer windows with blinds and shades between the panes of glass, reducing dust and allergens and eliminating the possibility of children or pets becoming entangled in blinds and cords. Pella even offers motorized and remote-controlled versions of such shades. “There’s just a lot of options to look at and consider,” Nick says. “Even within vinyl windows, even within the one manufacturer that I do most of my work through [Polaris Windows and Doors, from Youngstown, Ohio], they’ve got three different lines.”

Choose Craftsmanship and Professionalism

An experienced installer will walk homeowners through the process of selecting the replacement windows that are right for their home. HomeRite begins with a half-hour to 45-minute consultation with Nick, who assesses clients’ issues and goals for replacing windows and doors. He then measures the windows and makes a recommendation about which product would best suit the home, giving an estimate on the spot.

It usually takes four to five weeks after signing an agreement with a homeowner until installation day, Nick says. “Home-



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◀ Danny May with HomeRite Windows and Doors sets a new window in place at a home in Waynesboro, Pa.

owners are typically expected to take down curtains and blinds and have furniture pulled away from the windows," he explains. "Of course we can always assist if needed. And depending on the size of the job, we typically do anywhere from 10 to 15 windows a day, or two to three doors." After the old windows are removed and replaced, any exterior or trim work is finished.

"The one thing that probably makes us unique as a window

dealer in the area is our capability to replace what's called seal failures," Nick adds. "So people throughout the area who have windows that have two panes of glass and they have fog build-up inside them or [they're] cloudy, it's called a seal failure. We have the capability of replacing that glass rather than replacing the entire window."

For homeowners considering replacement windows, Nick notes that most installers in the marketplace are offering a quality product that will be an improvement over older, single-pane windows, "but the level of craftsmanship and professionalism around the home is dependent on the company you choose. So I would say that the people are more important than the products themselves," Nick says. "I think the most important thing for a homeowner to consider is the organization and the people that they're choosing to work with. They're going to be inviting a company into their home, and they want to work with somebody who's going to respect their property and be clean and tidy." — *Places*

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