



A Homeowner's Guide to Buying Replacement Windows



San Diego's Top
Window & Door
Replacement Specialists



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About the Author

Michal Bohm

Michal is the owner of BM Windows, an independent replacement window company serving San Diego County for many years. Specializing in replacement vinyl windows and doors, Michal provides one of the industry's best window guarantees, and he doesn't use high pressure sales tactics. Instead, he helps to educate customers, providing explanations and options. BM Windows does not outsource the installation; the entire process is handled in-house.

Originally from Europe, Michal worked for many years in Munich and familiarized himself with German window technologies. He worked in all aspects of the window business from installation, project management, design, and sales. After moving to California and settling in San Diego, he continued working in the glazing business.

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Introduction

Buying replacement windows isn't something homeowners do all the time. In fact, it is something most people will only do once in their lifetime. Many homeowners don't know what to look for in a replacement window company, or don't even know the right questions to ask.

We've created this six-step guide to aid San Diego homeowners with the process of purchasing vinyl replacement windows for their homes. We start at the beginning—when you're not even sure if you need replacement windows for your home—and walk you step-by-step through the entire process. Our hope is that you'll find this guide both informative and thought provoking. We made a special effort to identify potential pitfalls and increase awareness for homeowners who are new to the process of buying replacement windows.

New windows can have a great impact on both the look and functionality of the home.

Should I Buy New Windows For My Home?

For many homeowners, the question of whether or not to buy new home windows is a big decision. Window replacement is likely only one project on a long list of possible home improvement projects you'd like to undertake, and it may not seem like the most “exciting” improvement on your list. However, new windows can have a great impact on both the look and functionality of the home. Installed correctly, new windows will improve the attractiveness of your home, and recent advancements in window technology have afforded the creation of highly energy-efficient windows that help maintain interior temperatures and save on energy costs.

Look for signs that your windows need replacing by considering these questions.

- Is your energy bill higher than it used to be or higher than you'd expect for a house of its size?
- Is your furniture faded from direct light through the windows?
- Can you hear or feel a draft around the windows?
- Do the blinds move even when the window is shut?

New windows will not only help correct these problems and improve the look of your home, but modern window products offer features that simply didn't exist until recently. In addition, replacement windows can dramatically increase the value of your home. A recent study by Remodeling Magazine found that window replacement has one of the highest returns on investment for home improvement projects—the fourth highest, in fact.



I Want to Replace the Windows In My Home. Where Do I Start?

Replacing the windows in your house is an investment, so you should begin the process by doing a little homework. It's worth taking the time to be organized and prepared. It is helpful to create a project folder that will contain everything you collect, from research to estimates, and finally the written warranty for the completed project.

Now that your folder is ready, begin gathering information:

- Consider any Homeowners Association (HOA) concerns. If your home is part of an HOA, you'll need to check with them or consult your documents to determine if there are any limitations or approval requirements before having new windows installed. It's common for San Diego area communities with HOAs to require pre-approval on exterior projects like replacement windows.
- How many windows do you want to replace—all of them or just a few? Make a quick list of the windows that need to be replaced and the location of each.

If your home is part of an HOA, you'll need to check with them or consult your documents.

- What's your budget? Many homeowners don't set a specific budget early on because they don't know how much new windows will cost. But they sometimes find that all the estimates are more than they can afford. It's best to identify your maximum budget before contacting companies for estimates. That way, you will quickly know if you need to scale back the project or replace fewer windows.
- How will you be paying—cash, credit, financing? Your payment type may affect pricing. Many companies give the best pricing to cash customers because it avoids additional costs like credit card processing fees and financing.



I've Done My Homework, What's The Next Step?

Now that you know which windows you want to replace and how you plan to pay for them, it's time to start researching companies. Ask friends, neighbors, and co-workers if they've recently had their windows replaced—it's always helpful to hear firsthand experiences. Ask them which company they used. Did the process go smoothly, and are they happy with the result? Would they recommend the company? Do everything you can to learn from their experiences, both positive and negative, and use those experiences to help you make your decisions.

Beyond personal referrals, researching online will yield several options. Use Google to find replacement window companies in your local area: San Diego, Poway, La Jolla, Carlsbad, etc. We recommend identifying 8-10 companies to research in more depth. Once you've found some companies, start by comparing their websites. See what they say about their services and products. Find out how long they've been in business and what makes them different from other window companies in the area. Compare what they say on their website with consumer reviews, review sites like Yelp (<https://www.yelp.com>), and the Better Business Bureau (BBB) (<http://www.bbb.org/sdoc>). If you find any inconsistencies, or a number of negative reviews, move on to another company.

Remember, the goal is to research a total of 8-10 replacement window companies and ultimately select 2-3 companies to provide estimates on your project.

As you continue researching companies, make sure to compare apples to apples. What kind of warranty do they offer? Does in-house staff handle all functions from sales and selection to installation and support, or do they outsource various parts of the project to subcontractors?

Research 8-10 replacement window companies and select 2-3 companies to provide estimates.

It's important to look at a company's history as well. Sometimes, companies will go out of business and start again under a new name. When a company goes out of business or files bankruptcy, their customers are often left with a worthless warranty and no support. Make sure you're checking out reputable companies that began prior to the economic downturn in 2008 and have maintained a strong reputation over a substantial period of time.

Consider the products they offer as well. Ultimately, the product and installation are what you care the most about. Consider material choices like fiberglass, aluminum, and vinyl. Due to the materials and construction, and because they are the most durable, vinyl windows generally offer the best warranty for San Diego homes. Vinyl replacement windows also hold up great in salty environments like the coastal cities of Encinitas, Carlsbad, La Jolla, Del Mar, and Oceanside.

Lastly, make sure each window company is licensed and bonded, and carries the required workers' compensation insurance. You can use the California State Contractors Board (CSLB) website (<https://www2.cslb.ca.gov/OnlineServices/CheckLicenseII/CheckLicense.aspx>) to find a company quickly. It's easiest to search by license number, which should be displayed on the company's website.

Hiring a properly licensed, bonded, and insured replacement window company provides you with financial protection, should anyone get injured on your property or if your property is damaged during the installation.

Now that you've researched 8-10 companies, select the 2 or 3 with which you feel most comfortable.



I've Selected 2 or 3 Window Companies to Consider - Now What?

With 2 or 3 companies selected, you're prepared to gather estimates. You know which windows you want to replace and how you'll pay for them, and you've already researched each company's website, Yelp reviews, and BBB complaints. You know what they and others say about their window products and services online. You've checked that they have the proper license, bonding, and insurance, and you don't see any red flags that indicate a recent bankruptcy or an inexperienced company. Now it's time to meet with them and make sure everything matches. Call each of the companies and request an estimate. Set up a time for them to meet you at your home to discuss your project.

Remember, the salesperson's job is to explain the product options and make sure you're comfortable with their company. Their goal is to win the project, but beware of pushy sales pitches and "hard sells." These things are indications of a company that cares more about making a sale than they care about taking care of their customers.

The salesperson's job is to explain the product options and make sure you're comfortable with their company

Let the salesperson explain their product options and listen to their recommendations, but make sure their message matches with what you've learned about their company so far. If you encounter any inconsistencies, be sure to ask more questions until you're confident that they are knowledgeable and honest. Ask them who will be performing the installation. Is it their team, or do they hire it out to subcontractors? Ask about insurance and their company's history.

But above all else, focus on the product they are selling. You must see and feel physical samples of the window products they are recommending. Looking at pictures is not good enough. Many companies will bring window profile samples and corner cut samples to your house. If not, you need to visit their showroom and see them. Make sure you evaluate both the exterior look and the apparent quality of the materials used. Let the salesperson answer any questions you have and explain what you're looking at and what makes it a quality product. Ask them about what type of warranty comes with the windows. Does it just cover the products themselves, or does it also cover any problems related to the installation?



How Do I Evaluate the Estimates and Select the Best Window Company?

While evaluating estimates, remember to consider the value equation. That is to say, consider both quality and price. In most cases you get what you pay for. So while it's okay to be price conscious, recognize that choosing lower quality products to save money will prove to be a big mistake just a few years down the road. Identify which company is offering the best balance of price, quality products, professional installation, customer service, warranty, and trustworthiness.

Consider the level of comfort you had with the salesperson. Most people are a good judge of character, so trust your intuition. Did they seem to have a high level of knowledge and competence? Did they present their company and products in a professional manner without being pushy? Consider who will be doing the work in your home, and the timeline they've presented.

Make sure the company's contract is very detailed. When hiring a contractor to work in your home, it's important to be cautious. The contract should include:

- A specific payment schedule
- Who (specifically) will be doing the installation in your home
- A project timeline
- Energy efficiency ratings for the windows
- Dimensions for each window
- Location within the house for each window
- Hardware details (colors, materials, etc.)

Consider the level of comfort you had with the salesperson and trust your intuition.

Be wary of contracts that don't include all of these details. Also, make sure everyone who signs the contract has the legal authorization to do so. It must be an owner or registered contractor with the company. If not, the contract will not be legal. Again, you can check the CSLB to see who is listed.

Lastly, as the homeowner, it's important to know that you can be held liable for injuries that occur on your property in some circumstances. Ensure that the window company lists any contractors they use under their insurance. If not, hiring them is a major risk.



I Selected a Company. What Else Do I Need to Know?

Be available the first day of installation. There may be a few decisions to make early on, and it will help if you're there to take care of them right away.

Once your project is complete, make sure you receive:

- A copy of the written warranty that includes the order number, installers' names, dates, and the company name and address
- A copy of the written warranty that includes the order number, installers' names, dates, and the company name and address
- A receipt showing that you paid in full.
- A copy of the Unconditional Waiver and Release Upon Final Payment. This shows that the window company paid the manufacturer for the windows installed in your home.

Add these items to your project file, along with any copies of the checks you used to make payments.



Conclusion

Following the recommendations above will greatly increase the likelihood of a successful home improvement project and help to ensure that you will be happy with the final outcome. Knowing you did your homework will give you confidence in the company and products you ultimately choose, and it will allow you to sit back and enjoy your new windows for years to come.

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San Diego Replacement Window and Door Specialists

For top-quality replacement windows and doors at affordable prices in the San Diego area, look no further than BM Windows. Our customers are our highest priority, which is why we offer the best customer service in the area, and we never resort to using high-pressure tactics to make a sale.

Would you like to know more about the products we offer and receive a quote on replacement windows for your San Diego home? [Contact us](#) today to schedule your free, in-home consultation, or stop by our San Diego showroom.

BMWindowsca.com
Phone: (858)621-6287