

Window Shopping

Today's energy-efficient window choices can be overwhelming. We provide five tips to ensure that you purchase the best fit.

Gas fills, glazing, Low-E glass. The terms and technology involved with shopping for windows of late can get a little confusing. The good news about these options is that they add up to a better window — one that's not only more efficient for your home but also will save you money in the long run.

The secret to understanding today's windows is to fully examine all your options, so you'll know exactly what to look for when shopping. A few window experts provide their tips.



OAKBRIDGE TIMBER FRAMING PHOTO



PELLA PHOTO

1 STAR POWER: When it comes to window features, step one is easy: Make sure it has an Energy Star label on it. "For windows and doors to be Energy Star-qualified, the products must first be independently certified and labeled according to standards developed by the National Fenestration Rating Council," says Joe Hayden, a senior engineer for Pella. In other words, regardless of the other claims a particular manufacturer may make, you can't fake the quality and performance offered by an Energy Star certification.

2 KNOW YOUR REGION: There are plenty of energy-efficient options from which to choose, including windows constructed with Low-E, or low-emissivity, glass that filters out heat wavelengths, windows with multiple panes of glass, and windows with gas between the panes to improve their insulating value.

What features you need for your home, though, Hayden says, really depends on what climate you live in. "If your home is in a colder northern climate, then triple panes of glass

and gas fills between the panes will help insulate against the cold," he explains. "A low to moderate solar gain Low-E coating on the glass will also be beneficial in helping to insulate and allow some passive-solar gain into the home."

Farther south, however, window needs change. "In a warmer southern climate, the most critical feature is a low to very low solar gain Low-E coating," says Hayden. "This will help block the intense solar heat from entering the home. Triple pane is typically not necessary in a hot climate."

3 MATERIAL MATTERS: Beyond the features of the glass, the actual window material itself also makes a big difference. "Some window frame materials are definitely more energy efficient than others," says Les Stephens, a product marketing manager for Jeld-Wen. "Vinyl and wood windows are about equal in energy performance and rate far better than metal frame windows."

4 PROPER ORIENTATION: Just as your region affects best window choices, so

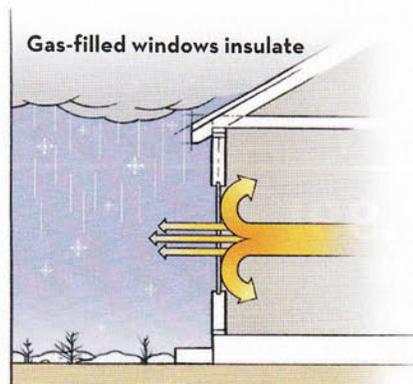
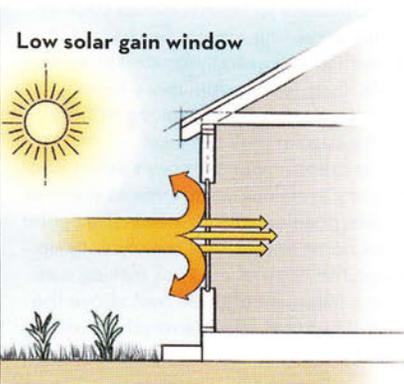


OAKBRIDGE TIMBER FRAMING PHOTO

does the window's placement in the home. "Many homeowners select windows for their entire house that are similar in appearance, material, style and features to achieve a consistent look," says Stephens. "But one often overlooked consideration that homeowners should think about is exposure. Windows facing south or west should include glass with a low solar heat gain coefficient to reduce radiant heat from the sun."

5 SMART SAVINGS: In the end, it's all about choosing the right windows for your particular home. If you're concerned about the higher cost of Energy Star-rated windows, Stephens says it's important to keep one thing in mind: "A typical household can save between \$125 and \$450 per year by replacing single-pane windows with Energy Star-qualified windows."

What's more, he adds, the current tax credits available make this a great time to consider upgrading or purchasing new energy-efficient windows. "Under the government's new economic stimulus plan, federal tax credits for qualified energy-efficiency improvements, including windows and doors, are available for up to \$1,500," he notes.



JELD-WEN IMAGES