

12 “Insider” Tips To Purchasing Windows

Don't start shopping for replacement windows before learning the *tricks of the trade!*

What you don't know could cost you thousands of dollars...



2525 Oconee Ave., Ste. 104

Virginia Beach, VA 23454

757.216.6850

www.progresivewindowco.com

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If you're considering replacing the windows in your home, but aren't actually employed in the residential window replacement industry, then this little bit of information may become your best friend when you get ready to go "window shopping". Written by the owners of a "modern" window replacement business (that is, they do not follow the "old school" method of selling windows to homeowners), they have revealed the most common industry secrets, tactics and closing tools employed by many window companies today. Don't fall into the traps set by slick window companies and their salespeople. Knowing what to ask a company before you invite them into your home can save you many headaches and thousands of dollars in the long run.

- 1) **"Lifetime Warranty"**...actually ALL vinyl replacement windows carry a "lifetime warranty", unfortunately most homeowners find out after they purchase their windows that it is often only used as a marketing ploy, not as an assurance that the windows will actually last a lifetime. Window manufacturers are pretty smart...they know the average American family moves into a new / different home every seven years, and they write their warranties around the issues they know that they'll encounter. In most cases lifetime warranties are only valid to the original purchaser, so once you move out of your current house the window manufacturer is no longer responsible for any potential warranty related defects. Having a transferable lifetime warranty that cover the installation as well as the window will become an asset when you put your house on the market.
- 2) **"We sell the BEST windows"**...go to a local home show and see how many window companies tell you that they sell the best windows available on the market. How can a dozen (or more) companies all have the "best" window? Simple answer: they can't! Part of the "old school" way of selling windows involved the salesperson making claims about their windows that only weren't true, but the average homeowner really didn't have any way to verify the claims that they were told. Fortunately the internet has changed a lot of this (even though everyone still claims they have the best window!). The average homeowner can pull up more accurate information about windows that wasn't readily available 10 years ago. If an energy efficient window is your primary concern, you don't have to trust a salesperson telling you that his window is the most efficient...ask him what the u-factor is, then go to the NFRC website and verify it. Concerned about how durable and well built a particular window is? If your salesperson tells you that boats are made out of fiberglass (not vinyl), so it must be the strongest available, ask what the DP Rating is on that particular window.
- 3) **"Both husband and wife MUST be present to receive price quote"**...another "old school" trick. Window companies know that if both spouses aren't present during their sales pitch that there is little if any chance that they will make a sale on the initial appointment. Many people say they wouldn't make a commitment for such a large purchase on the first appointment anyway! Most window companies employ well-trained, high-pressure, commissioned-paid salespeople for a very good reason...they get results! For many salespeople in the area, if they don't sell the job on their first appointment they either get paid a much smaller commission, or none at all...talk about pressure! It's no wonder they in turn put so much pressure on the homeowner to sign a contract NOW!

- 4) **“Financing Available”**...is simply another closing tool for the salesperson. When the salesperson is told that the project is just too much money, he /she will then try to sell you the same exact job based on a monthly payment that you can afford. It’s the same exact same offer, but fed to homeowners in much smaller bites! If you are interested in saving money on your purchase there are usually less expensive ways to finance you contract than going through a window company. Give your personal banker or credit union a call, their rates are almost guaranteed to be more attractive. Window salespeople don’t want you to do this though...they’re afraid you banker will know someone “in the business” that can make you a better deal, and then you’re gone forever. Besides, now days many people feel much safer divulging their personal financial matters to a banker or credit union employee more than they do a window salesperson that they’ve never met before.

- 5) **“Replacement windows: \$189 installed!”**...can you say “snake oil salesman”? Do the math: take the \$189 price back out the labor cost to install the window (typically \$55-75), advertising, general overhead and a reasonable mark-up and you’re looking at a window that cost about \$75 to manufacture. The replacement glass for most windows cost more than that, yet they can manufacture a “quality” window for this? Perhaps a window more suited for a shed or a mobile home, but not for a house! Often times companies that are advertising replacement windows installed for less than \$200 are selling their windows “a-la-cart” style (there are additional costs for things like wrapping the exterior trim, warranties, disposal fees, etc.), or they are employing one of the oldest tricks in the book...the bait and switch. In this case remember the old saying, “if it’s too good to be true then it probably is”.

- 6) **“I’ll let you talk to someone in our wholesale department”**...this is what you may hear from the sales manager several days after you wouldn’t sign the contract when the salesperson came to visit. This is referred to in the industry as “re-hashing”, meaning that they’re going to send a different salesperson to your home to try and get you to sign on the dotted line. Often times the price is no different than it was the first go round, it’s just a way to get a more experienced salesperson back into your house to try again to get a commitment from you, because they know you’re in the market to replace your windows.

- 7) **“Win a house full of windows”**...is simply an inexpensive supply of homeowners that may be interested in replacing their windows to a window company. They claim that there is “no obligation”, which is usually true as long as you don’t consider being hounded by telemarketers being obligated! These types of contest usually run for a period of one to three years and only one person wins the major prize out of thousands that enter. If you aren’t in the market to purchase windows, or you aren’t interested in signing up to have a salesperson give you a demonstration and price quote, then don’t waste your time signing up to win the grand prize! Once again, if it’s too good to be true then it probably is. I’ve heard a lot of complaints from homeowners about this tactic, and even had one couple told me they changed their phone number because the window company would not take NO for an answer...and yes, this was after the Do Not Call law.

- 8) **“We can’t give you an estimated price at the home show (or over the phone)”**...this is simply because they need to have an experienced salesperson be there to justify the asking price by giving you a 3-4 hour demonstration. Every window company has made a conscious decision about what price target they are selling their windows for...granted, there may be some unusual circumstances that will have a minor effect on the final price, but most companies know within 10% of what price they’ll be selling their windows for BEFORE they even get to your house...so why can’t they tell you this right up front? It’s just because they’re afraid they’ll scare you off before they get a chance to get inside your front door.
- 9) **“Guaranteed hurricane proof”**...yet another sales ploy, this time it’s focused on your concern for the safety of your family and property. No window available on the market is “hurricane-proof”...yes, there are windows that have passed the Miami-Dade impact testing requirements for use in residential construction in hurricane zones, but there is a difference between a window that is “guaranteed hurricane-proof” and one that has passed the large missile impact testing. Some window companies are actually selling their standard window and calling it “hurricane-proof”, hoping that you won’t know what the difference is. They figure that if a window fails in a hurricane that they will simply replace it at no charge to you...it does you little good if your windows fail in the event of a hurricane and your entire house collapses because of the failed windows (the second leading cause of building structure failure in hurricanes is due to high winds and / or flying debris causing windows and doors to fail, which in turn causes the roof to lift off the structure at which time the house collapses). If a window company is claiming that they are selling “hurricane windows” be sure to ask to see the Miami-Dade Notice of Acceptance (NOA) which is issued to every building product manufacturer upon completion of all required testing.
- 10) **“You don’t need triple-pane windows in our area”**...almost every window salesperson will tell you that triple-pane windows are over-kill in VA. Could their primary reason for stating this be because they don’t have a triple-pane window to sell? Windows are the single most energy inefficient building product in your home. As per the building code, most exterior walls are required to be insulated to a level of R-13 or better. A single-pane window has an R-value of 1, and it jumps to a whopping 1.7 if you have a storm window. Most double-pane windows have an R-value of 4 - 4.5, whereas a triple-pane window has an R-value of 9.1 in most cases. Knowing this, a triple-pane window is the closest to the insulating value *required* for the walls in your home...you wouldn’t think about removing some insulation from your walls “because it doesn’t that cold around here”, would you? If you ever turn on your heat or air-conditioning, you are going to loose some of this energy through your windows...how many energy dollars can you afford to throw out of your windows?
- 11) **“Let me call my manager”**...is what you’ll likely hear after the salesperson gives you the initial price on your new windows. The “old school” window companies still sell their windows similar to the way most car dealerships operate...start off with an inflated price (which they’re hoping you’ll agree to – results in a bigger commission check), and assuming you give a negative reaction to the price they’ll usually ask permission to give their sales manager a call to see if they can get you a better price. If you don’t accept their second offer they’ll usually call you back in a few days with a new approach, see #6 above. Very few window companies

have adopted a bottom line / no haggle pricing strategy, like some of the car dealerships have in recent years. They'd rather play "pricing games" with homeowners, hoping to cash in on additional profits from uneducated and unsuspecting homeowners. Unfortunately this strategy has proven especially profitable with senior citizen purchasers over the years.

- 12) "***Easy cleaning feature***"...virtually all modern replacement windows come with four basic features...windows tilt in for easy cleaning, they're energy efficient, maintenance free and carry a lifetime warranty. Everything you could ever ask for in a replacement window, right? Well, not actually...these are only the very basic features a window should have in its favor. Quality vinyl windows should have some sort of reinforcement within the frame in order for the vinyl to maintain its structural integrity over a long period of time, or at the very least it should have a complex multi-chambered extrusion design to provide support. What is the thickness of the vinyl? What type of spacer system is used in the insulated glass unit? What type of vinyl does the manufacturer use in the frame...recycled, virgin or unplasticized virgin? The quality aspects of a replacement window lie below what you can touch and feel, and most manufacturers / salespeople don't want you to know what's on the inside of their windows and the only way you'll find out is to ask.

Now that you know the 12 most common tricks of trade that window companies and salespeople have in their arsenal you'll be better prepared when you actually start shopping for windows. Don't allow yourself to fall into their traps and play their silly selling games...let them know that you're aware of how the game *used to be* played and that you're now playing by a new set of rules...leave the gimmicks at the curb and make honesty and integrity the primary selling tools. Purchasing windows doesn't have to be a difficult and uncomfortable experience...just don't let *them* make it that way!

For more information on what consumers should actually look for in replacement windows (features, benefits, materials, manufacturing techniques, etc.) visit our website (www.progressivewindowco.com) and download or request our *Consumers Guide To Replacement Windows* and our list of *Questions To Ask Every Window Salesperson*.

Happy Shopping!