

## “Insider’s Guide to Buying Custom Window Treatments”

Carefully chosen window treatments can do wonders for the look and feel of a room. Besides their obvious practical functions, they can be used to set a mood, enhance the home’s style, or create illusions. The answers to the following questions will help you make informed decisions when choosing window treatments.

### Why select custom window treatments over ready-made?

Custom window treatments are typically made with higher quality fabrics and linings. There is usually much more attention to details, such as careful pattern matching and placement. A skilled drapery maker will evaluate a fabric’s print and determine the best place to make cuts. With custom treatments you have a much greater selection of fabric choices, so you get a fabric that perfectly complements your décor, and a treatment that exactly fits your window. Just like fine furniture and art, window treatments are an investment that will greatly enhance your home’s décor.

### What things should I consider before purchasing fabric?

When shopping, many people fall in love with a fabric and purchase it before speaking to a designer or drapery workroom. However, the fabric may not be suitable for the type of treatment desired. For instance, an upholstery weight fabric would not be the best choice for a swag-style treatment. Another consideration is how much to buy. Calculating correct yardage can be especially difficult when the fabric has a large pattern repeat. If you find an incredible deal on a fabric that you must have, be certain to purchase more than you think you’ll need. If there ends up being extra fabric, you can always have accessories made. Accessories such as coordinating table skirts, pillows, and place mats really add to the custom look of a room.

Before making a fabric purchase, be sure to look at a sample in the room where it will go. Other colors in the room and the lighting will affect how it looks. Also, view your fabric at distance. A small print that looks great up close may look “muddy” at a distance. Another consideration is the size of the treatment. For small window treatments, you generally don’t want to use a fabric with a large motif.

Another good idea is to inspect the fabric completely before purchasing it. If it is on clearance, it may be because it has significant flaws. A skilled drapery maker can work around some flaws. However, if the print is crooked it may be impossible to match the fabric at the seams. This isn’t usually a problem with a valance that is pieced, but it can be a real issue when seaming together multiple widths of fabrics for draperies. Generally, it is more convenient and less problematic to buy the fabric from a workroom or designer. They can advise you on fabric selections and will take responsibility to contact the supplier if there are any problems with the fabric.

### **Do I need to spend a small fortune on fabric to have beautiful window treatments?**

While there has never been a greater selection of gorgeous (and expensive) fabrics, you don't need to spend a fortune on fabric to have stunning window treatments. By using professional techniques and a good, quality lining, even a moderately priced fabric can look fabulous.

If you have your heart set on an expensive fabric, you might want to consider using it just for a valance. The draperies could be made from a less expensive, coordinating solid. Another option would be to use it for a Roman shade. These use much less fabric than draperies. When choosing treatments, keep in mind that heavily pleated or gathered styles will use more fabric than a less ornate style.

### **What are some ways to create window illusions?**

If you have an undesirable view, pleated sheers could be used to soften the view. Then eye-catching side panels and a valance could be used to distract the eye away from the view. To make a small window appear larger, install a valance that is wider than the window. This extra wall space is then concealed with drapery panels. For this technique to be effective the panels and valance need to just barely conceal the edges of the glass.

There are many ways to spice up a room that lacks architectural interest. For instance, a rectangular window could be dressed with an arched treatment. Another way would be to add crown molding to a cornice.

### **If I am constructing a new home, when should I contact a designer or drapery maker?**

Ideally you should involve the designer or drapery maker in the blueprint stage. Many new homes include beautiful, dramatic windows, but some of these can be challenging and expensive to cover. It can be very useful to know your window treatment design choices and costs beforehand.

If you are deciding between French doors that swing into a room or sliding glass doors, be aware that the French doors will generally cost more to dress. You will also be more limited in your choices of treatments. Other window types that can be challenging to cover are bay, bow, corner, triangular, and dormer windows.

If your decorating plan includes heavy two-story long draperies, it would be helpful to have the builder add wood blocking behind the drywall in the window areas, i.e. at the top and sides of

the windows. The draperies can then be attached more securely than a treatment that relies on drywall anchors.

### **How should I care for my window treatments?**

Spot cleaning and regular vacuuming are the best ways to care for draperies. Cover the end of the vacuum attachment with an old nylon knee-high stocking and gently wave it over the fabric. Dry clean them only if absolutely necessary. Dry cleaning can cause shrinkage and will remove some of the finish on decorator fabrics. The fabric will then have less body and lose some of its stain and sun protection.

With proper care, most custom window coverings should last as long as good quality upholstered furnishings. In addition to making your home more comfortable for you, a beautifully decorated home will help you get top dollar if you decide to sell it.

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