



The
**Homeowners
Guide**
To Shutters



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When it comes to choosing Shutters for your home, all the different types of shutters available can make the process seem overwhelming. Following is a comparative guide on the most common types of shutters available, followed by a table that compares all of them across key characteristics.

What Are The Different Types Of Shutters Available And Does It Matter What I Pick?

Wood Shutters

Traditionally shutters were made out of wood and today they're still very popular. The challenge with wood is that it's a natural product and may warp, twist or bow in time. The painted surface can fade, crack or peel depending on the humidity and amount of sun coming through a window. Today, wood shutters are used mostly in situations where you need a rich stain color or where there are custom color matches. When choosing wood, ask whether the shutters are made in the USA or imported. Many imported wood shutters use foreign unknown species of wood that may not be stable in windows over time.

Poly Shutters

Poly shutters are made out of polyresin materials, are very popular and are typically the first choice when it comes to lighter neutral shades. The major attraction is that poly shutters deliver the beauty and functionality of wood shutters but are low maintenance, easy to clean and very durable. Issues like fading, cracking or peeling paint as a result of sun or humidity are eliminated.



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Vinyl Shutters

Vinyl Shutters are made out of the same polyresin materials found in poly shutters but use a slightly different extrusion process. Vinyl shutters are also very popular and used when it comes to shutters in light neutral shades. As with poly shutters, the major attraction is that vinyl shutters are low maintenance, easy to clean and very durable. Issues like fading, cracking or peeling paint as a result of sun or humidity are eliminated. When buying any vinyl or poly shutters, always look at how they are constructed to ensure that the shutters are built strong.

MDF/Composite/Hybrid Shutters

Composite/ Hybrid/MDF are made of Medium Density Fiberboard (MDF) covered in a polypropylene. The poly surface is intended to give you durability like poly or vinyl shutters but the challenge really comes from the MDF base. The MDF base is a water sponge and at the exposed louver or stile ends where the MDF is only covered with paint, the base may start absorbing moisture, swelling and the surface may start delaminating, especially in a hot or humid window environment. Similar to MDF kitchen cabinet lines with laminated surfaces, this products durability is not the greatest and may be questionable in certain environments.

What shutter you pick really depends on your application and product availability in your area. Most homes use neutral whites and would be perfect for poly or vinyl shutters. Rooms that need rich stain colors or custom color matches, would use wood. When shopping for shutters, always ask about the construction as this is directly related to trouble free operation and lifespan of the product. The answer or lack of information will immediately make the underlying quality apparent.



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Shutters Compared Across Key Characteristics

	Polyclad Hardwood		Poly Foam		Wood		Coated MDF Hybrid		Vinyl	
Construction	Polyresin clad over a Solid Poplar Hard Wood Core		Painted Poly foam reinforced with metal		Painted wood		Glued paper fibers (MDF) coated in polyethylene		Hollow vinyl with vinyl support ribs	
Surface	1	Polyresin surface is rigid. Won't fade, peel or crack	½	Poly foam surface is painted and only as durable as the paint	0	Painted surface fades, cracks, peels and needs repainting	0	Polyethylene surface peels off MDF base specially at louver edges and the surface looks like an orange peel	1	Vinyl surface is rigid. Won't fade, peel or crack
Structure	1	Solid wood construction works just like a wood shutter	½	Heavy louvers may warp and heavy panels may sag. Require divider rail and limited to smaller panels	1	Solid construction and smooth operation	½	Very heavy shutter that may sag due to weak structure. Swelling and warpage may occur in moisture due to painted louver edges	0	Panels are flimsy and wobble when opened. Require many T-posts and divider rails
Tilt Rod Attachment to Louver	1	Rigid acetal hooks that never pull out or break	0	Tilt rod staples pull out	0	Tilt rod staples pull out	0	Staples in soft MDF louvers pull out much easier than in wood	0	Flimsy nylon hooks pull out and bend
Fire Resistance	1	Fire retardant and approved by California Fire Marshall	1	Fire retardant	0	Flammable	0	Highly flammable polyethylene surface	1	Fire retardant
Warranty	1	Lifetime warranty on finish and manufacturing defects	½	Limited warranty on finish and lifetime on manufacturing defects	0	5 year warranty on finish and lifetime on manufacturing defects	½	Limited warranty on finish and lifetime on manufacturing defects	1	Lifetime warranty on finish and manufacturing defects
Ease of Cleaning	1	Very easy to clean	½	Porous surface accumulates dirt	0	Woods porous surface accumulates dirt and absorbs moisture	0	Coated orange peel like surface accumulates dirt and may peel off on louver edges	1	Very easy to clean
Low Maintenance	1	Low maintenance	½	Low maintenance but issues with staples pulling out and paint on surface	0	High maintenance due to staples pulling out and painted wood	0	High maintenance due to staples pulling out and polyethylene surface peeling off from MDF base	½	Low maintenance surface but weak construction not durable
Replaceable Louvers and Tilt Rods	1	Easy to replace at home with louver/tilt rod system	½	Staples and louvers are difficult to replace	½	Staples and louvers are difficult to replace	½	Staples and louvers are difficult to replace	½	Easy to replace tilt rod but not louvers
Overall Rating	8		4		1½		1½		5	

Score Card: 1—Perfect ½—Acceptable 0—Not Desirable