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Different Types of Exterior Siding and Cladding

Find out about the different types of home exteriors including brick, vinyl and wood siding.

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Sometimes an exterior wall's structure provides the decorative finish, but most require extra material for decorative or weatherproofing purposes. For example, a brick or stone wall provides structure and finish, but a wood frame or block wall needs to be stuccoed or covered in siding. For most homeowners, the systems and techniques for these coverings become relevant only when they are faced with repairs. You will need to understand how these coverings are created if you want to match them on an extension, or if you wish to refurbish an entire section.

Things to Consider

Regulations and Permissions

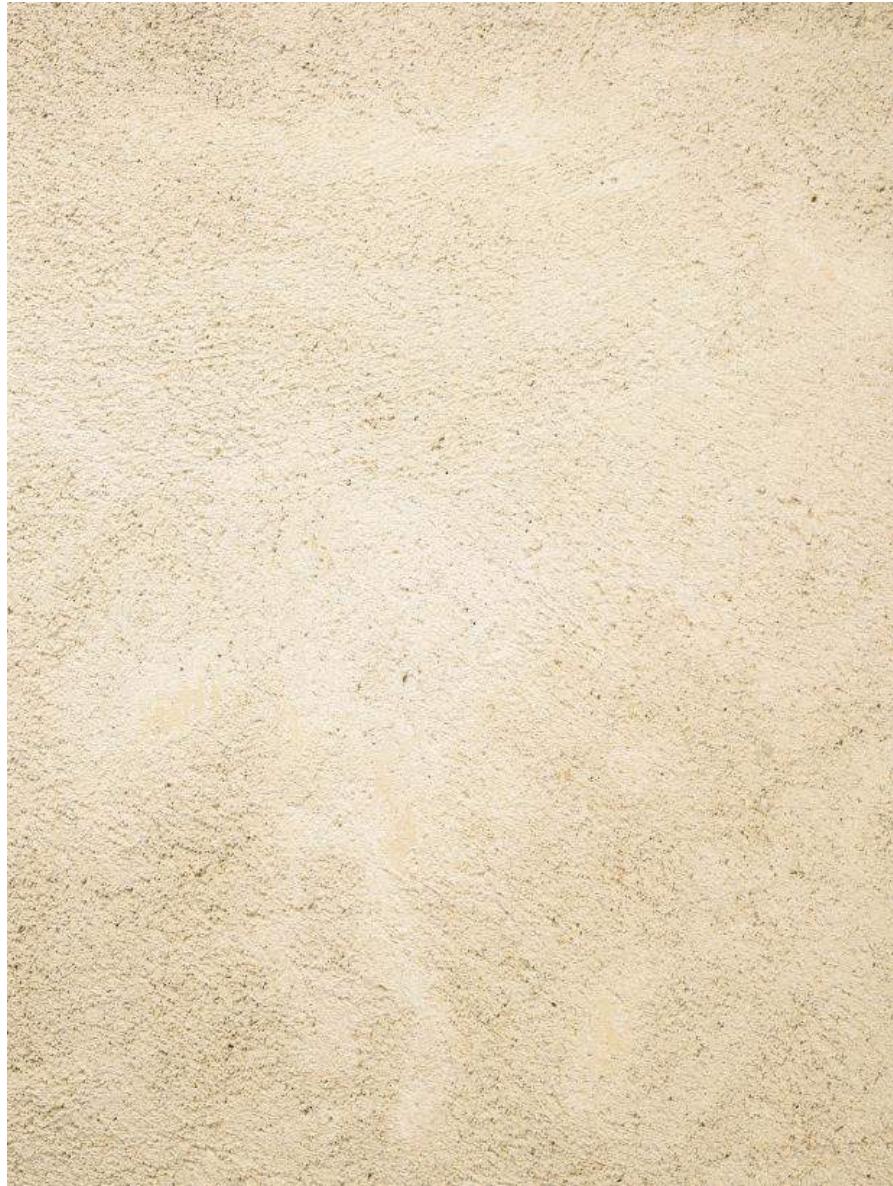
The rules covering exterior alterations vary from area to area, and according to whether the building is in a historic district. Before your plans advance too far, check with your local authorities and homeowner's association as to whether you need permission. It may also be necessary to get permission to use certain paint colors.

Choosing the right exterior cladding material depends on your climate, personal preference, and budget. Follow all manufacturer's guidelines and local codes to ensure the material you choose performs well over time. One part of this is choosing the correct fasteners for the material and your weather conditions. Most often, you will need to use rust-resistant nails for exterior work.



Stucco

This can be applied directly to blocks or bricks, or onto metal laths (sheets of wire mesh that help adhesion) to provide a decorative, weatherproofing coat that protects a wall's structure. There are several finishing options, including smooth stucco, the smoothest of stucco finishes with some slight texture (image 1); Patterned stucco, a smooth stucco that can be tooled to produce various patterns (image 2); Rough, a uniform rough finish that is applied over smooth stucco (image 3); and Pebbledash, which is achieved by throwing pebbles onto damp stucco (image 4).



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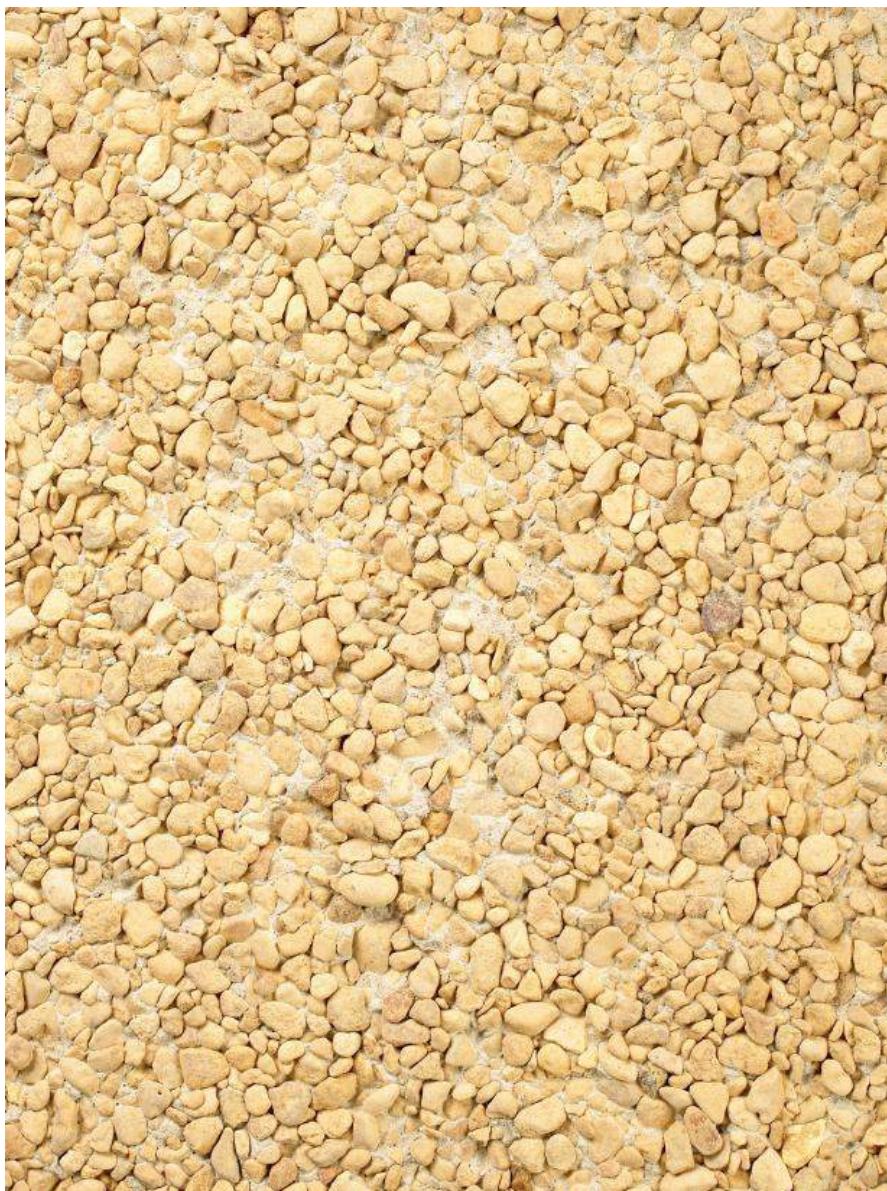
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Some topcoats have extra features, such as enhanced water-proofing properties, or suitability for finishing with outside-quality paint. Investigate your options with your builder or supplier, who will also be able to advise you on the quantities needed, and any waterproofing measures that may be necessary.

Planning to Stucco

Stuccoing large walls is not a job for an amateur—advanced plastering skills are required, as is experience in achieving the chosen finish. Unless you are very experienced, hire somebody to do the work for you. It may need several coats—usually an initial scratch coat followed by one or more further layers of stucco. Avoid application at times of extreme weather conditions, which can seriously affect the way stucco adheres, and may therefore reduce its life span. For those less experienced at DIY or the novice who wants the look of stucco, EIFS is an option. Made in panels, EIFS is similar to finished stucco and easier to install but requires careful flashing, so you will need professional help even for this option.

Siding

Siding is often found on most newer houses, forming the outer layer of a wood cavity wall. Some homes are partially covered in siding for decorative effect — boards can be placed horizontally or vertically — but siding also performs a vital weatherproofing function. Boards may be wooden, but synthetic options such as fiber cement board, vinyl, and aluminum are also available. These need less maintenance than wood, and some can be painted. Metal-based boards are usually attached to the house with special clips and channels, bought with the boards.

Siding should be applied on top of either building paper (a moisture barrier) or a breather membrane (which stops water from entering a wall, but allows vapor within the wall to escape). If you have a block house you may need a series of furring strips over the paper or membrane, to provide anchor points for the nails or screws to attach the siding.

Using Furring Strips

Horizontal siding goes onto vertical furring strips, which provide a cavity for drainage channels between boards and wall. To maintain channels behind vertical siding, which attaches to horizontal furring strips, fit vertical furring strips first. Chamfering the top edges of the horizontal furring strips directs water away from the wall. If untreated, furring strips must end 6 inches above the ground, so that siding does not touch damp soil. Use treated softwood measuring 1 x 2 inches. Some manufacturers will produce siding systems that incorporate an insulation layer between siding and the wall. Ask for professional advice, because it is important to use the correct insulation and vapor barrier to avoid problems with condensation.

Siding Products

Typically siding is installed from bottom to top, nailed to plywood sheathing through a building paper. Each product has its benefits and special installation instructions. These can include tools and techniques for making installation easier, and some require air spaces or nailing strips. Examples include, feather-edge boards with breather paper and vertical furring strips (image 1); tongue-and-groove boards with plyboard sheathing and breather paper (image 2); shiplap boards (image 3); and shingles with vertical furring strips beneath horizontal strips (image 4).



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More Siding Options

Vinyl siding (image 1); brick (image 2); fiber-cement siding with plyboard sheathing behind breather paper and vertical furring strips (image 3); and tiles with horizontal furring strips (image 4).



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Green Cladding Options

Consider green alternatives when choosing cladding for your external walls. Try using reclaimed wood, for example, or make sure that any new lumber you use comes from a sustainable source.

Aluminum cladding produced from recycled aluminum rather than a virgin source is another viable option. For clay tiles, visit a reclamation yard, as reuse is the most eco-friendly option and may save you money. While cement board is not the greenest option, if you are determined to use it, find manufacturers that use high quantities of recycled material.

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There are several choices for the exterior of your home, but brick, wood and stone make some of the most visually pleasing. They also cost more than stucco or vinyl. You may decide, however, that the added cost is worth it thanks to their long-lasting qualities and aesthetic beauty.

Brick is an especially higher priced choice, due to the cost of materials and labor for the installation. A lot of people today want to imitate the look of homes where they actually made the brick on the site and a lot of people will spend the extra money to get that handmade look.

While brick can add 25 percent or more to the cost of your house construction vs. a less-expensive option such as stucco or vinyl, it more than makes up for it due to durability.

Wood is the next high-end siding option to consider for your home. Much like brick, it may also cost 25 percent more than vinyl or fiber-cement siding. Lumber products are volatile in their price fluctuations, and the supply is also volatile.

Natural stone is another high-end option to consider, but it's costly for a different reason — because it's heavier weight, which means it's more difficult to install. This will raise the labor costs, obviously.

Note: Both stone and brick take longer to install than vinyl siding, and this additional time is another element contributing to their higher cost.

If you love the look of stone and brick but your budget won't allow for the added cost, you do have alternatives:

One way to achieve the look of a high-end siding material without breaking your budget is to use synthetic substitutes. For example, if you want the look of wood siding, consider using an engineered wood as an option.

Engineered wood takes wood chips, breaks them down into a size of a fiber, adds resins and wax and, with heat and pressure, bonds them back into a homogeneous panel. That yields a very stable product that can provide an excellent finish and a lot of versatility when it comes to siding the house.

Like wood, stone has a synthetic alternative called "cultured stone," which provides homeowners with the high-end look of natural stone — but without the higher price tag.

Cultured stone is actually a manufactured stone veneer product that replicates natural stone in size, shape and texture. And it's a lightweight product, which means it has installation advantages. Unlike quarried stone, which may be limited to a geographical area where it's available, this product can be available anywhere in the country.

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Siding Basics

As you begin to cover the frame of your home, it's important to understand the two primary functions of the exterior siding:

- The first is to provide protection from the elements, such as rain, snow or ice.
- The second is to provide an aesthetically pleasing look that matches the rest of your house.

Siding That Protects

There are many types of siding you can choose for the exterior of your home. Wood, brick and vinyl are just a few, but what's important is how well they keep out one of nature's most common elements — water.

"Water penetration is far and away the most disastrous effect that can happen on a house. It's the easiest way to have a house see all sorts of problems, whether it's structurally or in terms of mold growth — or just having it break down," said John Broniek, manager of building programs at IBACOS.

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Alternative Siding Options

Take a closer look at a few alternative siding options, all of which will help ease the burden on your wallet.

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For today's homebuilder there are many siding options that won't break their budgets. Engineered wood and cultured stone are two, but perhaps the most common low-cost siding option is vinyl.

"One of the biggest siding or exterior cladding system choices now is vinyl," said John Broniek, manager of builder programs at IBACOS. "It's very popular, especially for production homes. You have many colors, it's very durable, low maintenance, which people appreciate."

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Like brick, stucco is a manufactured siding product that uses natural materials to create a unique look. These ingredients include lime, silica sand and white cement.

Note: Stucco siding has an average warranty life of 15 years. However, a standard stucco exterior has been known to last more than 50 years or more.

One of the primary advantages with stucco is an aesthetic one — it can be manufactured in whatever color best suits the design and style of your home. This, in turn, will give you a wider variety of design options for your home.

The process involved in creating stucco includes laying down several base coats of the sand and lime mixture, and wetting them between each coat before applying a final color coat. Because of this multi-step process, stucco will cost you more to install than vinyl or fiber-cement siding; however, it's a very quick process that can take as short as a day or two. High-end siding options such as brick and wood can take weeks to cover an entire home.

There are so many options when it comes to siding for your home, so let's recap quickly with a final overview:

- Remember that the first function of siding is to keep out the elements such as rain, snow and ice.
- When it comes to functionality nothing compares to brick or vinyl, so in heavy rain or snow regions, consider these two options.
- *Aesthetics* — Don't forget what the exterior of your home will look like with the siding choice you make. Keep in mind that stucco and painted wood will give you the most "color" options.
- If a textured aesthetic is more your taste, wood, stone and brick will give a distinctive look.
- Don't forget about your budget. If cost is not a limiting consideration, choose brick, wood, stone or stucco. If you want to keep your budget lower but still want variety,

consider vinyl or fiber-cement siding. Both will give you the textured look of wood siding at a lower price.

- Keep in mind that even though we covered several siding options, there are still more out there. And also consider that some new houses use more than one siding material. For this reason, make sure that you work with your builder to thoroughly research all your siding options.

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Maintenance Free

Vinyl siding is tough, durable and maintenance free. It needs nothing more than a rinse from a hose to keep it clean and you never have to paint again. It's a great way to keep your house maintenance free and enhance the look of it.



Blake Brinkman

Start from Scratch

There are certain materials that you can leave on the house if it's in good shape. However, the best job that money can buy would be to take off what's there, get back to the sheathing, put a house wrap on it, foam and then apply the vinyl siding.



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Looking to make a great first impression? How about switching out that overgrown cereal box you call a front door for an entry door that's as stylish and welcoming as you are? When it comes to adding some curb appeal to your home - and making a statement about who lives inside - your front door plays a leading role on the grand theater of your property.

Door manufacturers are willing partners, providing more options and configurations than ever, along with custom services that let you dial up your own personalized entry.

"One of the trends we see is toward unusual shapes and sizes," says Brad Loveless, marketing and product development manager for Simpson Door Co. "People don't necessarily want a cookie-cutter front door. After all, it's one of the first things you see on a house and it lends terrific perceived value."

The good news is that a good-looking entry door isn't necessarily a budget buster. Yes, ~~you can get a custom-made front door with gorgeous art glass and hand forged~~

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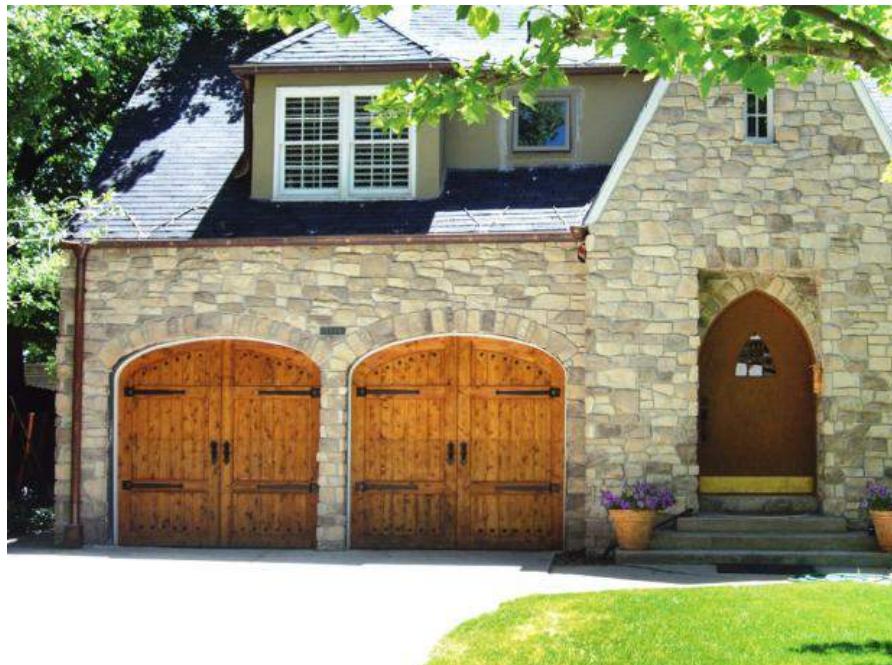
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First impressions, curb appeal, best foot forward: Your garage door does it all when it comes to the appearance of your home. That's especially true of suburban homes built in the last several decades. Designed for drive-right-in accessibility, many have in-your-face garages that occupy up to 30 percent of the front facade.

Small wonder that upgrading a garage door is a popular home improvement project. According to the 2010 Cost vs. Value Report from *Remodeling* magazine, a garage door replacement is the only project in the survey that recorded an uptick in value compared to the previous year.

Dazed and amused

If you're ready to scout out styles and options for your new garage door, take a deep breath: There are so many choices you'll be seeing garage doors in your dreams for weeks. Wayne-Dalton, for example, boasts 12 design options, 10 window patterns, and 15 colors for its Model 9700 door alone. Let's do the math: That's a possible 1,800 combinations! Exhale!

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