

Essential buyer's guide: FRONT DOORS

When renovating, pay close attention to your home's exterior appeal – it could add thousands to its value

Making the most of your property's outward appearance is more than a matter of looks – it can add up to five per cent to the value of your home. A battered or mismatched front door will stick out like a sore thumb, so paying out for the right style with a quality finish is a worthwhile investment.

One telltale sign that your door is past its best is warping, often resulting in a bad fit in the frame. There may be signs of serious water ingress – the wood feeling soft and spongy, or the joints clearly cracked. The doorframe itself will not necessarily need to be replaced, but if you're changing from a painted to a wooden door, you may want a new, matching wood frame.

It is often better to buy a complete door set, where the door will be machined to fit its frame perfectly. Fitting is best carried out by professionals, but some door sets are sold pre-assembled with the door already within the frame. Being simpler, these can be tackled by a competent DIY-er.



Marston & Langinger's Crabtree, available glazed – sealed units of 4mm tempered low-E glass with 16mm argon-filled cavity – or unglazed. Size: 57mm thick and (H)2,030x(W)815mm or (H)1,980x(W)840mm; or made to order in any size. Cost: from £860 (glazed) and £680 (unglazed)



Georgian-style door from The London Door Company with central symmetrical 'roof-top' panels. The traditional lion's head door-knocker provides a grand finishing touch to this solid door, with an elegant sandblasted window above. Cost: from £800, depending on the design and size

Choosing a style

To retain long-term kerb appeal, it's worth looking at current and upcoming trends as well as what will physically suit your home. 'It is very important that the style of door is influenced by the period of the house,' says Mark Roberts, product manager of JELD-WEN. 'A badly chosen door – for example, uPVC on a Georgian-style house – could knock tens of thousands of pounds off the value of your home.'

There is a little more scope for flexibility nowadays, however, so long as the design is tasteful and doesn't clash with the existing architecture. 'People are willing to use contemporary designs much more, regardless of period,' says John Corbett, design director of Acorn Doors, 'particularly in Victorian terraced streets.'

Peter Marston, design director and chairman of specialist conservatory and



Contemporary-style hardwood three-panel design from The London Door Company, painted a stylish grey. Size: (H)2,130x(W)915mm. Cost: from £940 or, fitted with locks and furniture, £1,400 to £1,650



Rondo from Urban Front, a large, modern design with horizontal lines, in cedar and stained teak. Size: (H)2,100x(W)1,050mm. Cost: £3,584 for door only, but shown with an existing aluminium frame

door company Marston & Langer, says: 'The serious, glossily painted, panelled door, such as at Number 10 Downing Street, is out of tune with the friendly, welcoming way in which people now want to live. Buyers are now tending to choose natural finishes rather than glossy paintwork.' Glazing, too, is popular and especially sensible in terraces, where glass panes help to draw as much light as possible into the hallway.

Current trends for new houses show a move towards wide and tall doors that make a design statement and can be more easily accommodated, but which also have high security features. In addition, keeping damage to the environment at a minimum is high on many people's agenda. Look for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or other chain-of-custody door schemes, which ensure the timber originates from well-managed, sustainable forests.



A porch or awning will help protect your door from the elements. Acorn Doors' Winchester glazed door in sapele wood is made to measure. Cost: from £1,227



Following the trend for wider doors, the owners of this house have chosen bespoke double-front doors in idigbo wood, from Acorn Doors. Cost: from £1,600

Which material?



Lancaster from Homebase, a uPVC screen-printed design reinforced with steel. Both sound- and heat-resistant with low-E toughened safety glass, it doesn't need painting and complies with Building Regs Part L. Size: 60mm thick, (H)2,055x(W)840mm. Cost: £369

uPVC will not flake, fade, rust or rot, so it's a good choice for a low-maintenance door. It also offers greater thermal insulation than a standard timber door and is sound resistant, too. Georgian bars, leaded lights and bevelled glass can be used to give uPVC a more traditional look.
Cost: from £200 to £800



Classic-look door made with a strong outer shell of high-impact reinforced resin and a rigid inner core of high-density polyurethane foam for good insulation and soundproofing. Bespoke from Anglian Home Improvements, so cost specific to the property

Composite/GRP (glass-reinforced plastic) or fibreglass is another low-maintenance choice. It won't warp, twist or bow and offers high thermal insulation. Unlike uPVC and metals, you can buy this type of door in wood-effect finishes. It is highly thermally efficient and extremely resistant to burglary.
Cost: from around £400



Wickes' Thames aluminium door set pre-fitted with 24mm toughened, low-E double-glazed units, door furniture and high-security, five-point locking system conforming to the Association of British Insurers' specifications. Size: (H)1,981x(W)838mm. Cost: £199.99

Aluminium finished with a tough polyester coating that can be wiped clean with a cloth.
Cost: from around £150

Timber is eco-friendly, but confirm the FSC-accredited source. Repaint or varnish every two years. Regardless of style, insist on traditional dowels-and-glue construction; these are longer-



Scotts of Thrapston-supplied oak-panelled design with AC lacquer finish, including centre panels that the client had carved to their own design and fitted prior to delivery. All Scotts' doors are bespoke, so costs vary depending on materials, size and spec

lasting and sturdier, with no visible screws. Or reclaimed wood is an option, but won't be as energy-efficient or last as long as new. Cox's Architectural Salvage makes Georgian- and Victorian-style doors to order in reclaimed pine or rustic-style reclaimed oak.
Cost: from £50 to £1,200-plus for new; reclaimed from £504 (pine) and £906 (oak)



JELD-WEN's McKean design inspired by the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, with two glass panels with Art-Deco roses. Part of the Mackintosh range. Size: 44mm thick, (H)1,981x(W)838mm. Cost: £462.58

Glass on all external doors should be double-glazed toughened safety glass for security. Triple glazing is also a common option. Energy-saving low-E (low-emissivity) glass inner panes reflect heat back into your home. Stained glass should be encapsulated within a double-glazed unit. In conservation areas and listed properties, contact your building control office for advice.

The right dimensions

In reality, there is no standard size for front doors – particularly when it comes to houses built before the 1920s. For sale today, though, you will struggle to find anything other than the popular (H)1,981x(W)838mm or the slightly less common (H)1,981x(W)762mm. 'If ever there was such a thing as a standard size, the width was 2ft 9in (838mm), but the height varied a great deal,' says Acorn Doors' John Corbett. 'In more recent times, a height of 6ft 6in (1,981mm) would be called a modern, 21st-century standard door. But nowadays, particularly with new-build, it's a question of how big

you can get away with. Grand entrances are really coming to the fore.'

If you need to source different sizes, DIY stores might not stock them but it's worth asking if they can source you something specially. Otherwise, a builders merchant should be able to sort you out with non-standard sizes. New houses are being built to meet Part M of the Building Regulations, which covers mobility and means they must have at least a 900mm-wide door and low threshold to allow for wheelchair access. The standard size sold for new-build entrance doors is (H)2,095x(W)1,125mm.

Added security

To meet the standards recommended by the Association of Chief Police Officers, doors must be of solid construction and offer robust locks, latches and bolts, giving them better resistance to forced entry; look out for the 'Secured By Design' logo. Generally, though, wooden exterior doors should be solid and at least 44mm thick, with a rim latch or mortise lock fitted at roughly one-third spacing.

A uPVC door should have a multipoint lock that meets PAS23/24 standards, but

check with the installer that fitting one will not affect your warranty. For added security, fit hinge bolts or security hinges, which help to reinforce the hinge side of a door against forcing, and protect the hinge if your door is an outwards opener. Finally, your letterbox should be at least 400mm from all locks – but consider fitting a letterbox cage in any case. These prevent thieves from putting their hands or any gadgets through the letterbox in order to reach the latches.

Source: Secured by Design



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