

How To Dress Up Your Windows

By Curt Hagedorn

Though most people don't realize it, choosing window treatments can be one of the most difficult choices to make in home decorating. First, there is simply so much to choose from, from shades to blinds to drapes. Then, every one of those things comes in so many varieties and with so many accessories. Depending on your décor, you also might want to combine two or more window coverings. How to decide? Here are some tips:

- 1) Let your décor be your guide. Whether your window treatments are the finishing touch or part of a larger redecorating scheme, the key is research. Look through decorating books and magazines at different window treatments in rooms similar to yours in style or décor or colors and find what you like. Just copy their solutions (who will know?) or combine a little from a number of different window treatments for your own unique look.
- 2) Have a budget. As you can probably imagine, the cost of window treatments can mount up rather quickly. You can start out wanting some simple tab top draperies and end up with shades, sheers, two different kinds of draw rods, finials, tiebacks and more. So come up with a realistic per window budget you can afford, and then design and shop to meet it. You'll find that many different stores from discount and home stores to specialty shops carry window treatments, so comparison shop for individual items from shades, to drapes to hardware and find the best deal on each. And don't forget shutters!
- 3) Be practical. Window coverings aren't just a decorative element for your windows. They actually perform a number of functions. You have a choice of opaque or semi-opaque or virtually transparent shades and sheers depending upon whether you want to let natural light in or keep it out (as well as prying eyes.) Draperies can be lined or unlined or even insulated depending on your climate and heating and cooling bills. Blinds and shades come in endless materials and variations from vinyl to aluminum to cloth, with all sorts of means of operations from spring loaded rollers to remote control electrical. Figure out what you need your window coverings to do first, and then figure out how you want them to look.
- 4) Keep it simple. Unless your interior décor is extremely elaborate, an elaborate window treatment is only going to draw attention from the rest of your décor. So avoid the pleats and swags and scarves and tie backs and other accessories unless they're really

necessary to complete the entire look of your room. You don't want people to be impressed with your window coverings, but with your overall sense of style.

- 5) Change your windows. If your windows are old, leaky, damaged or don't match your décor, you might find that you want to change your windows before you change your window coverings. Sliders can become beautiful French doors, old aluminum windows can become beautiful wood or vinyl multi-pane double sashes. You might want to put a new or even unusual shaped window where there was none before. There are even windows that have shades or blinds built into the windows themselves, and some glass (highly expensive) which has liquid crystals that react to electric current, becoming clear or opaque at the touch of a button. Your windows might be so beautiful you might want to show them off with very simple or no window treatments at all.

- 6) If you have old wooden windows in bad shape, often they can be restored for less than the cost of new, particularly if they're non-standard sizes. Restorers can scrap of layers of old paint, reglaze and add new hardware, sash weights and the like. Or, it could be a do it yourself project if you have the ability and the time. New or restored windows can add a great deal to the value of your home, as well as providing savings in heating and cooling costs which could just end up paying for the cost of the windows themselves.