

# GUTTER GUARD BUYERS GUIDE

By Steven Glaze



**SmartExteriors**  
<https://www.smartextpros.com/>

# Gutter Guard Buyer's Guide

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## Introduction

Gutters may not be the most glamorous part of a home's exterior—that honor goes to the home's more visible features, like the siding, rooftop, windows, and landscaping. However, in spite of the fact that they're not the glitziest of home features, gutters are an unquestionably important part of a home's construction.

Gutters have one purpose, and one purpose only: to divert the flow of water away from the areas that need protection from excessive moisture. A properly functional and efficient gutter system exists to preserve the beauty and curb appeal of the more glamorous components like your siding or your landscaping. This is because gutters work hard throughout the year to prevent costly and serious damages to your home's foundation and structure.

Water damage is a constant threat to home constructions. Without functional gutter systems in place, rainwater can seep through your exterior materials and ruin indoor and outdoor areas of your property. Some of the consequences of non-existent or malfunctioning gutters include flooding, erosion, mold and mildew growth, house collapse, and other major damages that affect the entirety of your home and property.

Surprisingly, gutters offer non-stop protection from all of these threats by doing one thing, and one thing only: directing the flow of rainwater away from your home. Many homeowners have no idea how damaging water can be, or how important your home's gutter system is for keeping the entire property dry and in good shape throughout the year.

## Gutter Maintenance and Protection

However, just having a gutter system installed won't guarantee the protection of your home. Gutters also require continuous maintenance to keep them clear and free of build-up. That's why taking the next step to reinforce them with high-performance gutter guards is an invaluable decision that will ultimately safeguard the value of your property.

If you're reading this guide, it's safe to assume that you're a homeowner with a gutter system installed on your property. It's also likely that you're aware of the heavy and time-consuming demands of gutters, and are diligent about cleaning them—whether on your own or by hiring a professional team to do it for you. If this is the case, then chances are very good that you're tired of the dangerous, and costly maintenance of your gutter system throughout the months of the year, and are looking for options to make things easier. Luckily, there are smarter ways to get around the demand of heavy, constant gutter cleaning, and that's with the installation of a gutter guard system.

This guide is also written for those that do have gutter guards installed on their properties but are unsatisfied with the performance of your existing products. Unfortunately, gutter guards come in a wide variety of types—and not all of them work as well as others. For starters, DIY options are not nearly as effective as professionally installed systems, which will offer greater protection and durability. However, just because a system is professionally installed, doesn't mean it's going to perform well—as the products and installation methods will vary in materials, techniques, and other factors.

## Our Focus on Gutter Guards

As the son of a roofing contractor and over twenty years of professional experience in exterior remodeling in the Midwest, I've dedicated my life to the improvement of residential homes and commercial buildings. I've seen my fair share of serious water damage of all kinds—and the consequences of poorly performing gutter systems (or lack thereof). Gutter guards have always fascinated me as an effective, affordable defense against serious home and property damage. As they say, prevention is worth a pound of cure—and nowhere is this more applicable in home improvement than when it comes to gutter guards.

I've also found that like any home improvement product, gutter guards come in a wide variety of brands and types. For this reason, our team at Smart Exteriors has made it a point to research and test gutter guard systems over many years. Our extensive research and product evaluations have led us to find the best ones on the market, that outperform all others when it comes to outstanding

protection, quality, and value. For more information on that, skip to chapter six to learn about stainless steel, micro-mesh gutter guard systems by Smart Exteriors.

In this guide, you'll find a wealth of information about gutter guard systems—including which ones we recommend and install at Smart Exteriors. Our hope is that you'll use this information to prepare for a successful gutter guard installation for your own home, and a lifetime of satisfaction following one of the wisest home investments that you'll ever make.

**Steven Glaze**

VP of Sales at Smart Exteriors

## Chapter One: Gutter Problems



If your home is equipped with rain gutters, keeping them clean and in excellent working condition throughout the year is an essential part of your home maintenance routine. Unfortunately, most homeowners aren't likely to think about their home's gutter systems at all until there's a problem.

Gutters are an essential aspect of most home constructions in most of the United States, as they're responsible for protecting your home against water damage from rainwater. If you have gutters—and you should, if you're living in the Midwest or another part of the country with intense winter weather and wet, and rainy seasons—learning how to spot issues before they become problems will help to prevent serious damage to the structural integrity of your home, including erosion, staining, and flooding. Additionally, becoming aware of the solutions that exist for protecting your gutters from problems will significantly lower the maintenance requirements of your gutter system while improving its performance and reducing the need for future repairs.

To help you become familiar with some of the most common gutter issues we deal with on a daily basis, here are some typical gutter problems seen in homes across the nation, and what you can do about them.



## 1. Soffit/Fascia Rot



In roof construction, the soffit is the material that connects the edge of the rooftop to the outer wall of the home. Another important part of the roof structure is the fascia, which refers to the long, vertical boards that cover the outside edges of the rafters (where the gutters attach to the rooftop). These two important components are very susceptible to gutter problems like leaks and clogs, as water will drip down into the fascia, rotting the boards, which eventually will affect the soffit panels as well.

## 2. Landscape Erosion



Whether your home is on flat land or on a slope, gutter problems can quickly cause a problem with your landscaping. When downspouts and gutters become clogged from debris during a rainstorm, the water can divert into areas like lawn or garden. This heavy overflow of water, especially when combined with heavy winds, can cause soil erosion in a matter of hours. Soil erosion can sabotage your lawn or garden, and in some cases, erosion can spread to your neighbor's property as well.

## 3. Flooded Basement



Homeowners in the Midwest know a thing or two about flooding, as will anyone living in an area where long, snowy winters and stormy weather is a constant. Basement floods can be caused by a number of factors, including structural issues, faulty window seals, sump pump problems, and others. Another common cause of a flooded basement is a clogged gutter.

When gutters become filled with leaves, dirt, twigs, and other debris, rainwater has no choice but to fall straight down to form pools around your home's foundation. The water ruins the foundation of the home, causing cracks in the concrete. Water then finds its way into your basement walls through the holes in the construction, ruining your basement and any belongings you keep inside.

#### 4. Stagnant Water / Mosquitos



Mosquitoes are more than just pesky nuisances that make us itch—they can also spread serious diseases like the West Nile virus, chikungunya, and malaria. For these reasons, keeping mosquitoes far away from our homes is well worth the effort.

Clogged gutters can lead to flooding in your yard and around your home. These pools of stagnant water can quickly become breeding grounds for mosquitoes, as females are known to hatch between 100 and 300 eggs at once. In other words, keeping water from pooling around your property should be a top priority for any homeowner that wants to protect the household from these dangerous and bothersome creatures.

## 5. Foundation Damage

As we've mentioned before, one of the problems with clogged gutters is that the rainwater that falls is pushed out down to accumulate in pools around the home's foundation. Aside from basement flooding, landscape erosion, and the other problems we've listed so far, this can also quickly cause your home's structure to deteriorate from the ground up.

Foundation damage is a serious problem that can wind up costing homeowners a fortune in repair and renovation costs. For example, continuous water exposure will erode the foundation layers and cause cracks that weaken it over time, which could result in a major disaster if the house collapses or caves-in at some point. Excessive moisture can also create mold growth, which can be quite dangerous to your health (and hard to remove).

### When Gutters Need Replacement

If you're in need of gutter replacement, you might feel worried about the cost of a new system. The good news is that today's gutter systems are of much higher quality and feature advanced designs that are built to last longer and provide better protection against the rain.

For example, many homeowners consider switching to a seamless gutter system. Seamless gutter systems are considered superior to traditional sectional gutter systems, that tend to leak at the seams or develop gaps after a while. Seamless gutter systems are built to endure harsh weather and can be outfitted with high-performance gutter guards and covers to prevent clogs and lower your maintenance requirements. Upgrading to a newer system can be an excellent way to protect your home while enhancing its value for years to come.

## Chapter Two: Can I Clean My Own Gutters?



If your home has gutters installed, you're probably aware of the level of maintenance they need to work at peak performance. Gutter maintenance depends on a rigorous cleaning routine to keep them working properly, which is why many homeowners prefer to install gutter guards as a way to improve the functionality of their gutter system without the constant upkeep.

While unprotected gutters should be cleaned regularly and often throughout the year, spring is an especially important season for gutter cleaning in the Midwest and throughout the rest of the country. After the fall leaves and winter storms have passed, gutters that are not equipped with an efficient gutter guard system tend to become filled with debris, and the risk for serious clogs is higher.

If you normally clean your gutters yourself, you may find yourself wondering if professional cleaning is a better option. Alternatively, for those that are wondering whether they might be able to save money on professional gutter maintenance services by doing it on your own, DIY gutter cleaning is worth exploring.



In this section, we'll weigh some of the pros and cons of DIY gutter cleaning and offer our expert advice on what you can do to cut down your gutter maintenance.

## A Word About DIY Gutter Cleaning



When it comes to cleaning your own gutters, there are a few factors that you need to consider. After all, climbing onto your roof to provide maintenance to your home is always risky for those not trained as professional contractors. Even the healthiest, most physically fit individuals put themselves in danger when climbing up to the top of the roof to clear out their gutter systems, and extreme caution is advised if you are planning on doing it yourself.

You'll also need to gather the correct tools required for gutter cleaning, which will vary depending on your investment into cleaning your gutters. Professional gutter cleaning supplies will cost more, while simple cleaning solutions are also an option—depending on the state of your gutter system. The basics tools and equipment you'll need might include a tall, sturdy ladder, durable rubber gloves, a hand trowel or a small rake, garbage bags, and a power washer wand or a high-pressure hose. You might also want to use a plumber's snake for cleaning out the downspout, which can

also become clogged with a variety of large and small debris—from leaves and twigs to birds' nests and more.

If you're still considering cleaning your own gutters, you'll need to learn the best techniques for doing so—and also how to identify important issues with your gutters that need attention. This step is especially important, as it can save the homeowner plenty of money in repair or replacement costs should they be able to prevent an issue before it becomes a problem.

To help you decide whether cleaning your own gutter system is worth it, here's a breakdown of some of the major pros and cons of DIY gutter cleaning in Kansas City.

### The Pros and Cons of DIY Gutter Cleaning

#### Pros:

- **Affordable:** Cleaning your gutters yourself will require little cost up front if you have the right tools to do the job. However, homeowners run the risk of missing a potential problem that could cost more money in the long-run.
- **Scheduling Flexibility:** Cleaning your own gutters can mean operating according to your own schedule instead of someone else's. If you're short on time or only available on weekends, doing it yourself might be your only option.

#### Cons:

- **Dangerous:** Climbing up and down a ladder, working on top of the roof, and reaching into piles of leaves in your gutters can pose all types of dangers, from animal bites to minor scrapes, cuts, and bruises, serious injuries or death. Working on top of the roof in slippery, wet, or windy weather conditions is strongly discouraged.

- **Time Consuming:** Between dragging out all of your supplies, washing out your gutters and downspouts, and making any repairs, the time you could spend cleaning your gutters can really add up.
- **Poor Quality Cleaning:** Most homeowners are not professional gutter cleaners. Professionals know exactly what to do and how to spot any repairs you may need, using safety protocols for protection.
- **Can Cause Further Damage:** Going along with your inexperience, your cleaning techniques could potentially cause more damage to your home.

### The Pros and Cons of Professional Gutter Cleaning

For homeowners, professional gutter cleaning is the easiest and most effective way to provide continual maintenance for homes without gutter guard protection. A professional team can also help to determine any spots o your gutters that need attention or repairs. However, this can be costly depending on the size of your home and gutter configuration, and you will have to pay this charge every year—at the very least.

Here's a breakdown of some of the most important pros and cons of professional gutter cleaning for your home.

#### **Pros:**

- **Safe:** Having a professional clean, your gutters will prevent you from suffering from potential falls, pest bites, or other injuries associated with gutter cleaning.
- **Quality Cleaning:** Gutter cleaning professionals are usually experienced and will know exactly how to clean your gutters, inspect for problems, and how to fix the issues that come up.



**Cons:**

- **Costly:** Gutter cleaning in Kansas City can be costly, depending on how large your gutter system is.
- **Repeat Routine:** Clogged gutters are a risk all year-round, and especially after the fall and winter months. As such, regular gutter cleaning will require periodic visits from your professional Kansas City gutter cleaning company.
- **Risk of Scams:** Finding the right company to service your home can be risky. Shady or even fraudulent companies might overcharge you, or try to sell you on repairs you might not need.
- **Strangers Around Your Home:** If you're used to privacy, hiring gutter cleaners to service your home once a year or more can become tiring or stressful.

## Chapter Three: Gutter Guards 101

One of the easiest ways to cut down your gutter maintenance while saving time and money, in the long run, is having a set of gutter guards installed. Gutter guards are a great investment—not only to not have to clean out your gutters but to protect your home from damages caused by clogs.

Clogged gutters can cause damages to your roof, eaves, soffit, and fascia—and even destroy your home’s lawn and foundation as water builds up in concentrated spots around your gutter system. A set of stainless steel, micro-mesh gutter guards from Smart Exteriors, can eliminate the need for dangerous DIY disasters, or prevent you from spending a fortune on endless professional gutter cleaning services. Stainless steel, micro-mesh gutter guards are proven to keep out even the tiniest debris throughout the year, cutting down your maintenance requirements and eliminating the risk of dangerous clogs that cause water damage to your home.

### Do I Need Gutter Guards?

Leaves, insects, feathers, seeds, pine needles, sticks, dirt, and rocks are just some of the types of debris responsible for clogging your home’s gutter system. Gutter guards prevent the gutters from becoming blocked by these materials, and in turn, prevent your home from serious problems caused by water damage and exposure.

However, it’s important to note that not all gutter guard systems operate at the same level of efficiency. While most products will protect the gutters from larger particles, most are incapable of screening out smaller debris from entering the gutters and causing clogs.

As with any home improvement purchase or installation, choosing the right products that offer the highest quality and best durability is a critical part of the process.

At Smart Exteriors, we recognize the importance of extra-strength gutter guard products for preventing serious water damage to homes and gardens. In fact, our team has observed a strong connection between homes that choose to protect their gutters, and those that don’t—and it’s

become quite clear that installing high-quality gutter guard products directly translates to greater savings and increasing home values over the long run.

In short, homeowners can save plenty of money with gutter guards, which is why we've dedicated our company to identifying, providing, and installing the most efficient and state-of-the-art systems in the nation.

As clear and obvious as it may be to the professionals that gutter guards are worth the investment, convincing homeowners that they're an essential feature isn't always easy. We get it—home improvement projects can be costly and saving money should always be a high priority. Furthermore, many people are completely unaware that gutter guards exist, and are confused about what they are supposed to do in the first place.

What most homeowners don't realize is that gutter guard systems can be extremely affordable, especially over the long-term. Gutter guards can help homeowners save thousands of dollars a year in cleaning, maintenance, repairs, and damages. Not to mention, they'll also help your home to appraise much higher if you ever decide to sell.

Installing the right gutter guards can protect your home from serious threats, including foundation damage, landscape erosion, and other costly disasters.

If you're interested in protecting your property from water damage caused by clogged gutters, take a look at the research we've collected on the different types of gutter guards available, along with a breakdown of how each of them holds up when compared against each other.

## **Brush**

Brush systems are made of heavy-duty bristles and are fairly cheap to manufacture and purchase. Brush-style gutter guards resemble giant-sized pipe cleaners and fit right into the gutters to trap leaves and debris while letting the water pass through.

- **Good:** Cheap and easy to install.

- **Bad:** Not all debris is blocked through this method, and the gutters can still become clogged when seeds, leaves, pine needles, and similar debris become trapped in the bristles. Another downside to this system is that proper maintenance requires removal of the gutter guards—which means that they’ll need to be re-installed each time you clean them.

## Foam Inserts

Similar to brush systems, a foam system is actually piecing of foam designed to fit inside the gutters. The foam’s function is to absorb water—much like a sponge—while blocking debris from building up and clogging the gutters.



- **Good:** Cheap and easy installation.
- **Bad:** Seedlings and trees can grow inside foam materials. Furthermore, while foam guards can prevent some debris from passing through, clogs can also form on top of the guards—leading to overflowing of rainwater and leakage. Foam inserts are also designed to last no more than one or two years and are a very temporary solution to a permanent problem.

Just like a bristle system, these guards are cheap but require a lot more time and work that can be justified in light of the other options available.

## Reverse-Curve

A reverse-curve system is specifically designed to move rainwater down through the gutters. This system features smooth covers equipped with slots that go over the gutter, drawing rain in while keeping debris out. Reverse-Curve systems are also known as surface tension systems.

- **Good:** Most of the gutter guards are professionally installed and come with a warranty.
- **Bad:** The guards can lift roof shingles, which may void your roof warranty. In addition, they are obvious and reduce curb appeal. Some homeowners have to also buy new gutters since the original ones may not fit.

Ultimately, while they are better than the previous systems mentioned, they are less effective in heavy rains and tend to leak. Reverse-curve systems do fairly well as a short-term fix for keeping out debris but lack the durability necessary to work as a long-term solution.

## Micro Mesh Screens

A micro mesh system involves gutter guards made of a strong mesh material that contains barely visible, tiny holes. Traditionally, this system is made of stainless steel, although it can be made with other metals as well, and is a tough and durable, long-lasting option to keep the debris out.

- **Good:** Micro mesh is the most effective gutter guard system on the market, according to Consumer Reports and other industry experts. In addition, this system is a permanent solution that usually comes with a warranty, and is professionally installed.
- **Bad:** Micro mesh materials are made with a wide variety of metal materials, including aluminum, stainless steel, copper, and others. Of the products, the highest quality options are those made with surgical grade stainless steel screens, that are anodized to protect against rust, corrosion, and oxidation.
- While stainless steel gutter guards will last a lifetime and require much less maintenance or repair needs, they are still more expensive to install than the other materials. While long-

term savings can more than makeup for the higher upfront cost, the pricier cost of installation can be a downside for homeowners on a budget.

## Chapter Four: Do-It-Yourself Options

There are two basic categories that gutter guard products fall under: those that are installed by professionals, and ones that you can install by yourself. According to our own research, we've found that many homeowners attempt a DIY gutter guard installation before resorting to a professional installation. In fact, many of our own customers admit to trying an average of two to three different products or DIY attempts before handing the project over to us.

While we do not advise the DIY options for most homeowners, those with the right experience, tools, and resources can find the following inexpensive options at their local hardware store.

### **Metal Screens**



Metal screens are an inexpensive, easy-to-install gutter guard that can be found in most home improvement stores. While they can provide an adequate solution to keeping large particles and debris out of your gutter system, they aren't as successful in blocking finer particles. Additionally, metal screens are not securely fastened into place and will buckle or blow off completely in harsh winds, heavy snow or ice, and other conditions.

## **Plastic Screens**



Similar to metal screens, plastic screens are inexpensive and easy to install yourself. They also offer the same pros and cons as metal screens. In general, neither metal nor plastic screens are considered as good long-term solutions for gutter protection, as both require plenty of maintenance to clear debris that gets stuck in the screens.

## **Foam Inserts**





Foam inserts are also inexpensive to purchase and very easy to install. The inserts lay flat in the gutter and allow water to pass through them, blocking larger debris from passing through. The downsides to foam inserts are that they clog easily, can begin growing mold and plants, and can serve as an excellent breeding ground for mosquitoes. They also require constant routine maintenance to keep them from clogging and causing water to overflow.

### **Slit/Holes**



A slit/hole gutter guard system is the simplest method for preventing clogs, consisting of a series of a material, usually aluminum, that lays flat over the gutter. The material is perforated with strategically shaped holes or slots designed to pull water through while keeping dirt and debris

trapped outside. This system is prone to overflowing in heavy rains if the holes or slits fail to draw in the water fast enough. It can also provide insufficient protection against smaller particles, like pine needles, dirt, seeds, and insects, which will pass through the small holes and eventually clog the entire gutter system.



As tempting as it may seem to want to do it yourself, the products found in most home improvement stores just don't match up to the lasting quality of a professional-grade product and expert installation. We highly recommend saving money and getting it right the first time around—with a product and installation service that's backed by a lifetime guarantee (like the one we offer at Smart Exteriors).

## Chapter Five: Professionally Installed Gutter Guard Systems

As long as you choose a high-quality company to perform the installation, rest-assured that professionally installed gutter guard systems are far superior to DIY options. Still, homeowners will need to decide on the gutter guard system that's best for them according to the options available. Here are the three most common gutter guard systems produced in the United States, including micro-mesh—the preferred system used by your trusted team of gutter installation experts at Smart Exteriors.

### **Slit/Holes**



Unlike the DIY version, the professionally installed slit/holes system is mechanically fastened to stay in place. The system keeps large debris from entering the gutters. However, it performs similarly to the DIY version in that it can overflow and overshoot the gutter in heavy rains. The slit-holes can also become clogged easily and require plenty of maintenance to keep them from becoming blocked by smaller particles.

### **Reverse Curve**



Much like the slit/holes system mentioned above, the reverse curve (or surface tension gutter guard) works well for keeping large debris out of the gutter system. On the downside, the design of the reverse curve gutter guard requires an opening of less than an inch at the nose of the gutter. This gap often becomes filled with debris, and also bees, mice, birds, and other creatures that build nests or crawl inside, causing clogs.

## Chapter Six: Stainless Steel Micro-Mesh Gutter Guard Systems



In a study performed by Consumer Reports, various types of gutter guards were left outside in the rain for over a year—a test devised to explore the efficiency of various gutter guard systems and products.

After sixteen months of testing, Consumer Reports learned that micro mesh screen systems worked extremely well—while the vast majority of them failed to provide the value or efficiency one would expect from their investment.





At Smart Exteriors, we've done our own testing—and agree with Consumer Reports that micro mesh screen gutter guards are the only product on the market that provide high-value for customers. In fact, our testing goes a step further, evaluating the different types of materials used to make micro mesh screen products, of which there are many.

For example, the frames can come in various materials, including plastic or aluminum sheet metal, copper, or extruded aluminum, which offers the highest performance. The mesh, on the other hand, is made from metal, aluminum, copper, or varying grades of stainless steel. While micro mesh systems are superior to other options, we quickly found that only premium stainless steel options offer the lifetime protection and durability that we wanted for our customers.

Smart Exteriors uses micro-mesh products that feature 316L surgical-grade stainless steel, which is considered far superior to the 304, 308 grades, which can corrode quickly.

### [Premium Products from Smart Exteriors](#)

We've seen the difference that superior-quality gutter guards can make when compared to other systems, and how well they work to protect your home from flooding and water damage.

That's why we're proud to use only the finest micro-mesh technology, with products that feature surgical-grade steel and extruded aluminum frames. In contrast to the other options on the market, micro-mesh systems are the only gutter guards that feature an enclosed design. The sealed system keeps out even the smallest particles from entering the gutters. This option is typically more expensive to install but offers the most benefits and long-term protection for your home when compared to the other options.

## Chapter Eight: Gutter Guard Pricing

Homeowners with properties surrounded by trees, or that live in areas with high winds, heavy rains, and other intense weather conditions benefit immensely from heavy duty gutter guards. Premium-quality gutter guards ensure that your gutters stay free of debris and clogs, lower maintenance and upkeep needs, and will help to keep your property in excellent condition over the years.

However, one of the biggest caveats that keep customers from installing their own gutter guard systems is the investment required. There are numerous types of systems available for homeowners that range in quality and price. Some gutter guards are cheaply made and won't offer the same level of protection that a higher quality gutter guard will. Others are professional systems that cost more but yield high-performance results.

Many of our customers have heard about the lower quality models from friends, neighbors, or others, or have had them installed before. This is where gutter guards can tend to have a bad rap—as many people believe that because of their experience with cheap gutter guard materials, gutter guards “don't work” or “aren't worth the investment” across the board.

While they may be absolutely correct when it comes to most gutter guard products, little do they know that better options do exist—and can offer important benefits and a lifetime of protection against clogs. In fact, introducing our superior quality gutter guards to homeowners that have given up hope for alternatives to rigorous maintenance and constant clog prevention has been quite satisfying. Not only are they surprised to learn that gutter guards can actually work—but that they can offer a high return on their investment over the long run as well.

As it goes with all home improvement investments, spending a bit more for quality usually pays off. This is true when it comes to gutter guard products, which can range in price—a factor that

can feel quite intimidating for homeowners evaluating their options. That's why we have created this guide for homeowners to follow when learning about pricing. In this section, we'll cover the costs, pros, and cons of each material or product and ways to mitigate your costs in an attempt to help you decide if the price is worth the investment.

## DIY Systems

### Foam inserts

Foam guards are usually made out of polyurethane and are triangular in shape. The foam wedge base is wedged into the gutter itself with the point sticking up. This method of installation blocks debris but allows water to flow through.

**Materials Cost:** \$3.00-\$4.25 per linear feet.

- **Pros:** This system is easy to install and effectively keeps out leaves and pine needles.
- **Cons:** The foam can be blocked and cause water to pass over and onto the ground. After a little bit of time, the organic matter collected can form algae, moss, and mold. In addition, UV rays break down the foam causing them to be worn down to nothing over time. They also require removal to clean.

### Plastic Screens

Plastic screens are the cheapest materials available on the gutter guard market today. Similarly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the quality of the plastic screens is also on the lower end of the spectrum.

The screens are produced in rolls of flexible plastic. Due to the material, they can easily be cut to size to fit over any gutter system, and usually, require no fasteners to secure in place.

**Materials Cost:** \$1.20-\$2.40 per linear feet



- **Pros:** Cheap and a breeze to install. They are also strong against leaves.
- **Cons:** The quality is cheap—which means that it’s a matter of getting what you pay for. The screens can easily be moved out of place or warp in excessive heat. Plus, they become brittle over time, making them a sure candidate for replacement in the near future.

## **Metal Screens**

Though similar to plastic screens in shape and function, metal screens are more durable. The performance is the same, but this option represents a longer life expectancy for a little bit more of a financial investment.

**Materials Cost:** \$5.50-\$7.00 per linear feet

**Pros:** Affordable and reasonably strong. They are also easy to install.

**Cons:** Most of these options aren’t powder coated, making them vulnerable to rust. In addition, ice and heavy twigs can easily damage them, making them fairly weak compared to other options in areas where the elements are a concern.

## **Professionally Installed Systems**

### **Reverse Curve**

The reverse curve system is designed to cover the entire gutter. However, they don’t rest on the outside edge of the gutter. The outside edge curves downward toward the gutter. The water running across this “helmet” will cling to the metal and fall into the gutter to ensure proper draining. This type of system is usually fastened to the fascia.

**Installation cost when provided by the contractor:** \$25.50-\$32.00 per linear feet

**Pros:** The gutters are effectively covered. Wet leaves are either washed away or easily swept with a broom.

**Cons:** The need for professional installation makes this a more expensive option than DIY methods. Seeds and other small debris can still slip through the gutter guard. If left unchecked, this can cause plant life to grow in the gutters. They are difficult to clean and require maintenance that makes it cumbersome in areas where rain is a common occurrence.

## **Stainless Steel Micro Mesh**

This option is a gutter guard system that focuses on the use of tiny barely visible holes. This allows for the greatest protection against smaller debris. While there are other materials options available, the best ones are made from high-quality stainless steel, thanks to its unparalleled strength and performance.

**Installation cost when provided by the contractor:** \$20.50-\$22.00 per linear feet

- **Pros:** Stainless steel is hands down the best at keeping even the smallest debris out of the gutter. This option is a more permanent solution that usually comes with a warranty, and is very low maintenance when compared to other options.
- **Cons:** Large debris such as large wet leaves can block the gutter guard easily. Although this is much easier to resolve than when debris gets stuck inside the gutter or gutter guard. This is also a more expensive option, although the long-term benefits may outweigh the initial cost of installation.

## **Const Concerns: Tips for Mitigating the Price of Gutter Guard Installation**

While the base costs are easily calculated, that doesn't mean that there is no variation. Different suppliers and contractors all have different levels of product availability, overhead, and expertise, which will influence the final price. Consider these extenuating factors when determining pricing options:

- **Read Customer Reviews:** Reading feedback from previous customers has proven to be one of the best ways to learn about what you can expect when doing business with a company. Look for reviews that leave detailed feedback, not just a star rating etc...
- **Check for complaints with BBB:** Similar to the first point, but this one focuses specifically on complaints. Look to see if the company has had any complaints and if so, did they resolve them. It is not uncommon for a company that has been in business a long time to get a complaint. You just want to make sure they don't have numerous complaints, and that they made every effort to resolve the issue
- **Pay attention to the season:** Gutter guard systems are fairly optional. This means you can afford to shop at optimal times of the year. Late Spring/early summer is your best opportunity for potential pricing discounts due to the lack of business.
- **Budget for more:** If your goal is to spend as little as possible on gutter guards, know that cheaper materials will increase the likelihood of spending far more money than you'd think on repairs, replacements, maintenance, and upkeep down the road. Spending more on quality products and superior installation services will guarantee more savings in the future.

## Chapter Nine: Top Questions to Ask When Selecting Gutter Guard Protection

One of the most surprising things about customers interested in gutter guards is how little they know about them. In fact, many customers assume that there's only one type of gutter guard system to consider—and are confused when they learn that the opposite is true.

As mentioned before in this guide, there are many, many types of gutter guard systems. Additionally, these different systems can be broken down even further according to brands, materials, and other factors.

The best thing that a customer can do when purchasing a gutter guard system is to become informed. This guide is a great step towards making the best decision you can make for your gutter guard installation, and to avoid making a costly mistake that you'll regret down the road.

A great contractor can help you learn more about the gutter guard products available, providing plenty of information that you need to make an informed decision. To help guide you in the right direction when it's time to visit with your remodeling company, take a look at some of the most important questions to ask when selecting gutter guard protection for your home.

- **Estimates:** When making a decision about gutter guards, you need to know what the cost/total estimate will be. More importantly, you need to know what the estimate includes. Does it include installation? Does it come with other benefits? If you plan to take a while to compare quotes and reach a final decision, ask your contractor how long the quote will be valid—and how much time you have to reach a final decision.
- **Warranty:** Most reputable contractors will offer warranties on their products and installation services. It's up to you to verify if one is included, what it covers, how long it lasts, and whether it's transferable. Another extremely important question to ask is whether

the installation will affect the warranty of other exterior components—such as your roof or siding installation.

- **Sealing:** Every gutter guard system is different. Some are completely sealed, while others have holes and openings. Knowing how the system is set up will help you understand how the system will benefit your needs.
- **Installation:** One of the biggest questions to ask is the one surrounding the installation itself. Make sure to ask how the contractor trains and oversee their crew. In addition, look into what quality control measures they use. If the installation isn't done properly, then your gutter guard does nothing for you. Don't let that be you.
- **Roofing:** The gutter is attached to the roof. It only makes sense that the gutter guard will be there too. Make sure to ask how the installation will impact your roof. In addition, find out if the product will be installed under the shingles or other roofing material. Everything in your home is interconnected, so take the time to ask how that will be maintained with the installation of your new gutter guard system.



- **Rain and Clogging:** Will the system hold up in severe weather, i.e., heavy rainstorms, blizzards, and high winds? Plus, you will want to ask what guarantees they have when it

comes to gutter clogs. If the gutter guard can't handle the rain or prevent clogging, then it's not a worthy investment for you.

- **Maintenance:** Everything requires attention and maintenance, including your gutter guard system. However, some gutter guard systems require far less maintenance than others. When considering which system to install, be sure to ask what kind of maintenance is needed and how often it's needed. The point of a gutter guard system is to reduce the work involved with your gutters. If it can't lessen the attention needed, then it's not the one for you.
- **Business History:** Last but not least, make sure to investigate the remodeling company's background. Unlicensed, inexperienced contractors are a dime a dozen—as are scam artists posing as skilled contractors. Search the company online, and ask for their license and insurance information. Read their online reviews. Do they have the experience necessary for providing top-quality gutter guard installation and other home remodeling services? Are the rates comparable to other companies in the area? These are the kind of questions you need to answer to determine if the contractor you're considering is the one for your needs.

Keep in mind that a gutter guard system is meant to be an investment for your house. Take the time to understand exactly what you're getting with your new system. The last thing you want is to repeat the entire process because you didn't do the research the first time.

## About the Author

Steven Glaze grew up in Olathe, Kansas—a small suburb outside of Kansas City, Kansas. A remodeling specialist with a lifetime of experience in residential and commercial exterior renovations, Steven began working as a builder's assistant at his father's roofing company at the age of 16 and was estimating projects and managing crews by the time he was 18 years old.

Steve currently serves as VP of Sales for Smart Exteriors. Steve shares the company's passion for replacing old, antiquated, non-sustainable materials with today's smartest products. The company's services include siding, windows, roofing and gutter guard installations and is proud to serve as one of the leading exterior renovation companies in Kansas and Missouri.

Steven is proud to use his expertise in the industry to find the best exterior products that offer the highest value for homeowners. In fact, Smart Exteriors was the first company to introduce stainless steel micro mesh gutter guard systems in Kansas City—a product that truly outperforms all other options on the market today.

Beyond his passion for researching and testing out the world's smartest exterior solutions, Steven enjoys spending time with his wife Christie and their three daughters Jasmine, Lily, and Violet. An avid sports fan, Steve also loves playing golf and cheering on the Kansas City Chiefs and the Kansas City Royals during game seasons.