



THE HOME OWNER'S BUYING GUIDE TO

Exterior Siding in Kansas City

VINYL • STEEL • FIBER CEMENT • WOOD • PVC/COMPOSITE

By Steven Glaze
www.smartextpros.com

SmartExteriors

Copyright © 2019 Steven Glaze

First Edition

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except under the terms of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 or under the terms of a license issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd.

Legal Disclaimer

The publisher and the authors make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation warranties for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales or promotional materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for every situation.

Neither the publisher nor the authors shall be liable for damages arising herefrom. The fact that an organization or website is referred to in this work as a citation and/or a potential source of further information does not mean that the author or the publisher endorses the information the organization or website may provide or recommendations it may make.

Further, readers should be aware that Internet websites or web pages listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read.

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	6
Chapter One: Siding Problems	7
When to Consider Siding Replacement.....	8
Common Siding Problems	9
Vinyl	11
Fiber Cement.....	12
Steel	13
Engineered Wood.....	14
PVC/Composite	15
Chapter Two: Vinyl Siding	16
Vinyl Siding Designs & Styles.....	17
Siding Options.....	17
Pros and Cons of Vinyl Siding.....	18
Proper Installation.....	19
Top Brands	19
Warranty Comparisons.....	20
Vinyl Siding Warranties: A Comparison of Popular Vinyl Brands.....	21
Chapter Three: Steel Siding	24
Styles Available	25
The Pros and Cons of Steel Siding	27
Seamless Steel Siding vs. Standing Seam Siding	29
Top Brands	29
Warranty Comparisons.....	30
Fading	31
Chapter Four: Fiber Cement	33
Styles Available	34
The Pros and Cons of Fiber Cement Siding.....	35
Pre-Finished- James Hardie Plus.....	37
Seams.....	37

Top Brands39

Inspecting the Warranty40

Comparing Cement Siding Warranties41

James Hardie42

What is Covered Under the James Hardie Warranty?42

What is Not Covered Under the James Hardie Warranty?43

Additional Warranties: James Hardie’s Color Plus Technology Warranty.....43

GAF Weatherside44

Nichiha.....44

Allura.....44

Chapter Five: Engineered Wood 45

Stylish Engineered Wood Installations.....46

The Benefits and Drawbacks of Engineered Wood Siding.....48

Pre-Finished - Diamond Kote.....49

Proper Installation.....50

LP SmartSide Siding51

Warranty Information.....51

Chapter Six: Composite / PVC Siding 52

Styles Available53

Pros and Cons.....55

Seams.....56

Everlast56

Royal Celect.....56

Top Brands57

Warranty Information.....57

Everlast58

Royal Celect.....59

Chapter Seven: Siding Pricing Information 61

What Factors Affect the Cost of Siding Installation?62

What Else Affects the Total Cost?63

What’s the Average Cost of Siding?64

Installation Calculation.....64

Price Variance65

Average Siding Costs by Type65

Vinyl Siding65

Engineered Wood Siding66

Steel Siding.....67

Fiber Cement Siding.....67

PVC/Composite Siding68

Wood Siding68

Conclusion: Paying for Siding Installation69

Chapter Eight: Tips for Choosing The Right Contractor 71

 What to Look for in a Siding Contractor?72

 What are the Full Details of the Company?.....72

 Do They Have Insurance?.....72

 Are They Licensed?.....72

 Are they Credentialed?.....72

 How Long Have They Been in Business?73

 Do They Have or Provide Referrals?73

 Is There a Workmanship Warranty?.....73

 How Do They Handle Customer Complaints?73

 Do They Employ Their Installers or Subcontract?74

 What Type of Siding Are They Experienced With?.....74

 Managing Costs74

 Some things you can do:.....76

Conclusion: Choosing Your Siding Contractor 77

About The Author 78

INTRODUCTION

For most homeowners, making sure your home is beautiful and attractive from the inside and out is a priority. There's nothing like pulling up the driveway of your home and feeling pride for where you live—which is why exterior remodeling and maintenance is an important aspect of homeownership.

Improving your home's exterior appearance and curbside appeal can also impact the value and practicality of your entire property. One of the best examples of this is siding replacement or new siding installation, an overwhelmingly important feature that can have a dramatic effect on the aesthetics, indoor comfort, and cost-effectiveness of your home construction.

As one of the co-founders of Smart Exteriors in Kansas City, I've seen firsthand how important siding materials are—as well as the options homeowners have to benefit their homes with superior-quality siding materials and installation work. I've also had the opportunity to witness the impact of poor siding installations and products, and the effect that a bad renovation can have on a homeowner's wallet and well-being. For these reasons, it's extremely critical for homeowners to exercise plenty of caution and care when selecting their siding materials, products, and installation companies.

Along the same lines, I've also had a first-row seat to the world of siding over the last twenty years that we've been in the businesses of exterior remodeling. For over two decades, I've dedicated myself to exploring the new and exciting breakthroughs in the home exterior industry, learning all that I can about the new products and installation techniques that offer the best results and value for today's homeowner.

The purpose of this book is to share my knowledge with fellow property owners that are considering embarking on a new siding installation project, or those that are thinking of replacing their old siding with newer and improved products. My hope is that this book will allow you to avoid some of the most common pitfalls when it comes to siding, and to help you learn all that you can about this important home feature—to make the most out of your siding project and the investment you're making to improve your home now and into the future.

I hope you find plenty of value in the pages that follow and wish you the best of luck in your future home exterior remodeling endeavors.

Steven Glaze

VP of Sales at Smart Exteriors

CHAPTER ONE: SIDING PROBLEMS



For most homeowners, replacing the siding is inevitable. Like any other material that makes up the home, the siding will break down beyond the point of repair eventually.

While siding replacement may be necessary, choosing your siding replacement materials and installation services shouldn't be taken lightly. The siding you choose represents a long-term commitment and the investment you make into your home, which means that it should be durable, high-performance, and long-lasting. In addition, architectural and technological advancements have made way for stylish options in siding—and homeowners have an abundance of material options along with a variety of finishes and colors to decide between. This can result in homeowners feeling overwhelmed when trying to make their decision, as their choice will affect the aesthetics, value, and many other aspects of your home's exterior for years to come.

While design choices are important for curb appeal and the ability to show off your personal style, the decision on what kind of siding is best can be determined by analyzing each siding option by what can go wrong, how costly it will be to fix it, and how common the problem is compared to other siding choices.

Before you can figure out which siding option offers the least amount of negatives, you need to understand when siding replacement isn't optional.

WHEN TO CONSIDER SIDING REPLACEMENT



If you are experiencing any of the following issues, then siding replacement is in your future.

- **Damaged Siding:** Over time, your siding will be affected by damage. Damage comes in many forms—for example, it can be caused by violent storms, rotting due to water exposure, mold, and mildew, or even a stray baseball if a game is played too close to the house. Common signs of damage include cracking, warping, and mold buildup. When damage builds up on your siding, it can no longer protect your home properly. Moisture problems along with a pest infestation are just some of the ongoing issues homeowners face with damaged siding. Plus, let's not forget that obvious signs of damage aren't great for curb appeal.

- **Paint, Paint, and More Paint:** If you find yourself frequently having to touch up the paint job on your siding, it may indicate that replacement is necessary. Keep in mind that most siding options will require a touch-up from time to time. However, if that touch-up is needed every 3-5 years instead of every 15 years or longer, then there may be a problem with the siding itself that is contributing to peeling or chipping paint problems.
- **Higher Energy Bills:** In general, energy bills are higher than they were 10-15 years ago. This is due to inflation and higher costs of living in general. However, if you're noticing a distinct increase in your heating or cooling efforts year over year, then the siding might be to blame. Damaged or poorly insulated siding can lead to higher energy bills due to the air escaping through holes and cracks in the product. There are other causes of rising utility bills, so be sure to examine your home construction carefully to determine where energy loss might be occurring and why.
- **Mold, Mildew, Fungus:** The presence of mold on your siding, especially around the seams, is a sign that moisture damage is affecting your home's siding. As soon as moisture makes it past the protective barrier, it's only a matter of time before the rest of the house becomes compromised. The best solution is to replace the siding as quickly as possible and verify the soundness of your home's walls while you're investigating.

COMMON SIDING PROBLEMS

Regardless of the type of siding you choose, there are problems common to everyone since no siding is perfect. Despite the best efforts made by innovators and inventors, the weather still plays a role in the life expectancy of your siding. In addition, the sun's UV rays, installation methods, and time itself all contribute to siding problems over the years.

The most common siding problems that homeowners should be aware of include:



- **Warping and Buckling:** This is more common with lighter materials like vinyl and aluminum, but even heavier materials like steel or fiber cement are at risk for warping or buckling. The trick is to have the installation performed in a manner that allows expansion and contraction due to temperature changes. The tighter the siding is attached, the more likely it is to buckle or warp depending on the material.
- **Cracking:** Cracks in the siding is the most common and obvious sign of damage homeowners face. This is usually for physical reasons like falling tree branches or hailstones. Exposure to extreme weather changes is also a contributing factor. The repeated contraction and expansion can cause the siding to crack. Trimming away tree branches and proper installation can prevent cracks in the siding. It's also a good idea to choose siding products that are designed to handle contraction and expansion along with changing weather patterns.
- **Fading:** The paint job and overall richness of the material will naturally fade away over time. This is mainly thanks to the sun and its UV rays. Direct sun exposure will produce discoloration and fading in the siding without proper UV coatings. In addition to the fading, this can lead to other problems like cracking thanks to the UV rays compromising the material itself once the paint is washed away.
- **Moisture Problems:** Improper installation is the single biggest culprit of any moisture problems that occur, and it happens more than you would think. In addition to poor installation, homeowners can be at risk for moisture buildup if the waterproof barriers are compromised. Physical damage to the siding is the easiest way for this to occur. Keep in mind that all components of your home's exterior have to work together to keep moisture out. If the roof is underperforming, then the siding will soon follow. Should this take place, problems like mold and fungi will develop and ultimately lead to rotting both internally and externally.
- **Noise:** Improper installation, poor insulation, or outright damage to the siding can result in an excess of noise passing through your walls. Not only can this be annoying, but it's also a sign that the siding is weakening overall. Replacement is the best solution if repairs aren't performed immediately.

The good news is that while these problems are common, they are fixable when handled promptly. Ongoing maintenance and repairs are a natural part of being a homeowner. However, professional inspections and qualified contractors performing any needed repairs can extend the life of your siding better than anything else. Each siding option has its own advantages and the inspections should be handled accordingly to maximize your efforts.

VINYL

Vinyl siding is an attractive option for many homeowners for good reason. It's low maintenance, doesn't peel or chip, and doesn't require repainting or touch-ups often. In fact, most brands offer fade protection for their vinyl siding products. However, before you decide to invest in vinyl siding, you need to be aware of the problems that vinyl siding is known for having.

- **Appearance:** Despite the advances made with vinyl siding, it's still made of plastic and looks like it. It lacks a true ability to produce a textured look or feel. In addition, due to being molded bends and overlaps are common sights without a perfect installation. This can result in lower curb appeal. With thicker grade vinyl, this can be minimized to an extent, but it requires smart shopping around for the best combination of price and quality.
- **Sustainability:** Most homeowners desire to have their siding last for a long time while being good for the environment. In the case of vinyl, going green or being sustainable isn't a possibility. Plus, if you need to replace the siding, all of that material goes to a landfill instead of being recycled. If being environmentally conscientious is a priority then vinyl siding may not be the right choice for you.
- **Warping:** Vinyl is extremely susceptible to high temperatures. When it's hot enough for a long period of time, the siding can warp due to actually melting. The warping won't be noticeable immediately, but after a few years, the signs will start to show up and become visible. While you can always replace the warped pieces, you will experience a problem every few years with vinyl siding. If high temperatures are normal for the area you reside in, then consider a different option for your siding that doesn't melt.
- **Cracking:** It's not just the heat that affects vinyl siding severely. The cold is just as much of a problem for homeowners. Instead of melting, cracks are the main concern with cold temperatures. This is mostly due to damage from impacts. While most siding protects against varying levels of impact, all that protection means nothing when the protective shell is frozen. As such, anything from bumping into the house to a full storm can cause fractures and cracks in the siding. With these cracks, moisture from snow and rain can seep through causing even more problems for homeowners.
- **Insulated Windows:** It's understandable that vinyl melts in extreme heat thanks to being plastic. However, it can also melt in the cold thanks to the increasing use of insulated windows. The insulation affects how the light passes through. If you live in a neighborhood filled with multiple homes surrounding you, then the light being reflected may cause problems.

- **Moisture:** The siding itself is water-resistant, which means that it's naturally protective against moisture buildup. However, vinyl is often installed with foam backing to increase insulation. This foam backing ends up trapping the moisture between the siding and the walls. With nowhere to go, the level of moisture builds up and leads to mold and rot developing. The worst part is that the vinyl siding itself won't show any signs of a moisture problem meaning the problem can go undetected for a long time.

FIBER CEMENT

An increasingly more popular option, fiber cement siding is often praised for its beautiful appearance and durability. In addition, it's relatively low-maintenance requirements and fire resistance make it an attractive option for homeowners that live in high-risk, wildfire areas. However, that doesn't mean that there aren't various cons to consider with fiber cement siding. Here are some of the things you should be aware of when considering fiber cement siding products for your home:

- **Maintenance:** Yes, the need for maintenance is lower compared to some other siding options, but maintenance is still needed. More importantly, it's the type of maintenance needed that is noteworthy. Regular painting and touch-ups will be needed with fiber cement siding. In addition, you will most likely need to invest in caulking to maintain your siding warranty and stay protected against future problems. Then there's the cleaning. Expect to need to clean the siding regularly to minimize the appearance of dirt and grime.
- **Higher Costs:** While not a functional problem, it still represents a significant barrier for most homeowners. The high cost is due to the cost of the materials involved in making fiber cement siding, which is a mixture of cement, sand, and cellulose fibers. Plus, the labor costs are higher than any other siding choice thanks to its high weight. More weight means more manpower, which means that the labor bill goes up. Fiber cement siding is heavy and difficult to install—and should always be placed by a licensed and experienced contractor for optimal results.
- **Fiber Cement Quality:** Since the siding is made up of a mixture of three different materials this leads to less uniform standards when it comes to quality. Inconsistencies are bound to occur, but the lack of standard manufacturing processes also contribute to great variation from one product to another. In addition to the quality of the siding, the quality of installation is also a potential problem.

You can minimize the impact of a poor installation by buying high-quality fiber cement siding products from a manufacturer like James Hardie that specializes in this material, and by hiring a contractor that specializes in the specific installation methods required for that particular product.

- **Moisture Problems:** All types of siding can be compromised when it comes to moisture and water damage. However, fiber cement actually absorbs moisture, a quality that can mean that this material is more susceptible to panel damage, rot, and mold. The way to minimize this problem is to ensure proper installation methods. All gaps must be properly treated—specifically, the gaps between the siding and the roof and the seams should be placed perfectly to prevent absorption and water infiltration into the home.

STEEL

Steel is a popular siding choice thanks to it being more durable than aluminum and vinyl. Plus, it requires little maintenance and its inorganic makeup means it can't rot or waste away—making it an option built to last a long time, even when compared to other siding options. That being said, even steel siding has its problems for homeowners to be wary of.

- **Wet or Coastal Climates:** Steel may not waste away or rot, but it does rust. Rust is basically the beginning of the end for metal, which includes steel. Areas filled with high humidity levels or exposure to salty air or fog are perfect environments for rust to thrive in. Most manufacturers offer a rust protection coating that can minimize this concern. However, this coating is only good until it's scratched or otherwise compromised.
- **Hot Climates:** Steel lacks a natural resistance to heat compared to other siding materials. This means that heat will affect your home more easily, resulting in higher energy bills. Many homeowners mitigate this concern by adding insulation to their steel siding. However, this drives the cost up significantly and might only prove to be effective to a point. If you live in a hot area, take the extra precautions if you want to live comfortably with steel siding.
- **Insulation:** Briefly touched on in the previous point, the fact is that metal is terrible at insulation both from heat and sound. Many homeowners complain about louder than normal noise levels and even amplified noises coming from the outdoors with steel installations than owners with different siding materials. Plus, the energy bill could be higher in hotter climates. The only real solution is to install insulation that not only protects against the heat but also sounds and outside noises.

- **Installation:** When it comes to weight, steel is the next heaviest option after fiber cement materials. This means that steel should be professionally installed by licensed and reputable contractors, which means an increase in labor costs for those hoping to install their siding themselves. In addition to higher installation costs, the installation is also difficult thanks to the need for special equipment to cut and attach the siding. The installation process is longer for steel than other options as a result. Some owners may need to reinforce parts of their house due to the extra weight. Finally, most contractors are unfamiliar with steel siding, making it difficult to find a good contractor to install it.
- **Durability:** Yes, the product is durable especially compared to vinyl and aluminum. However, this material is still susceptible to rust especially when scratched. Protective coatings and paint jobs can help protect against this concern but requires upkeep. Plus, like all metal, steel is vulnerable to dents from impact. Thicker gauge steel can protect against these dents, but siding can only be so thick and still perform its functions. Basically, steel siding can take a hit and keep on coming, but once enough hits add up the damage and need for repairs becomes all too visible.

ENGINEERED WOOD

Engineered wood siding is fairly new compared to other siding options and is already being praised for its many benefits including its versatility, environmental friendliness, and cost. While engineered wood siding is making great sides, there are still barriers homeowners need to know before buying.

- **Fillers:** The quality and environmental friendliness of engineered wood siding are completely dependent on the manufacturers and their process. Many manufacturers will use other binders than the standard ones, which can have an impact on quality and sustainability. The key to managing this is to compare different brands closely to rule out those of suspect quality.
- **Perfect Appearance:** For those who desire an authentic look with their siding, they will find that engineered wood is a little to perfect in appearance. Basically, the look ends up looking more manufactured than natural. From a design standpoint, this can be a problem depending on your goals.

PVC/COMPOSITE

PVC/Composite Siding is the newest addition to the siding industry, although it's been around for over fifty years in non-residential uses. This option is engineered to closely resemble wood siding, and is also known for behaving much like real wood during installation.

While many homeowners have decided on the relatively new cellular PVC products for siding installations in the last decade, there are some issues to consider before choosing it for your home. Here are some of the potential cons of PVC siding to help you make a decision:

- **Lack of Information:** Like all new products, the cost is naturally higher since the features and characteristics of PVC siding haven't been confirmed. In addition, there's not much information available for customers who like to research before making a decision.
- **Unsure Investment:** This option has been around for about 10 years for residential installations. This length of time is nowhere near long enough to determine how much of a return on investment owners get with PVC siding. If value is your focal point, you may want to consider other options.
- **Installation:** Not only is the installation process different with this option, but very few contractors are trained or experienced with this siding material compared to other options. This means installation is a tricky and potentially costly endeavor for homeowners.

No matter what siding option you choose, it's important that you remain up to date and knowledgeable with the warranty. Siding needs warranty coverage for the product itself, any finishes i.e. color, coatings, etc. and the installation. In fact, improper installation is the number one cause of a voided warranty. In addition, consider where you live and how that will impact your siding. Some materials thrive in hot environments while others will inevitably fail—so make sure you consult closely with a reliable contractor to determine the best siding choices for you and your specific situation.

CHAPTER TWO: VINYL SIDING



Perhaps the most popular choice of siding materials in the country is vinyl. Vinyl siding is an affordable and durable plastic material that is used to wrap around the home. The most common benefits that vinyl siding materials are known for are its stylish options, weatherproofing capabilities, low-maintenance requirements, and energy efficiency.

Vinyl siding has not been available for very long in comparison to other options like wood siding. In fact, vinyl siding has only been around for 70 years after making its first debut on the construction scene in the US in the 1950s. It was introduced as an alternative to aluminum siding due to aluminum's ability to damage easily. Initially, vinyl siding was not a popular siding choice thanks to flaws in the design. Issues like fading, cracking, and sagging were common occurrences. Fortunately, over the years, the technology behind vinyl siding improved dramatically making it the most popular siding option today.

VINYL SIDING DESIGNS & STYLES

There is no doubt that aesthetics will play a large role in your decision on siding materials. Curb appeal is important for both reflecting your personal style and maintaining and enhancing the future resale value of your home.

Vinyl materials, contrary to popular belief, can be designed to suit a number of home design styles—from classic, to contemporary, to modern, and many others.

SIDING OPTIONS

Vinyl siding comes in a number of options designed to reflect your style, but they are also designed to accommodate your need for a functional home. Here are three of the most popular siding options for your review.

- **Foam-backed siding:** Also known as insulated vinyl siding, this option is standard vinyl siding that also has a backing made of rigid-foam insulation. The goal behind this choice is to fill any gaps behind the stepped profile of the siding. In addition, the siding is an extra deterrent to warping and movement and overall improved weather protection. However, this option is the most expensive one and can create additional problems for homeowners living in areas with extreme temperature changes.
- **Vertical Siding:** (Board and batten): Vertical siding isn't nearly as common as horizontal siding, which can make it a refreshing choice for those that like standing out from the crowd in a subtle but eye-catching way. Another benefit of vertical siding is that it can be less susceptible to water damage than horizontal siding.
- **Lap siding:** Lap siding, also known as "horizontal", or "clapboard" siding, refers to long, flat boards laid horizontally and overlapping one another. This overlapping system helps the material to shed excess water that slips through the seams when it rains. This function also helps to keep moisture from reaching the walls and is also an attractive way to lay the panels. The vinyl lap siding panels can be narrow, wide, or standard in size, and can come in numerous colors, finishes, and styles—including dutch lap, beaded, and lap—to create your ideal look.
- **Shingle Siding:** This option for vinyl siding is meant for homeowners who love the look and texture of wood, but want the benefits of vinyl. Available in numerous styles and colors, vinyl shingles and shake materials offer the look you want without the maintenance, care, or significant expense that real wood materials require.

PROS AND CONS OF VINYL SIDING

Before you can make your final decision, it's important to understand the actual advantages and disadvantages vinyl siding provides. Knowing this information will help you determine if vinyl siding is truly right for you.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility: The number of colors, styles, finishes, and textures are nearly unlimited. This makes for an easy way to pursue your personal style without the hassle of different installation procedures or restricted options. • Long Lifespan: Vinyl siding is meant to last a long time, with thick, high-quality products lasting up to 40 years or longer. Its durability, combined with weather prevention capabilities, makes it a superior choice compared to other materials. Plus, recent advances like UV-resistant coatings have helped to minimize any color fading that may occur. • Mostly Maintenance-Free: The maintenance of premium-quality vinyl siding is easy and hassle-free, especially when compared to wood and other materials. To keep your vinyl siding looking clean and free of dirt, and grime, homeowners, use mild soap and a light spray of the garden hose to remove build-up. Also, make sure to check for any water slipping through the seams and address the issue immediately to prevent water damage. • Moisture-Resistant: The vinyl siding itself is waterproof and water-resistant. Plus, properly installed vinyl siding actually keeps the home dry and protected from damage, unlike other siding materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fading: Vinyl materials come pre-painted and will never need to be re-painted again. However, the color on the vinyl siding can fade over time after long-term exposure to sunlight. Some vinyl siding products offer UV protection and a special coating that help the materials to stay bright and vibrant for much longer, so look for these options if the issue of fading concerns you. • Water Damage: It's true that the vinyl siding itself is waterproof. However, poor installation can lead to open pockets of space between the siding panels. If your vinyl siding is installed incorrectly, water can slip through and cause significant damage inside your home. This downside can easily be avoided by hiring professional, reputable home remodeling experts to install your vinyl siding properly. • Cracking: Vinyl siding is versatile and durable. However, extreme weather like storms can dent, bend, or crack the vinyl siding. In extremely cold temperatures, vinyl can crack against any impact to the siding, including hail. If this happens, the crack might not be noticeable right away—meaning your home's construction could be compromised without you knowing about it. Holes in your siding can lead to sky-high energy bills, uncomfortable indoor temperatures, and a decrease in the level of security of your home. • Warping: While vinyl siding does not warp as easily as other materials like wood, extreme heat can cause the vinyl to actually distort and change its shape over time. If you live in very hot climates, then vinyl may not be your best choice—unless your home is in the shade and out of direct sunlight.

PROPER INSTALLATION

Properly-installed, premium-quality vinyl siding can enhance your home's curb appeal, improve its energy-efficiency, and advance your home's insulation performance. That said, the reverse is also true—and bad quality vinyl siding, and/or a bad installation can result in a bonafide home improvement disaster.

Vinyl siding is quick and easy to install—if you're a professional contractor with plenty of experience using state-of-the-art tools and techniques to get the job done right. Otherwise, installing vinyl materials can be a nightmare for the unprepared or unskilled layperson.

Keep in mind that seals, which are the joining points between the siding and cladding, are important in vinyl installation. Vinyl materials will leak at the seams if not carefully installed in such a way that the seams are close and tight against each other to keep out as much water as possible.

For most people, the trick to a great vinyl installation that lasts for decades is to hire professional, licensed siding contractors. Professionals understand how to secure the siding materials correctly—eliminating wide gaps and holes in the seams that let in mold and excess moisture.

A professional contractor will be able to assist you by installing your vinyl siding in a way that optimizes your home's beauty, function, and value. In addition, they can help you determine the best style and design options for your home so that the vinyl siding wraps around your house like a glove.

TOP BRANDS

Just like anything else you may purchase, the available brands play a role in the decision-making process. To help you with your choice, here are some of the top brands of vinyl siding sold in the United States.

- **Mastic:** This brand is highlighted by its durability and eco-friendliness. If you live in an area that has extreme weather or want to go green, then this brand is the one for you. In addition, there is little, if any maintenance required with this brand. Finally, the brand offers a truly solid warranty for its vinyl siding.
- **Alside:** This brand is actually one of the largest manufacturers of vinyl siding worldwide. In addition to their availability, they are also marked as one of the best. If unlimited options, high quality, and multiple features are things you value, then you will want to check out Alside. Don't be afraid to check out some of their lines that feature increased durability and strength if you live in an area that demands that of your home.

- **CertainTeed:** This brand has been hailed as one of the best and also one of the most reliable. Their vinyl siding collection has been deemed as America's siding and comes with a number of color options. If different styles, colors, and overall superior quality sound good to you, then CertainTeed is the brand for you. Plus, their siding is known to be tough and resistant to fading making them a great choice for those who desire more striking deeper color options.
- **Crane:** This manufacturer prides them on providing customers with excellent aesthetics while providing the opportunity to save money. Their options are deemed premium grade in quality and come in multiple styles and colors. If that's not enough, then consider their energy efficiency. The options available through Crane are specially designed to provide additional insulation, which lowers that energy bill.
- **Variform:** This brand boasts vinyl siding that is reported to be completely maintenance free. If you hate having to do outside chores, then choose Variform. Don't think about it, just do it. If that's not enough for you, they offer lap siding and vertical siding, making this brand a truly versatile design choice when it comes to showing off your curb appeal.
- **Royal:** This brand is one of the top manufacturers of vinyl siding. They focus on delivering elegant and sophisticated options to accommodate those homeowners that value premium style. Royal offers a range of colors covering standard, dark, and premium shades for all of your design needs. In addition to design, they also specialize in durability and strength, which is noted by the ability for their siding to withstand winds up to 240mph. If you value elegant yet durable vinyl siding, then go Royal with your decision. Plus, they offer a double lifetime warranty that is quite useful.

WARRANTY COMPARISONS

When it comes to an important decision like buying vinyl siding to upgrade your home's exterior, one of the most important factors to consider is the warranty. A warranty helps keep you protected in the event that something happens to your vinyl siding. As such, it is important to understand your warranty so you can protect your investment.

It's important to remember that there are warranties available that cover the installation and the siding itself. The reason this is important is that your vinyl siding can fail to function because it's installed improperly or because the siding was defective. Should this occur, and you don't have warranty protection, then you will have to pay double and in some cases may not be able to afford the repair/replacement.

When choosing a contractor, make sure they offer a warranty on their installation. Verify they are up to code on their practices and confirm, what the warranty will and will not cover. It will save your wallet and possibly your sanity. The same goes for the brand you choose. It can be tempting to choose the cheapest option, but real savings comes from superior quality backed by an excellent warranty.

One of the largest complaints about vinyl siding is color fading. The complaint has grown so much that many brands and contractors offer additional fade protection. Ultimately, manufacturers want to sell their products, so take the time to look for a brand that protects against fading and other similar concerns.

VINYL SIDING WARRANTIES: A COMPARISON OF POPULAR VINYL BRANDS

Deciding between the different manufacturers of vinyl siding can seem confusing—especially if you're not sure what to look for, or what should be covered. The most important thing you can do when choosing your siding—whether it's vinyl or another material—is to check the warranty for the product, the warranty for the installation, and if applicable, the warranty for the finish.

All reputable vinyl siding manufacturers offer warranties to cover their products. While these warranties are similar in structure, the terms and conditions do vary—and it's up to the purchaser to understand what is covered and what isn't before making a decision to purchase the product.

To help you wade through the details, here's a quick summary of the warranties of three of the most popular selling vinyl siding manufacturers in the country.

Alside: Alside offers some of the best limited lifetime warranty deals on the markets for its siding products, which includes its regular vinyl siding system and premium vinyl siding lines.

According to their vinyl and premium vinyl warranty information, all Alside premium vinyl and vinyl products are warranted by Alside against blistering, corroding, flaking, and peeling as a direct result of defects occurring during the manufacturing process. This includes Charter Oak, Williamsport, Cypress Creek, Board and Batten, Premium Vinyl Siding, Charter Oak, and Greenbriar Vintage Premium Vinyl Soffit and Accessories.

One of the most important details of their warranty is how it handles fading. Alside will cover “excessive fading” for the lifetime of the product. According to Alside, excessive fading refers to a change of “3 Hunter Units of Delta E” color degradation.

Alside also allows for the warranty to transfer to a secondary owner, with some restrictions. For example, the Warranty may be transferred to the a new owner and a fifty year, limited, non-pro-rated warranty will take effect from the start date of the original installation. This includes fading, although the fade protection coverage is set under different terms according to a detailed, pro-rated schedule.

Hail damage is also covered by Alside's warranty for vinyl siding products. As per the warranty information, homeowners will receive replacement products for damages to their Alside Vinyl Siding, soffits, and any vinyl siding accessories.

In the case of hail damage, the homeowner should contact their homeowners' insurance company for policy details, and submit a claim for coverage under their policy. In the event that coverage is denied by the insurance carrier, the homeowner will be entitled to the hail protection coverage from Alside. Alside does not cover labor costs for replacement of hail-damaged products, as these are considered to be the responsibility of the homeowner.

For both vinyl siding and premium vinyl siding, Alside provides plenty of maintenance instructions that carefully outline the necessary steps for keeping the product clean and well-kept over time. This is important as damages or defects that happen as a result of poor maintenance are not covered by the company—as is the case with all siding manufacturer warranties.

CertainTeed: CertainTeed is another vinyl siding brand that's popular among homeowners in the United States. It offers separate warranties for each of its vinyl options, including its vinyl siding system, and also its Cedar Impressions, Northwoods, and CedarBoards lines.

The details for the warranties are distinct and vary slightly according to the product. In all warranties, CertainTeed covers, its vinyl siding products for manufacturing defects and will pay to repair, replace, refinish, or coat any vinyl siding product, or will refund the money paid for the product plus the installation costs should a problem be identified.

The warranty is categorized as a limited, non-prorated, and transferable warranty—however, the warranty will change terms (i.e. become pro-rated) upon transfer. The original, single-family homeowner and purchaser of the original vinyl products are guaranteed 100%, non-pro-rated coverage for life.

Excess fading is also covered and is defined as degradation in the color intensity that's greater than 4 Hunter Units. The warranty is voided for products that have been painted, varnished, refinished, or similarly coated over the manufacturer's original finish (unless the refinishing or coating is authorized by CertainTeed pursuant to this Warranty).

CertainTeed guarantees that their products will stand up against hail and resist hail damage, and offers a limited warranty for hail protection. If the homeowner notices hail damage to their vinyl siding, he or she must first contact their homeowner's insurance company before contacting CertainTeed. If homeowner's insurance does not cover the full amount of repairing or replacing the vinyl siding and if this amount exceeds the property owner's insurer's payment or contribution (excluding any insurance deductible payment), CertainTeed promises to reimburse the property owner for the uncovered amount.

Mastic: Mastic's limited lifetime warranty covers all of its vinyl siding products, including its vinyl soffits and accessories. The warranty, like others, covers manufacturing defects to the products, excessive fading of 4 Hunter Units. These warranties last forever as long as the original owner of the home when the vinyl siding was installed is still the owner of the property. However, the warranty can be transferred to a new owner with a 50-year coverage term starting from the time the original siding materials were installed.

Hail is also covered under a limited hail damage warranty. Mastic makes it clear that the homeowner is responsible for replacing and repairing siding damaged by hail, and must pursue the cost of repairs and replacements with the homeowner's insurance company before submitting a claim for coverage through this limited hail damage warranty from Mastic.

CHAPTER THREE: STEEL SIDING



The exterior of the home is not only vital to maintain for the sake of functionality but is also a great source of style and curb appeal. Whether it's the landscape, the roof, or the siding, there are a number of decisions that need to be made regarding the materials used in construction. One material growing in popularity is steel—which is used in everything from window frames, to roofing, and siding.

The history of steel siding is long yet sporadic when it comes to its use and popularity in homes in the United States and around the world. While it was undoubtedly used before then, steel siding was only officially patented as a material for construction in homes in 1903. Until the 1930s, it was used in a limited fashion, due to susceptibility to water penetration and rust. However, in 1939, a man by the name of Frank Hoess developed interlocking flanges on the top and bottom of the steel siding panels to correct this problem, leading to its continued popularity in the decades that followed.

While a milestone in the development of steel siding, all production and development were halted thanks to the need for steel by the military during World War 2. After World War 2, the nation's housing shortage combined with the cost-effective nature of steel and aluminum led to a rise in the use of steel siding that peaked in the 50s and 60s. By the 1970s, vinyl was introduced and began to take over the siding industry in record numbers—leading to a significant decline in the use of steel siding for both residential and commercial buildings.

Today, modern steel siding is made from stainless or galvanized steel to better combat the possibility of rust. Both types of steel have inherent protection against rusting, although stainless steel has an edge over other metals due to chromium ingredients mixed into the steel. With this change in focus, today's steel products are engineered to better compete with its cheaper yet weaker cousin, aluminum.

Besides addressing the concern of rust and corrosion, recent advances have led to the use of a variety of textures and colors to better accommodate the homeowner's style and aesthetic needs. Steel siding is expected to maintain its growth in popularity as more technological improvements and advances continue to be made.

STYLES AVAILABLE

Now more than ever, homeowners are benefitting from the use of steel siding thanks to its multifaceted uses and longevity. To that end, style is what really begins to separate steel siding from other available options on the market. From quaint and rustic, to modern and hip, steel siding can truly transform your property and even help you maintain your original design—while infusing it with unparalleled strength.

- **Corrugated:** Known for its strength and durability, corrugated siding has evolved into a style of its own for both the home and commercial buildings. These panels are specially formulated to deliver multiple tones and shades across numerous color options during the day. For example, at 8am your home may look forest green, and then in the afternoon, the sun might transform the look into an emerald-like appearance. Combined with simple installation, this style option is versatile and perfect for accommodating other styles or being a style all on its own.
- **Vertical Panels:** The vertical panel style is all about the sightlines. When installed correctly, the panels offer clean lines that refine multiple property types. In addition, this style is perfect for the homeowner who wants to show off special features of their home such as window trims, overhanging roofs, and more. Keep in mind that taller buildings benefit more than short buildings if the best presentation is your goal.

- **Horizontal:** Just like vertical panels, horizontal ones are a style as well. While this style can be merged into other styles, it can still stand on its own thanks to how they're installed. The panels are designed to be longer lengths, which in turn means they create a seamless line that runs across the length of the building. With this style, you can benefit from creating a uniform appearance across the house or use it as a complement to other materials for a striking contrast that brings positive attention.
- **Modern:** Simple yet impactful is the modern style approach. A modern approach requires infusing one of the base styles previously mentioned and adding a touch of creativity to deliver incredible results. It's recommended to utilize dark greys, white, and possibly black as your color choice for that ultra-modern look. If your home has a lot of other features, you may want to consider a second color that pops with your base color for the ultimate in curb appeal.
- **Rustic:** As much as modern has become a buzzword so too has rustic. To that end, many homeowners are choosing to adopt a style based on textures and colors to enhance or introduce their rustic appeal. This option is more popular in suburban and country homes but is seeing a lot of use everywhere. With this style, you will want to go with weathered steel for the "authentic" rugged look or stick to reds, browns, and tans if you desire color more.
- **Industrial:** The industrial look has grown in popularity thanks to the widespread development of commercial buildings and homes with exposed structures. This option is perfect for people who have homes with unique geometric shapes or multiple features that offer visual points of interest. The trick to optimizing this style is to combine the steel siding with other materials such as stone or wood. In addition, color is important as well. With this style stick with neutral colors to highlight the other natural materials or go bold to stand out. Bold colors work best around entryways and balconies. Don't be afraid to play with the textures and dimensions available with this style.
- **Mountain:** More popular in the mountains and surrounding locations hence the name, this style is growing in popularity anywhere else that has nature as its surroundings. The key to this style is to take what's good about steel siding (durable, fire-resistant, etc.) and blend the look with the surrounding landscape. For example, if mountains surround you, the natural thing to do is look at the mountains. By sticking with darker tones and natural finishes you can make your home part of the picture instead of sticking out in a jarring fashion.

- **Farm and Ranch:** Farms and ranch style homes get love too with steel siding. Thanks to the streamlined look provided by either vertical or horizontal panels an authentic look can be produced that comes with minimal maintenance. Light, crisp colors or dark natural colors are the ticket with this style choice. For a modern twist consider light grey or off white. Don't be afraid to play with texture options for another bit of uniqueness while staying true to the spirit of the style.
- **Log Cabin:** Traditionally, log cabins were made with all wood and stone materials. However, steel siding is being used as the modern approach to the log cabin thanks to rustic or weathered looks that can be applied to the steel. The trick to having this style look magazine-worthy is to use the steel siding to offset the appearance of the logs surrounding the home. One of the easiest ways to do this is to feature the siding around entryways and windows. Also, go with flat panels to contrast with the rough and 3D nature of logs for a striking appearance.

Keep in mind that steel siding can come in a number of styles, color, and profile options. Some panels or finishes are better for a modern look while another option is best suited for an industrial look. The trick is to work with a professional designer or contractor that can best advise how to marry your style and goals with the best siding choices to make your new look a reality. Even with steel siding, there are different levels of quality available.

This can be due to different brands since each brand will focus on a specific quality over another or it can be down to availability. Regardless, you want to identify your needs and shop according to what the panels can provide not just the price point.

THE PROS AND CONS OF STEEL SIDING

Before making a decision on steel siding, you first must understand what steel siding actually provides you and what it cannot do for you. After all, every kind of siding material has strengths and weaknesses, and steel is no different. To help you evaluate your choices, here's a breakdown of the pros and cons of different options for your review.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength and Durability: Steel is tough and can take a hit. From baseballs to baseball-sized hail, steel is tough and can withstand heavy impact like no other materials. Plus, unlike other materials, steel doesn't get weaker with age—meaning it will keep you protected for decades. • Maintenance: Compared to most other options, steel requires little maintenance. Usually, rain will wash away accumulated dirt and grime. If needed, you can use mild soap with a hose or pressure washer for that polished look. Keep in mind that harsh cleaners should be avoided when cleaning. • Resistance Factor: The steel is inorganic and therefore cannot waste away. This means concerns like decay or insects are a non-factor. Animals like termites or mice that like to eat away or slip through are unable to do so with steel siding meaning additional protection is an installation away. • Fire Protection: Unlike other materials, steel siding can take on fire. Wood burns easily, aluminum melts at a lower degree, and vinyl is a form of plastic meaning it warps and melts. Unless the fire can hit 2,500 degrees Fahrenheit or hotter you're safe. • Color Protection: Steel, especially stainless steel doesn't fade. Other materials like vinyl and aluminum will fade over time. Keep in mind that chalking is still a concern along with the finish and quality you buy. Lower-grade steel siding may still have fade concerns compared higher quality pieces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corrosion (Rust): The largest concern with metal like steel is corrosion. This is caused by prolonged exposure to moisture. For those living in coastal or humid environments, this can be a large concern. You will want to look into rust protection plans to keep your siding protected. Some product offerings already come with coatings to protect against rust, but that is compromised once scratched. • Expense: The upfront cost is higher than other siding options. For those on a budget, this option may not be the one to pursue. That being said, it's longer-lasting making it an option that may save you money down the road. If resale is a factor, then be wary of potential buyers not being comfortable with an uncommon siding type such as steel. • Installation Problems: This one needs to be qualified. The installation, when handled by a professional with the proper tools and training, is a breeze. However, for the person who likes to DIY, steel siding is the worst choice to make. In addition, if you mess up or damage a segment then the entire piece has to be replaced. Don't forget. Steel is heavy especially compared to other choices. • Poor Energy-Efficiency: Steel is a thermal conductor and transfers heat from the living area to the outside quite easily. This means a higher energy bill and more difficult temperature regulation. This can be negated to a point which extra insulation under the siding, but this can result in additional costs.

SEAMLESS STEEL SIDING VS. STANDING SEAM SIDING

We all know about comparing one material to another such as when steel is compared to vinyl. However, did you know that steel can be compared to itself? With steel siding, you can also select between seamless steel siding and standing seam siding.

Information about the two is provided below:

- **Seamless Steel Siding:** This option is actually specially made. These are steel panels coated in a protective layer of vinyl. Each section is built to span the length of the home despite how long or wide the home is. This results in a seamless installation that is more durable than other options. Plus, there is a range of finish and color options built to suit anyone's personal style.
- **Standing Seam Siding:** This is a metal panel system that utilizes a raised seam that connects other panels together. This option is known for its high degree of protection against environmental conditions. In addition, the panels are usually created at the job site due to the manufacturing process. Since the panels can be longer, the end result is a more seamless appearance compared to other installations. Farms and ranches have been the most common property to use this option, but are seeing more use in houses that benefit from simple lines and have limited décor.

Neither option is inherently superior to the other. What the decision comes down to is what you want to accomplish with your remodel. Every homeowner has different goals, concerns, and styles so make the decision based on which option best matches those three items.

TOP BRANDS

Every manufacturer tempers its siding products in different ways, in order to highlight the features and characteristics that they value the most. For this reason, the top siding brands will vary greatly in the products they offer for customers. Here are some of the top siding brands we work with, and why they're considered to be some of the best siding manufacturers in the industry.

- **EDCO:** Elegance combined with a natural look is the focus with this manufacturer, whose roots in the siding industry go back to 1946. EDCO specializes in fabricating faux wood grain textures, making it a perfect brand for those who desire to mimic the appearance of wood while getting the benefits of steel. In addition, EDCO utilizes a finish that bulks up the durability of steel, making it long-lasting compared to other steel siding options.
- **Quality Edge:** With Quality Edge, you get strong steel siding at a cost-effective price. This brand is a leader in the steel building products industry, whose diverse and varied product line is the result of innovative new developments in steel siding technology,
- **Rollex:** Weather protection with attractiveness is the approach of Rollex. Rollex has been hailed as the brand with the highest durability on the market. They use an oven-fused finish to better protect against scratches and dents along with tighter seams. All of this contributes to color choices that last and won't fade.
- **Alside:** Alside prides itself on their steel siding options. Their steel siding is maintenance-free. In addition, they produce excellent profiles with their galvanized steel. The steel is fused with PVC making it quite durable. Their product line is varied for a number of different results to accommodate everyone's needs.

WARRANTY COMPARISONS

When buying steel siding or any building material, you must consider the warranty. Sometimes the best prices and contractors mean nothing in the face of a poor warranty. The main job of the warranty is to protect you in the event something goes wrong with either the installation or the siding. However, this can't be accomplished without knowing and understanding the key elements of a steel siding guarantee.

The first step to evaluating a siding warranty is to determine if the terms cover the product, the installation, or both. Knowing this answer will inform you whether the warranty is actually a good one, and also if an additional warranty is needed. The last thing you want is to pay twice for installation of the same product, just because the first one wasn't done correctly. On the flip side, a defective panel won't offer any benefits, even if it's installed properly. A proper warranty should cover both the installation and the actual product when possible.

In the event that both installation and the siding product are not covered under one warranty, then make sure to shop accordingly. Choose a contractor that has a great track record backed by an excellent warranty on their installation process.

Make sure you know what their warranty covers, and be sure that everything they do is up to code. Failure to do so is to be caught with nothing to help you in case your siding malfunctions, deteriorates, or is ineffective in some other way down the road.

When choosing a brand, check their warranty. If they seem to offer everything except a warranty, then chances are that the quality of their product is lacking. This could cause you to lose plenty of money in the long run, even if the product is offered at a low and affordable price. Instead, make sure to get superior quality with superior coverage so your steel siding is an investment worth having.

FADING

Problems like fading are by and large not a problem with steel siding. However, anything colored or painted will gradually fade to some extent, eventually. If you choose a colored or painted option, then be sure the installer or the manufacturer protects the product from fading in the future. Also, be sure to check out rust and corrosion protections while you're at it. A great warranty will cover all of these bases, granting you the peace of mind you need to know you're protecting your investment now and into the future.

One of the largest complaints about vinyl siding is color fading. The complaint has grown so much that many brands and contractors offer additional fade protection. Ultimately, manufacturers want to sell their products, so take the time to look for a brand that protects against fading and other similar concerns.

Keep in mind that how you handle your steel siding plays a role, as mishandling your products can effectively void the warranty. Read over your maintenance instructions and warranty details to learn how to best take care of your steel siding, and ask plenty of questions before deciding to have it installed. If a certain cleaning product is prohibited from use on steel siding, make sure to find out—and then avoid using it to reduce fading. Also, make sure to find out the proper ways to clean your siding products that will extend the life of both the product and its color into the future.

Here are the top two warranties for steel siding on the market from top manufacturers Alside Satinwood and Quality Edge.

Alside Satinwood Select Steel Siding: Like all manufacturers of siding products, Alside provides thorough instructions for the proper care and maintenance of its siding materials. This is because improper care of your siding installation will void the warranty, so if you decide to go with Alside Satinwood Select or any other brand of siding be sure to understand what it takes to maintain it.

Alside Satinwood Select Steel is covered with a Kynar 500 PVDF finish—which is a heavy-duty, resin-based metal coating designed to weather-seal the materials. Homeowners that choose this product agree to Alside’s Lifetime Limited Warranty contract terms, which also includes 35-year, limited chalk, and color change coverage, and 50-year limited hail protection.

According to the terms of the warranty for steel siding, Alside promises to fully repair, refinish, or replace any defective siding at no cost to the customer within the first three years from the initial date of installation. After the first three-year period is over, Alside will charge a \$100 payment for each claim filed, and cover the rest of the costs of materials and labor for each incident.

Regarding hail coverage, Alside will guarantee only the replacement materials for damaged siding products. However, homeowners must first file a claim with their homeowner’s insurance company. If the hail damage is not covered by insurance or is only partially covered, homeowners can then pursue coverage from Alside—and must pay a \$200 fee for each claim filed.

If the warranty is transferred, the warranty is prorated through the fiftieth year after installation of the siding. This applied to both the warranty for the siding, chalk and color change, and for hail protection.

Quality Edge: Quality Edge offers a Lifetime Transferable (Limited) Warranty for its steel siding products, which are painted with Q800 TuffTech™ metal building products. The siding is guaranteed to arrive without manufacturing defects, and will not peel, chip, or crack for the lifetime of the products. This does not include grazing or slight cracking on the edges or break bends of embossed steel products. The warranty also covers color changes and fading, and Quality Edge guarantees the product not to fade more than five Hunter AE units, or to chalk in excess of eight units.

The lifetime warranty is transferable to the second owner of the home after the siding was first installed, however, the transfer must be executed within the first thirty days after the new homeowner assumes ownership of the property. The new warranty for the transferred product will cover 75 years after the initial installation and is pro-rated to cover 100% of repair or replacement expenses for the first 25 years, 50% of coverage for the following 25-50 years, and 25% for the remaining 50-75 years of the warranty.

CHAPTER FOUR: FIBER CEMENT



The origin of fiber cement begins with the Industrial Revolution. During that time period, new materials were made through soaking fabric or fibers into durable materials such as cement. This process yielded a cement-based material that boasted improved internal stability compared to concrete alone.

Until it became known that asbestos is a carcinogen, that was the primary fiber of choice when creating fiber cement. After asbestos was discontinued from use, the material known as cellulose became its replacement.

Fast forward to the mid-1980s, and the company founded by James Hardie invented fiber cement technology, as we know it today. During this time, the company went on to manufacture and design a large range of building products centered on the use of fiber cement. In the 1990s the company officially entered the North American market with its HardiePlank® lap siding product. This entry into the industry heralded a noted shift in the technology and options available with siding.

Today, fiber cement remains a popular siding choice for both homeowners and businesses alike. Its versatility combined with its low maintenance and durability makes this choice a can't miss for those who want siding products that can resemble other popular options while remaining stronger and more capable.

Keep in mind that fiber cement is trickier to install than other options, which is why professional installers should be considered in the decision-making process.

STYLES AVAILABLE

If there is one thing obvious with fiber cement siding, it's that style is the name of the game. This particular type of siding has five base styles with room for shapes and colors to set your home apart from the rest in a stylish and functional manner that lasts.

- **Lap:** This option comes in a variety of finishes and is known for its horizontal pattern. Whether you want to create that natural wood look or go ultra modern with a smooth and colorful finish, the lap style is a classic that shouldn't be ignored.
- **Shake or Shingles:** Coming in either strips or individual shingles, this option is perfect for those who want the classic wood-grain look. For a truly classic touch, consider getting the shingles stained before installation.
- **Artisan:** A subset of the lap style. This option also includes trim and is designed specifically to add a touch of luxury to the home's appearance. With this option, it's all about the details you put into your siding.
- **Panel:** Basically the inverse of the lap style. This option uses vertical panels to accomplish either traditional country style homes or for the homeowner who wants to go modern yet minimalist.

With each base style, there are a number of shapes or finish options as noted in the list below. Consult with your chosen contractor to determine the finish that will accomplish your design goals.

Shapes:

- Perfection Shingles
- Random Square
- Half-Rounds
- Octagon
- Individual

Lap:

- Cedar
- Smooth
- Smooth Beaded
- Textured Beaded
- Textured Dutchlap

Vertical:

- Cedar No Groove
- Cedar 8" Groove
- Smooth

No matter which fiber cement siding style you choose, all of your choices can come pre-designed and pre-colored ahead of time. This allows complete control of the appearance of your home before you commit to the installation. Also, if you choose to pre-color it may be necessary to perform a touch-up on the paint job depending on the coloring process provided by your chosen manufacturer.

THE PROS AND CONS OF FIBER CEMENT SIDING

With any material, there are pros and cons to consider. Fiber cement has a healthy mix of them both, and the breakdown has been provided below.

Pros of Fiber Cement Siding	Cons of Fiber Cement Siding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Maintenance: When properly installed, the maintenance needed is extremely low. Once a year, you will need to wash with a pressure washer or standard garden hose. During this time, be sure to inspect the flashing and condition of the paint job. Expect to re-paint every five years with standard paint jobs. • Multiple Options: Previously touched on, but it is certainly a major benefit. Fiber cement can mimic any other material in touch and appearance while boasting nearly unlimited color options thanks to being painted. Whether it's wood grain, stone, or vinyl look and feel, you can't go wrong with fiber cement siding. • Durability: Live in a hot humid environment? Does it get extremely cold in the winters where you reside? With fiber cement, those concerns are nonexistent. Fiber cement siding doesn't warp and won't become brittle. The siding stands strong against storms of all types and can even handle being near the ocean. You will need to hit the siding with the force of a car to make it crack. • Fire Resistance: Made of sand, cement, and other fillers, fiber cement is considered neutral—and as a result, isn't flammable. Fiber cement siding won't ignite or further feed any flames, which makes it an excellent and valid option for those living in high-risk wildfire zones. • Pest Control: Pests like termites and ants hate this material, which means they will leave your siding alone making it a perfect option for those who live in humid areas filled with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weight: Averaging around 2.5 pounds per square foot, this is not a material to handle alone. Larger work crews are often needed along with special tools for the installation itself. In addition, these pieces need perfect support so it may take extra reinforcing to install. • High Costs: The high weight and additional workforce combined with necessary safety measures can often result in a higher cost than other siding options. However, the cost is mitigated by the longevity of the product making it a solid option for long-term savings. • Needs Repainting: Compared to vinyl or aluminum, this material needs more care and attention through repainting. However, the need for repainting can range from 10-25 years between paint periods depending on the finish and method of painting used.

PRE-FINISHED- JAMES HARDIE PLUS

When it comes to the finish of your siding, it's important to know that the paint color will fade over time. This is especially true when UV rays are considered. Fortunately, recent advances have come about thanks to pre-finishing, which can prolong the vibrant color of your siding for longer. One of the leaders of this approach is James Hardie, who developed their ColorPlus technology in the mid-2000s.

The ColorPlus technology utilizes a baked-on finish that is formulated specifically to bond with their siding products, resulting in a longer-lasting finish that requires even less maintenance than ever before.

Some additional benefits of pre-finishing include:

- A strong uniform finish, thanks to multiple coats.
- Pre-finished equals immediate curb appeal soon as the installation is complete.
- Weather delays that slow down the installation process won't occur, since the siding is already painted.
- Year-round availability for installation.
- No streaks, drips, runs, or shrink lines.

In addition to the previously mentioned benefits, most pre-finished siding products—including the ColorPlus method from James Hardie—come with a 15-year limited color warranty that covers paint and labor, and protects against chipping, peeling, and cracking.

Also important, the number of color choices are virtually limitless and can include complementary colors when the trim is included in the installation package.

SEAMS

One of the most important considerations with siding of any material is the seams. Fiber cement siding is less susceptible to shrinkage and expansion than other materials.

Unlike wood and vinyl, which tend to expand and contract considerably as temperatures fluctuate, fiber cement holds strong throughout intense dips and rises in temperatures. This is important because when siding shrinks and expands, it's more likely to crack or separate at the seams. When this happens, your siding can leak and become more susceptible to serious water damage.

Where fiber cement siding differs from other options is in the method in which it protects the seams from moisture and water damage. Instead of caulking like with other siding, it is recommended by the experts in the industry to use flashings to accomplish this objective.

The reasons for this method are below:

- **Moisture Management:** The first and most obvious reason is moisture management. Joint flashing that is inserted behind the butt joints provides a physical layer. This physical layer serves as a barrier that aids in directing water down and away from the wall cavity, guiding it out and away from the home construction. Caulking serves to disrupt the design of this process due to impeding said drainage. In addition, caulk prevents proper drying from occurring making issues like rot or mold more likely to occur.
- **Caulk Needs Maintenance:** In order to properly care for caulk-based seams, the butt joints and horizontal laps will require removal. This is a long and cumbersome process that carries the additional risk of not being reinstalled correctly. This can result in additional problems and make this siding choice seem not worth it for some.
- **Attractive Flashing:** Proper installation of flashing means that the joints look better. The goal is to create a continuous looking joint i.e. a seamless appearance due to everything flowing and interlocking as it should. On the other hand, caulking requires a minimum gap that becomes more visible as time progresses. This results in an uglier appearance that results in a jarring effect visually.

Thanks to the established practices of industry experts and manufacturers, a failure to utilize flashings for the seams may result in any warranties being voided, which will hurt homeowners in the event something occurs.

TOP BRANDS

With fiber cement siding, there are a number of brands available for homeowners. Of those options, a list of the top five along with their specialties have been provided below.

- **GAF Weatherside:** This manufacturer's primary focus is on roofing supplies. As a result, the company's focus and point of specialization is on fiber-cement siding shingles, however, they also are a top supplier of fiber cement siding products. Their degree of focus on exterior fiber cement solutions has made them one of the leading providers of this material in the market. Combined with their specialty is their accessibility being made available in major retailers such as Home Depot making them an accessible option for those who desire the shingle look.
- **James Hardie:** This brand might is widely considered to be the father of fiber-cement siding, covering more than 95% of the market. In fact, the James Hardie company is responsible for inventing the fiber cement technology as its known today and is known as the "father of fiber cement". What's more, James Hardie continues to innovate and develop within this space in its effort to provide a truly superior product. In fact, this brand has become synonymous with fiber cement siding since they have not diversified, and offer nearly every single feature or extra that you can think of at nearly unmatched quality.
- **Nichiha:** This brand is a Japanese company that specializes in the commercial buildings sector. However, they do offer a number of options for residents. They are not available in retail outlets so you will need to request them through your contractor. However, for those who desire the best in modern looks, they can't do better than Nichiha.
- **Allura:** Allura is a mid-range provider that provides a bit of everything at a decent price with exceptional quality. While their main product offerings aren't as diverse as brands like James Hardie, they make up for this with their vast selection of accessory products. When it comes to trims and soffits offerings, Allura stands out.

INSPECTING THE WARRANTY

Before you make a decision on what kind of fiber cement siding to buy or who to buy it from you need to consider the warranty.

In the case of this type of siding, there are three types of warranties you need and depending on how you shop all three may be combined into one comprehensive warranty. When possible, that is the route you want to take to ensure that you enjoy maximum coverage.

While advances in the siding industry are ongoing, that doesn't mean that the basics of warranty coverage have changed along with them.

Good warranty coverage is as much an art as it is full of legalese. In order to know if the warranty available is a good one, there are certain criteria that need to be met. The needed criteria are listed below.

- Covers the installation
- Covers the product
- Offers color protection
- Covers the finish

Ideally, the warranty would include all of those criteria. However, in some cases, multiple warranties are needed. This usually occurs when the contractor you hired offers a warranty on the installation, but the manufacturer is who provides coverage concerning the product itself.

The best quality and finish for your fiber cement siding won't mean anything if the product is installed incorrectly. That's why it is always recommended to have professional contractors perform the installation.

Besides verifying that they offer a warranty, be sure to verify their history. Do they have good reviews? Have they been operating for a long time? Are they experienced with fiber cement siding? If the answer is yes then you will most likely enjoy the benefits of a superior installation that ensures that your siding not only looks good, but also maintains optimal functionality for decades after the initial installation.

Before committing to your contractor, double-check their coverage. As a rule, if the contractor is unwilling to offer decent coverage for their installation process, then they are likely not as good as advertised, or worse, they may not install your siding in a manner that is up to code. If your siding violates building codes, then any additional warranted may be void so make sure you're protected in that matter.

Besides the installation, the product itself needs to have coverage too. First and foremost is the quality of your siding. While fiber cement siding is incredibly durable and versatile that doesn't negate the possibility of shoddy workmanship or compromised materials. Most warranties should offer product protection in the event that the siding cracks or are otherwise damaged through no fault of your own. In addition to the product quality, the finish and the color need to be considered.

That octagonal shaped piece of siding that has a stucco texture is a thing of beauty when first installed. However, with such particular evidence of design, the last thing needed is damage or a reduction in the finish that isn't covered. If you're going to spring for the extra special finish, then it only makes sense to get the extra special coverage. The same goes for color. If you choose pre-finished siding that offers special color protection, then it is important that the color is protected against by your warranty.

When installed properly, your siding can look amazing while remaining functional and protective. Sometimes, a product defect or a mistake in the installation process can happen. That's why your warranty coverage is important. Your warranty is the difference between a decision that costs you far more than you planned and an investment that pays dividends for decades after the installation is complete.

COMPARING CEMENT SIDING WARRANTIES

One of the most important things to mention about fiber cement siding is the difficult nature of its installation. While properly installed fiber cement siding will work well and last for decades, an improper installation will likely be very susceptible to rapid decline and deterioration.

Needless to say, a bad installation is not the fault of the manufacturer that produced the siding. In most situations, damaged or faulty siding caused by a poor installation job will not be covered by warranties from the manufacturer. Furthermore, fiber cement siding products that break down or show signs of premature deterioration are often the result of a bad installation—and one that failed to properly adhere to the strict installation guidelines outlined by the manufacturer.

A bad installation can also happen if the type of fiber cement siding installed is not conducive to the area and climate you live in. For example, James Hardie evaluates siding needs based on the region the homeowner lives in, with a classification system known as the "HardieZone".

With this system, the homeowner can be sure that the siding products they need will match the area they live in—whether they need siding that resists wet, freezing conditions over the winter or products that withstand a blistering hot, desert climate.

The installation expert that installs the products in your home will need to correctly classify your needs based on the type of climate your home is located in, and offer the correct products from James Hardie's line.

That said, as long as your installation is completed by a professional contractor (and covered by a separate warranty), and as long as you provide proper maintenance to your siding installation, fiber cement siding can be an excellent option.

All of the leading fiber cement manufacturers offer a warranty on their materials. These warranties differ from company to company.

Here's a breakdown of some of these differences to give you an idea of what to expect when purchasing fiber cement siding products for your home.

JAMES HARDIE

James Hardie is perhaps the most important warranty on this list, due to its dominance in the fiber cement siding market. The most popular fiber cement siding in the country offers a 30-year limited, non pro-rated warranty on its products and is guaranteed to resist damage caused by hail or termite attacks. The product is also guaranteed to arrive free from defects in material and workmanship.

WHAT IS COVERED UNDER THE JAMES HARDIE WARRANTY?

According to the terms of the warranty, the company will repair, replace, or refund the defective portion of a product. However, they will not refund or pay for any costs related to the installation or accessory materials installed along with the siding.

To make a claim for a defective product, the homeowner must contact the company in writing within 30 days after discovery of the issue. The homeowner should provide important details about the defective product including the location and the issue, along with photographs of the product to send to the manufacturer. The homeowner must also keep from making any repairs or replacements to the product until it has been examined and evaluated by a James Hardie representative.

The representative must be allowed to enter the property and perform an evaluation of your siding, taking photographs and samples of the defective materials to send back to the company. Once approved, the company will either repair or replace the product or will provide a refund for up to twice the original retail price of the defective portion of the product.

WHAT IS NOT COVERED UNDER THE JAMES HARDIE WARRANTY?

The warranty for James Hardie fiber cement siding products does not cover damage or defects that happen during the shipping or installation process. This also goes for damage to products caused by improper handling or storage of the materials once in possession of the homeowner.

Products that have been altered or modified from their original state, or that have been repaired are not eligible for coverage benefits. Also not covered under the warranty are products that have shifted or changed position due to structural settling of the home construction, and weather damage that exceeds the specified limits of the materials used in construction according to the HardieZone geographical profile for each product. This includes damage caused by severe weather storms, abnormal wind speeds, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, and other natural events.

Another issue that is not covered by the warranty is mold, mildew, bacteria, fungi, or the growth of any other living organism anywhere on the surface of the siding materials.

James Hardie provides ample and detailed installation and maintenance instructions on its website and along with its products. For best results, examine these instructions carefully and follow them to make the most out of the 30-year limited warranty benefits.

ADDITIONAL WARRANTIES: JAMES HARDIE'S COLOR PLUS TECHNOLOGY WARRANTY

It's important to note that James Hardie fiber cement siding is finished with the company's signature Color Plus Technology—a finish that comes with its own warranty.

This warranty is different from the warranty for the siding materials and is a 15-year, pro-rated warranty that covers properly installed and maintained products. This warranty guarantees the buyer that the siding finish will not peel, crack, or chip.

Homeowners should know that the Color Plus Technology finish is prone to chalking, fading, and tends to attract dirt easily. This often means that the finish is hard to maintain, and will require frequent repainting to keep up—as none of these issues are covered by the manufacturer.

In addition, the manufacturer states that the warranty coverage drops 6.67% after the first year, and will continue to be reduced by 6.67% each year following the original purchase of the siding. This means that the warranty will void itself completely after a time period of 15 years.

GAF WEATHERSIDE

GAF Weatherside's limited, non-transferable warranty is similar to that of James Hardie's, with a few differences. To start, the pro-rated warranty lasts 25 years instead of 30 and is set to adjust each year after the first.

This means that after the first year after installation, the company will compensate you based on the amount of use received from the materials for the remaining 24 years after the first initial year after purchase. This figure is calculated by dividing the number of months that have elapsed since installation by the number of months in the warranty period.

GAF Weatherside siding comes pre-primed and ready to paint—which means that the finish is not covered by the company.

NICHIHA

Nichiha offers a 30-year limited warranty for its Sierra Premium Shake, Savannah Smooth, NichiBoard, NichiPanel, NichiShake, and NichiStaggered products, a 25-year limited warranty for its NichiTrim and NichiSoffit products. It also features a 15-year limited warranty for factory finishes on its Illumination Series Panels and Architectural Wall Panels, and a 10-year limited warranty for its factory finish on KuraStone products. For finish warranties, the coverage guarantees coverage should the product peel, blister, wrinkle, or significantly fade for a period of 10 to 15 years after installation—depending on the specific warranty of the product chosen.

ALLURA

Allura's guarantee on its fiber cement siding products is longer than most, with 50 years of limited warranty coverage. It also comes with a separate 15-year warranty coverage for its ColorMax finish and a 20-year warranty for its Backerboard and Underlayment products. However, there are limitations to be aware of in regards to this warranty. According to the warranty details, the company will replace or repair defective products if the material or workmanship are defective. However, the company will only reimburse the defective portion of the product for up to twice the original retail cost during the first through the thirty-fifth year of the warranty. After the thirty-fifth year through to the fiftieth year of coverage, the company will reimburse the covered person for an amount equal to the cost of similar replacement products, minus the annual pro-rata reduction of 6.67% each year, until the amount payable under the warranty equals zero. This strategy ensures that the warranty voids itself eventually, after the fiftieth year of coverage.

CHAPTER FIVE: ENGINEERED WOOD



Engineered wood siding is made up of composite wood that is a mixture of different fibers and wood materials mixed together to create the final product. The process of manufacturing this type of siding involves taking the wood chips and fibers and compressing them together with a special type of glue. The blend is further hardened during the finishing process to create a more durable siding than wood alone is capable of.

In addition, engineered wood siding is pre-primed for painting, making design a simplified process for homeowners interested in this particular siding type.

This type of siding used to be known as composite wood siding and was originally sold in the 1980s-1990s. However, the initial version of this material led to class action lawsuits due to the material failing prematurely. The most common complaint was the prevalence of moisture present behind the paint finish. When this occurred, the siding would balloon until it crumbled to pieces. The effect was similar to rotted wood.

Since these darker days of the birth of composite wood materials, manufacturers have gone back to the drawing board to improve it. New innovations in engineered wood siding have led to these products being labeled as “engineered wood”.

As a result of the improved siding materials, several issues that plagued the first prototypes have been resolved. These include enhancements that address the moisture protection and pest-resistance qualities of the materials, along with other changes that have made the new product types stronger and more weather-resistant products.

A chemical known as zinc borate, which is fungicidal in nature makes up the coating of the wood chips resulting in even greater pest control than the original composite wood. Currently, engineered wood siding is estimated to last between 50-100 years and is growing in popularity thanks to its versatile use along with its signature, coveted wood appearance. The result is a product that looks similar to wood, and that features enhanced durability and strength.

However, it should be noted that these materials are relatively new, and time will tell how strong of a contender engineered wood siding remains in comparison to other siding options.

STYLISH ENGINEERED WOOD INSTALLATIONS

With the promise of lasting for decades after installation, it's important that style and design are not forgotten when making a decision about engineered wood siding. This type of siding is extremely versatile in styles available as well as color options.

- **Lap:** Perhaps the most common siding style. The lap style is not to be underestimated and owes its roots to the early decades of the United States itself. While the style is older compared to other options it has unmatched staying power thanks to the durability and attractiveness present with this style. The motto “if it’s not broke, don’t fix it” never applied so much as it does with this style choice. Touch-ups are often needed with this style when it comes to paint and caulk so that should be considered in the decision process.
- **Tongue and Groove:** This option shakes things up by being available in multiple patterns. Whether you prefer horizontal, vertical, or even diagonal, the tongue and groove installation can do it all. In addition, the siding can be installed with a variety of textures and finishes thanks to the numerous layouts available. If full customization of the final appearance is desired, then the tongue and groove approach is the decision to make.

- **Drop Channel:** Another option that can be installed in multiple layouts, the drop channel option also provides a significant degree of control similar to the tongue and groove option. However, where this style sets itself apart is its ability to direct water flow down and away from the house. The siding is installed in such a way that contracting and expanding is not only a reality, but it's utilized to its full potential. In addition, the natural shadowing effect of this style lends itself to a more visually striking appearance even without the paint job being considered.
- **Board and Batten:** This is a style marked by its vertical installation. In addition to the layout, the planks are traditionally wide and evenly spaced to create a uniform appearance. To help tie the larger planks together, smaller pieces are installed over them as an extra degree of protection for any contraction or expansion that may occur. While the traditional approach is an option, you can take the style to the next level by going with variable widths for your planks. This results in intriguing patterns that add an extra bit of visual appeal.
- **Shingle and Shake:** No discussion concerning style with wood-based siding can be complete without discussing the shingle style. Thanks to the uniform size and shape, this option is only growing in popularity for homeowners. In addition, this style is one of the easiest to install making it a viable option for those love to do it themselves. Extra points for this style are available thanks to being forgiving of homes that are oddly shaped. The shingles are naturally smaller compared to the larger planks meaning that they can be customized to odd dimensions more easily. For those who live in more storm heavy environments, they may want to consider upgrading to shakes. Shakes are the heavier version of the shingle style and are much more durable as a result. Plus, the design is not perfectly uniform making it perfect for those who desire a more offbeat appearance.

When it comes to style for the home, the decision-making process isn't complete until color schemes are decided. Considering the visual profile of engineered wood siding, it's no surprise that the available color palettes gravitate towards colors found in nature.

Keep in mind that with engineered wood siding, the planks and trim can be pre-finished and pre-colored in the factory, making installation fast and easy. Be prepared for the possibility of needing a touch-up on the paint job from time to time, depending on how you proceed with the painting process and how long the finish lasts before it begins to fade.

THE BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF ENGINEERED WOOD SIDING

Engineered wood siding has come a long way from its humble beginnings and that much is obvious when looking at the available benefits present with this material.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Versatility: The countless combinations of styles and colors make this an extremely versatile siding option that is nearly unmatched. In addition, next to actual wood itself, no other material mimics that desired wood-like appearance so perfectly. Plus, it can be made to look like brick and stone as well, meaning that it gets bonus points in this category for versatility in design and appearance. • Durability: This type of siding doesn't split, warp, or crack if installed correctly. In addition, engineered wood lacks the traditional knots found in regular wood meaning that its structural integrity is even stronger. The siding will stand up to hail, mold, rot, pests and other damaging effects making this option one that lasts. • Less Expensive: This siding choice is much cheaper than traditional wood siding thanks to the difference in manufacturing processes. Plus, the material is lighter than wood, which means that labor costs should be lower across the board. • Environmentally Friendly: Engineered wood siding is very environmentally friendly thanks to how it's made, lowered need for maintenance, and average lifespan. Should the time come that the siding needs replacing, you can take comfort in knowing that the materials are biodegradable, unlike many other siding options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Too-Perfect" Appearance: Granted, perfection is rarely considered a negative, but for those who desire a truly authentic wood-like appearance, they may find engineered wood to look too manufactured. • Expense: Engineered wood siding can cost more than other options like vinyl siding. In any case, the homeowner should also consider the longer lifespan of engineered wood options when compared to typical vinyl siding products, and how the longer lifespan can detract from the initial costs of installation. • Seams: Custom-fit planks are non-existent with engineered wood siding products, as are seamless options. For those seeking the efficiency and sleek visual appeal of seamless planks, engineered wood siding products might not meet expectations.

While engineered wood siding has plenty of benefits, it is not without its drawbacks as shown in the list below.

PRE-FINISHED - DIAMOND KOTE

One of the most effective ways to keep engineered wood siding in excellent condition is through pre-finishing. One of the most effective brands when it comes to pre-finishing LP Smart Side engineered wood products is Diamond Kote. The process involves machine finishing the pieces of siding in either a custom stain or custom paint color depending on the choice made.

Where the process truly shines is its made-to-order approach meaning that not only is the paint job fresh, but is also customized to exactly match your design goals. In addition, any trim or soffit among other materials may also be used in this manner. Whether you desire to match the color exactly to the siding or pursue a complementary color, pre-finishing allows an unmatched color experience for anyone who chooses engineered wood siding.

Some specific benefits of pre-finishing include:

- Uniform color with each piece
- No waiting at the installation site including for any weather delays
- Optimum color quality thanks to factory oversight that ensures that each piece is identical to each other
- Improved color protection
- Comes with a warranty
- And more

Each provider of pre-finished siding has a slightly different method that reveals additional benefits. When considering these benefits, be sure to determine what you desire from your color choices. Most color protection warranties will cover premature fading, peeling, or chipping of the paint.

PROPER INSTALLATION

Proper installation is a must with any siding, but with engineered wood siding, it's especially needed. The material is naturally protective against environmental factors, but there is a range of common mistakes and errors that occur and cause the siding to underperform at the least. This is especially common for those who pursue the DIY approach with their installation.

Some common errors include:

- **Missing Paint:** This occurs most often when people elect to not go with pre-finishing options. This mistake is easily avoided by ensuring all sides and ends are primed and painted. Plus, the paint acts as an additional shield when it comes to moisture.
- **Overdriven Nails:** More common with DIY, but still occurs with contractors who don't practice proper attention. Nails that are driven too far into the siding will lead to the seams and overall integrity of the siding becoming compromised.
- **Insufficient Clearance:** This is where expert contractors are truly needed. Most manufacturers require a minimum level of clearance between the siding and the finished grade. The slightest deviation from the range can lead to a buildup of moisture issues that void any natural protection the siding would have provided.
- **Flashings:** Where the siding meets the roof, you need proper flashings to maintain the home's ability to draw water down and away from the house. This piece of metal is a small but crucial component.
- **Joint Treatments:** Properly installed joints are the difference between siding that performs and siding that results in additional costs. Some joints require caulk or joint molding. Take the time to verify how the joints need to be treated to ensure a perfect fit.

With a correctly performed installation, these seam pitfalls can be a non-issue. When choosing a contractor, it is recommended to verify their best practices in managing seams for optimal installation.

LP SMARTSIDE SIDING

LP prides itself on delivering engineered wood siding that exceeds wood in performance in the following categories:

- Moisture resistance
- Flame protection
- Improved durability and strength
- Pest protection

Today, innovation is the primary goal for all brands associated with engineered wood siding. This material is still quite new and as such is going through a slight trial and error process to fine-tune and perfect the material. Regardless of any advances made, the goal of providing an alternative that promotes the beauty of wood wrapped in a more durable package is still at the forefront. One recent advancement is the improvement to the product's life expectancy and is backed by warranties that range from 30 to as much as 50 years depending on the provider.

WARRANTY INFORMATION

LP SmartSide: LP SmartSide offers a pro-rated, non-transferable limited warranty on its engineered wood siding products. The warranty guarantees that the products will remain free from fungal degradation, buckling, cracking, peeling, separating, chipping, flaking, and rupturing of the resin-impregnated surface overlay for up to 50 years from the time the product is installed. This is also dependent on the treatment of the product during shipping, handling, and installation, and also dependent on the maintenance given to the product once it is installed on the property. In other words, if the company deems that the product was improperly handled at any point in time, the manufacturer's warranty could be voided.

Coverage is guaranteed and will be replaced, repaired, or refunded the original cost of the defective product for the first five years after installation. After that, the product will be covered at a pro-rated price, reduced by an annual rate of 2.22% the 6th year, 4.44% the 7th year, etc. until the 50th year, where the amount payable will be void itself out at zero.

Diamond Kote: This company 30-year, no-fade warranty for its factory-applied finishes. In the warranty that covers the finish, the company guarantees that the product will not discolor due to chalking, peel or blister, erode and expose the substrate, or discolor due to yellowing or fading. The offer covers a set amount for the first seven years, and then is pro-rated each year, reducing coverage on a sliding reduction thereafter until the thirtieth year of the warranty

CHAPTER SIX: COMPOSITE / PVC SIDING



PVC, which stands for polyvinyl chloride, is a siding material that is a fairly new and has only been in use over the last decade. While its latest incarnation has only been around for such a short time, its roots go back to the 1970s. Originally, PVC was actually used as trim pieces to complement other materials. As the process became more refined and technology improved, the use of PVC expanded to siding.

Speaking of technology improvements, there is a new type of PVC siding known as cellular PVC. The beauty of this blend is its ability to mimic the look and texture of wood. This applies to not only the cut but also the shape of the siding panels. While the product is growing in popularity, it is still largely unproven compared to other siding materials.

Some of the features leading to its increasing popularity are the ability of cellular PVC to protect against problems found in nature such as weather and animal life. In addition, it has been proven to be more resistant to warping, cracking, and other signs of wear and tear compared to wood, vinyl, and other siding options. Besides its excellence in performance, it is also versatile in its design applications. Many homeowners choose this option for that extra bit of style with raised panels and decorative filigree being just a few examples of what can be accomplished with cellular PVC.

STYLES AVAILABLE

One of the main concerns with any siding material is the curb appeal. The product can be the best performing, most durable siding on the market—but if it looks ugly or can't hold its style over time, then it loses its desired effect on the exterior value of the home from an aesthetic standpoint.

With cellular PVC, aesthetic appeal is one of its best characteristics. While the product is new enough that profiles and color choices are comparatively limited, the existing products are quite stylish and elegant. Here are some of the most popular style choices for PVC siding:

- **Clapboard:** At its most basic, this profile is all about horizontal panels spread along the exterior of the house. Not only is it one of the most popular profiles available, but it also has customization options available for homeowners who want to add a little flair. Under the clapboard umbrella, you can choose Dutch-lapstyle, which is marked by distinct shadow lines for an added visual effect. Beaded siding takes that one step further by providing a more distinct shadow line for those who want a more dramatic look.
- **Smooth:** Usually done horizontally, but it also can be installed vertically. This profile is mostly about the texture of the panel than its layout. For nothing less than the cleanest lines and profiles, you want a smooth profile that is the definition of modern architecture.
- **Board and Batten:** This style is marked by large vertical panels with smaller raised panels installed over them is the hallmark look of the board and batten profile. Traditionally, the large panels are uniform in width and spacing. However, if going against the norm while remaining stylish is more your speed then consider uneven widths or spacing for those large panels.
- **Shingle and Shake:** With PVCs ability to mimic the look and texture of wood it only makes sense that this material would also be available in the classic shingle or shake look that wood is so famous for. The customized shapes allow for added versatility in installation, which is important for homes that are oddly shaped.

With cellular PVC, style can't be completed without considering what color you want. Many homeowners choose a natural-looking wood finish, but there are some solid color options as well. We have provided a breakdown of the color options currently available with PVC siding.

- **Gray:** The color gray has grown in popularity over the last couple of decades thanks to its versatile range. Whether its dark as a storm cloud or light as a common stone the visual effect is striking. Plus, it's color neutrality makes it a perfect counterpart to complementary colors like blue for a calming look or red for a passionate feel. As the main color or trim color, you can't go wrong with gray as your color choice.
- **Blue:** Blue is a color that represents the sky or the sea. It can be cool and it can be bright. When used as a more subdued color it works amazingly as the main siding color as evidenced by the popular Cape Cod color palette. In addition, brighter shades make for outstanding opportunities to have your trim, pillars, and archways pop with color and are visually striking.
- **White:** The color of white is the ultimate neutral. It can promote a timeless fresh look that is crisp and new. In addition, the brightness of the color helps make smaller homes seem bigger. An added benefit of white is its ability to help textures and exterior home features pop thanks to its ability to act as a blank canvas. For the truly design-savvy homeowner, consider pairing with a dark color like gray to go more modern or a bold color like red to make everything pop.
- **Cream:** This color is subtler than white and in some shades would be considered tan. However, it's just as versatile and specializes in promoting itself as the warm color needed when paired with darker colors. For a striking look consider a weathered gray or brown or green for an earthy look.
- **Red:** Red is a classic color especially in the country. Traditionally, it's used as the main color, but if your home has a lot of trim consider using it as a secondary color. The visual effect will be noticeable and welcome.
- **Green:** Green is a color that is very similar to blue in its application. More muted shades and tones make it perfect to use as the main color that resembles the nature it's surrounded by. On the other hand, brighter shades can make for a stunning visual display that shouldn't be discounted.
- **Brown:** This color works like a neutral and is a perfect contrast with bold colors like red or even orange. Alternatively, you can pair brown with pale or deep green for an earthy, natural look.
- **Weathered:** This is the perfect option for those who want to bring out the wood-like textures possible with this siding option. They can be stained lightly or dark for a variety of looks to suit your design choices.

Keep in mind that there is a distinct lack of shade variations due to how new the product is. As the product becomes more popular, it is expected that more color variations will become available. That being said, each base color has a decent range of light to dark shades suitable for a number of combinations that are sure to satisfy a homeowner's style.

PROS AND CONS

Just like other siding options, there are distinct pros and cons to consider with cellular PVC when making your decision. That's why we dive more in-depth into the good and the bad regarding this new siding option.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Decay: Unlike wood and other organic materials, this option won't attract mold or fungi much less rot. • Non-Combustible: This material isn't flammable and offers better flame protection compared to many other options making it perfect for wildfire heavy areas. • Weather-Resistant: Concerns like hail, snow, sun, wind, and other weather problems are greatly reduced if not completely eliminated with cellular PVC. • Minimal Maintenance: Compared to other popular options like wood the amount of maintenance is low and practically nonexistent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Cost and Market Newness: The newness of this product lends itself to higher costs than other more established materials. Plus, there's not a lot of information available making research more difficult for shoppers. • Questionable ROI: Return on investment is a big consideration for homeowners who want to ensure they add value to their home. Siding is meant to be an investment, but the numbers for cellular PVC lack the necessary baseline that other materials have. As time passes, this will become more defined. • Installation: The installation process is slightly different with PVC than other materials. This can make it challenging to find a contractor that knows how to install the siding, but also knows what to charge. With the lack of familiarity, labor and materials cost is largely undefined so it can cost more than you would expect without the necessary research.

SEAMS

With siding, seams are a foregone conclusion for the most part. After all, the siding can't be installed in one whole piece. As a result, the multiple panels have to connect in a way that keeps them together without letting moisture or other concerns through. This performance metric is measured by how effectively the seams are managed. With this particular siding option there are two different ways to manage the seams and they are differentiated by the brand you choose.

EVERLAST

Their method eliminates the need for caulking and flashing thanks to its lighter weight and installation method. All you need is a pocketed trim package and professional contractors and you have it made. The panels can be installed left to right or the opposite direction.

Everlast prides itself on providing an option that eliminates the need for painting along with a reduction in the expansion and contraction present in other siding choices. When installed properly, it's protected by a solid warranty, which is always a nice bonus.

ROYAL CELECT

One of the largest benefits found with cellular PVC siding is its seams or rather its lack of them. The siding features interlocking joints designed to not only prevent moisture buildup but also eliminate gaps and wavy lines present with other materials. This allows the siding to maintain its straight appearance without sacrificing the ability to expand and contract as necessary.

The interlocking mechanism prevents the need for caulking or flashing present with other siding option making upkeep virtually nonexistent. The siding is further protected with a special coating to maximize energy efficiency, repel water, and boost impact resistance.

TOP BRANDS

The use of cellular PVC siding is new enough that only a couple of brands have emerged as a leading provider. While other brands may offer some PVC options in the trim or even siding, the product offering is minimal compared to the two brands listed below.

- **Everlast:** A branch under Chelsea Building Products, Everlast has been on the market since 2009. Their focus is on their innovative triple-composite formula to deliver the highest quality in composite siding. This triple layer is made of inorganic materials, acrylic colorants, and polymer resins. The siding is manufactured in-house ensuring a nearly unmatched quality product that is backed by a fairly comprehensive warranty. If siding that is impermeable and resistant to common damage concerns like rotting and termites then Everlast is a worthy consideration.
- **Royal Celect:** The Royal Celect line is the cellular PVC line under the Royal Building Products umbrella. Their mission is to set the standard when it comes to durability and design and they are succeeding. Their focus on design has paved the way for this brand to provide the largest variety of molding profiles along with a contemporary color palette designed to appeal to most homeowner color preferences.

At this point, both brands are consistently working towards innovations in both the product and the installation process. It is expected that rapid improvements will be made in the next decade, as this siding option becomes better understood.

WARRANTY INFORMATION

Cellular PVC siding is the newest siding option and is, therefore, the least tested and proven. That's no surprise considering it has only been commercially available for about 10 years. Since most siding is meant to last for decades, proof concerning PVC's efficacy over the long-term is very much in the future. The good news is that warranties are offered with both brands meaning that you can expect some protection in the event that things break down. However, as with any largely unproven product, the warranty comes with a grain of salt.

There are three main factors to consider when it comes to analyzing the warranty behind PVC siding. Those three things being the installation, the product itself, and any color protection offered. Ideally, the warranty would be comprehensive enough to cover all three in one policy, but that is not possible with this particular option. Instead, the manufacturer covers the product and color separately and the contractor you hire to do the job will most likely cover the installation.

When it comes to installation, the best thing you can do to protect yourself is to find a contractor that knows the product and is trained on the installation. This product requires a different installation process than other products. A botched or improperly installed siding will void any product or color warranties you procure. Plus, while the contractor should cover the installation, the warranty is worthless if they lack the training and knowledge to fix their mistakes.

When it comes to product and color warranties, the only thing to do is to cover the main points for each major brand. The two brands represent the standard when it comes to cellular PVC siding and as such provide the best coverage. However, even within only two brands, there are still differences to be aware of. We have listed a breakdown by brand below.

EVERLAST

- **Color:** The brand will repair or replace any siding that has changed color by an excess of four Hunter Units. Hunter units are a standard to measure color change. However, they may choose to refund a pro-rated refund in lieu of replacement. This is usually done in cases where the color is no longer offered and a suitable match is unavailable. Keep in mind that you will want to keep records of the original costs if getting a refund. The other option is for Everlast to determine how much they will refund.
- **Product:** Everlast makes quite clear that any deviation to the quality of the product due to misuse, damage by animals, improper installation, improper storage, foreign object impact, inclement weather along with other acts of God, and damage to the home itself i.e. crack in the foundation will result in them not being liable for the damages and as such the warranty will not apply.

This is why it's crucial that any instructions provided by the manufacturer regarding installation or color protection be adhered to. When the instructions are followed, and the product still fails, then the case becomes clearly a case of Everlast being at fault and therefore liable. Don't let the case be unclear so you remain protected.

ROYAL CELECT

- **Color:** The coverage starts on the day the siding is installed. While the special coating is meant to last, Royal makes clear that natural weathering is still expected. However, the color is expected to last for 25 years from the day of installation. Fading, peeling, and other color concerns are to be minimized until 25 years. That being said, Royal Celect does have a prorated schedule that defines the extent of their liability. For example, in year one they maintain 100% liability whereas in year 25 it may only be 20%. Be sure to review your warranty and the various proration schedules provided to you. In addition, Royal Celect makes clear that the warranty is not transferable to future owners. If you are not the original purchaser, then the warranty is void.
- **Product:** Royal guarantees that the product is free from manufacturing defects in both material and workmanship. The siding will not corrode, split, rot, or crack. In addition, the warranty also covers potential damage done by termites to an extent. However, this is contingent on the installation being performed according to their instructions. Failure to follow the instructions will render the warranty void. Unlike the color warranty, the product warranty is transferable once. This transfer is only valid from the original homeowner to a subsequent owner. This transfer does not apply to a third owner and beyond. In addition, all transfers from a residential to commercial owner void the warranty.

Royal Celect goes on to reiterate that their product warranty is separate from their coating warranty. If the siding color/finish is compromised it may fall under the coating warranty instead of the product warranty. The nature of the damage along with the extent will help determine which warranty the problem falls under.

Hail damage is one of the most pressing concerns homeowners face when it comes to inclement weather. The immediate impact of the hailstones can dent and warp siding materials. While both brands offer hail coverage, it is important to understand the limits of this coverage. In fact, the coverage would be best classified as secondary coverage.

Everlast and Royal both make it clear in their warranties that homeowner's insurance should be used first before trying to utilize the warranty. This is further enforced by the claim that they will only provide enough coverage to address whatever homeowner's insurance and other coverage don't cover. In addition, the coverage is only viable for product replacement and material costs. Labor is not included under the hail coverage policy.

Ultimately, there are three takeaways important for homeowners to know. The first is that no warranty will compare to the coverage of a comprehensive homeowner's insurance plan when the damage is excessive. If the damage clearly affects more than your siding, you are better off working with your insurance company and using the manufacturer warranty as a second option. The second takeaway is the concept of state limitations.

While manufacturers would like their liability to go away after a certain amount of time it's not always possible. Some states do not allow limitations or exclusions for how long a warranty applies much less when it needs to be satisfied. Wherever limitations or exclusions exist in the warranty check your state laws and regulations to determine if they apply to you. The last takeaway is that this product is still practically brand new. This means that some products will be replaced, discontinued, or modified. Your warranty will not protect you against such changes and there will have to be compromises made if the original color or product is no longer available.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SIDING PRICING INFORMATION



At some point during the ownership of a home, replacing the siding of the house will eventually become necessary. Just like any other material, siding breaks down over time, and will someday pass the point of repair. However, siding can seem difficult to shop for thanks to the numerous options available.

Between different materials, contractors, and changes in industry standards it often leaves homeowners feeling more confused than when they first started looking into their options. The siding you choose represents a long-term commitment not just to what your house is going to look like, but also how protected it is as well as the amount of money it will cost to install and maintain over its lifespan.

There are many factors that affect the cost of siding and its installation. Before picking a material and your siding contractor, it's important to take the time to understand what exactly goes into the cost of siding.

In this section, we're going over what siding actually costs to install—to help you gain more insight into your next investment. We'll cover how pricing for siding is calculated, additional factors to consider, and what really separates one type of siding from the other when it comes to cost.

WHAT FACTORS AFFECT THE COST OF SIDING INSTALLATION?

There are multiple factors that affect the cost of your siding installation. Everything from the size of your home to whether or not it's new or replacement siding can influence the final amount you pay for new siding.

While the factors below are by no means comprehensive, they are the largest contributors to cost differences when it comes to siding installation.

- **Type and Quality:** Different siding materials offer different base pricing. For example, wood siding is popular for its appearance but is among the most expensive options available. However, it's not just the material itself that matters. It's also the quality you choose. Most siding comes in different levels of quality, which is great for managing upfront pricing—but can cost you more in the long run. Keep in mind that more complicated shapes like shakes are generally more expensive than standard long panels due to the different cutting process.
- **Siding Removal:** In most cases, the old siding needs to be removed before the new siding can be installed. This results in additional labor costs and possibly disposal fees, depending on the contractor. Sometimes, new siding can be installed over the old siding—like when vinyl is installed over wood siding that is still in good condition. However, if your siding is warped, rotted, cracked, or damaged in any other manner then the old siding will have to be removed without exception.
- **The State of Your Home:** Besides the condition of your old siding, the condition of your home also plays a role. If the home itself has rotted, then that will have to be repaired before the new siding is installed, which adds to the cost.
- **House Configuration:** Some price factors are basically set in stone. X amount per square foot equals your materials cost. However, labor is harder to compute and the dimensions of your house play a role in this. The more unique the shape of your house, the higher you can expect the labor bill to be. This also includes how many windows and doors are present. The level of detail work needed is raised higher when the contractor has to account for a window every two feet. While unique architecture is not a showstopper, it is a point of consideration when determining your total cost.

- **The Contractor:** Different contractors charge different amounts. This, by itself, is not unusual. However, there are some key things to consider when deciding if the pricing provided is fair. First, you should always get multiple quotes so you can average out the cost. Second, make sure the contractor is a licensed siding contractor. Siding installation is expensive enough without having to worry about voiding the warranty or improperly installed siding. Finally, not every siding is equal. One contractor may specialize in vinyl siding but lack the experience needed with fiber cement siding. Consider what siding you're buying and the contractor's expertise with said material.

WHAT ELSE AFFECTS THE TOTAL COST?

There are cost factors that homeowners run into that are specific to their unique situation and are often not considered when looking into the cost of siding installation. These factors include:

- **Warranty:** Every warranty differs from the other. The length of the warranty and the amount of coverage provided will affect the cost in the long run, especially since the installation itself affects whether or not the warranty is voided.
- **Permits:** In some parts of the country, permits are needed for new siding installation. This usually applies to full installation. Touch-ups and repairs are unlikely to need a permit. Even the color you choose may require a permit if you're subject to a homeowner's association or similar organization.
- **Climate:** The climate you live in plays a role in not only siding material costs, but also product lifespan, which also affects the cost. For example, if you live in a hot climate and want vinyl siding, you'll need to order vinyl that's heat-safe and won't warp or melt in the sun. Premium materials like these will come in at a higher price point due to lack of availability and better quality.
- **DIY vs. Professional:** Performing your own siding installation isn't unheard of. DIY siding installation can be done, and definitely saves you money when it comes to labor. However, consider the warranty and your actual capability when making the decision. Some materials shouldn't be installed by amateurs—and require expert installation to be worth the cost of the investment in the long run. If you do decide to choose a professional, find out what's included and what's not included in their pricing to make an informed decision.

WHAT'S THE AVERAGE COST OF SIDING?

On average, new siding installation costs \$10,000 to \$25,000 for homeowners. Sometimes, the cost is lower or higher depending on the material chosen and the quality of said material. The cost is determined by materials cost per square foot and labor.

The size and shape of your house also plays a large role in determining the final cost, but for those who want to calculate and estimate themselves we have provided a breakdown of how the calculation works below.

INSTALLATION CALCULATION

For siding, price calculations can be estimated by multiplying the length by the height of the house.

Example: Two-story house that is 25ft by 45ft (2250 square feet of flooring) with an exterior of 2,800 square feet. The calculation would sum up the wall lengths and then multiply by the height meaning it should look like this:

$25\text{ft} + 45\text{ feet} + 25\text{ feet} + 45\text{ feet} \times 20\text{ feet} = 2,800\text{ square feet}$

The price of siding installation varies per square foot. On average, the cost is between \$5-\$15 per installed square foot. This means for the 2,800 square feet we previously calculated, you can expect a cost range of \$14,000-\$42,000.

Keep in mind this calculation is only for siding installation. This does not include siding removal. Siding removal requires adding an additional \$1,000-\$3,000 to the cost, depending on the amount of siding being removed and the size of the house.

Also, labor is usually included in the price per square foot by contractors. However, some contractors may charge labor separately, which can be \$40-\$50 an hour on average. If more contractors are needed like when the material is heavy like steel or fiber cement then the price goes up even more. Make sure to verify how labor is charged when choosing your contractor.

PRICE VARIANCE

There are factors that can affect where you fall on the cost scale. These factors include:

- **Geography:** Prices have a higher baseline in some areas of the country. Depending on where you're located, prices could be lower or higher for siding.
- **Availability:** Some materials are not as readily available as others, which affects siding material costs.

AVERAGE SIDING COSTS BY TYPE

While siding costs, in general, offer a standard range, the fact remains that the actual type of siding chosen along with the quality or grade plays the largest role in determining your total cost—next to the size of your home. To provide further detail, we have provided a breakdown of siding costs by type for your review.

VINYL SIDING

Originally introduced in the 1950s, this material came onto the market as an excellent alternative to aluminum siding. Today, it's the most frequently chosen siding option and the most affordable as well. The sheer availability and standard pricing make this a valid choice, no matter what your budget is or the brand you choose.

Top Brand Breakdown

- **Mastic**
 - \$4.00-\$7.50 per square foot
 - Installation cost: \$1.00 - \$1.50 per square foot
- **Certainteed**
 - \$4.00-\$7.50 per square foot
 - Installation cost: \$1.00 - \$1.50 per square foot
- **Alside**
 - \$4.00-\$7.50 per square foot
 - Installation cost: \$1.00 - \$1.50 per square foot

You will notice that the price range is the same per brand, and that's for a reason. Vinyl siding is so available that all of the brands stick to the same basic range. Where the difference lies is in the quality of the vinyl siding. Low-quality siding is significantly cheaper but will cost more in the long run since it will need to be replaced sooner than high-quality vinyl siding. High-quality vinyl siding is thicker and offers insulation making for a better-protected home and increased energy savings.

Vinyl requires little maintenance and is meant to last for 20-40 years making it a cost-effective solution both immediately and in the future. You won't need to re-paint the siding, and most homeowners recover about 80% of the cost of installation.

ENGINEERED WOOD SIDING

Engineered wood siding is relatively new only becoming popular in the last decade and a half. This siding option is affordable and durable while offering a range of styles to match any homeowner's desire.

- **Cost:** \$7.50-\$10.50 per square foot for siding and all trim accessories
- **Installation:** \$1.50-\$2.00 per square foot
- **Total cost:** \$9.00-\$12.50 per square foot
- **ROI:** 82% to 87%

While the positives are plentiful with this siding type, there are some negatives when it comes to long-term costs. Engineered wood siding needs repainting every 3-10 years depending on inclement weather, climate, and UV rays. In addition, lower quality engineered wood may let in moisture which compromises not only the siding but also the house. 100% warranty coverage for defects only lasts for five years with a pro-rated deduction of 2.2% for every year after the fifth year. This can result in higher costs in the future.

STEEL SIDING

Both Quality Edge and Alside offer strong and attractive steel siding at cost-effective pricing. Quality Edge focuses on innovations making their products of a higher quality compared to other brands, while Alside has gone a different route by offering galvanized steel, which is purported to edge out steel siding by itself.

- Minimum Cost: \$8 per square foot
- Maximum Cost: \$11 per square foot

Steel is so popular not only because of its look but its low maintenance. It lasts for over 20 years and resists fading, which is common with other siding materials. The only concern to watch out for is rust and corrosion, but springing for rust prevention coatings can greatly negate that concern. Steel is not recommended for homeowners who live on the coast due to the prevalence of saltwater in the air.

Labor costs are the biggest concern when it comes to installing steel siding. The siding is heavy and practically demands that professional siding contractors are hired to do the job. In general, contractors will charge per square foot for labor and include it in the siding cost. However, it's important to remember that additional crew may be needed especially with thicker steel siding so be mindful of increased pricing with steel.

FIBER CEMENT SIDING

One of the most popular new siding options is fiber cement siding. This siding type is known for its durability and ability to resist common concerns such as warping and cracking. In addition, the natural resistance against fire and insects make it an option designed to last as evidenced by the standard 30-year warranty by James Hardie. Specific pricing for this brand is detailed below.

- **Cost:** \$7.50-\$10.50 per square foot for siding and all trim accessories
- **Installation:** \$1.50-\$2.00 per square foot
- **Total cost:** \$9.00-\$12.50 per square foot
- **ROI:** 83% to 86%

Despite its good points, fiber cement siding has a few things going for it that actually increase the cost to homeowners. For starters, this siding is heavy. It takes two installers per piece to install, which means labor costs are essentially doubled compared to other options. In addition, due to the complexity involved improper installation is a concern. Failure to secure a contractor experienced with fiber cement siding can lead to increased costs in the future when trying to repair the damages. Fiber cement is weak against impacts so be prepared to have to shell out additional money for repairs over the years.

PVC/COMPOSITE SIDING

Composite siding is so new that specific brand pricing has not been made available. The two biggest brands for this type of siding are Royal Celect and Everlast, who both offer outstanding quality and are the standard-bearers with PVC/Composite siding. Despite the higher base price, it's important to note this siding material offers no decay, is non-combustible and resistant to weather with minimal maintenance.

- **Cost per square foot:** \$7.45-\$12.35
- **Installation Cost:** \$1.00-\$1.50 per sq ft

In addition, the installation process is different than with other materials and makes finding a qualified contractor more difficult and also more expensive.

WOOD SIDING

Wood siding is extremely popular due to its natural look and protection against the elements. There are a number of woods available as siding, and the range in pricing is large thanks to different quality levels. Wood siding is a perfect case of you get what you pay for, as we'll explore further below.

- **Average wood siding installation:** \$3 to \$10 per square foot for materials and labor
Wood requires more consideration than other siding materials that include but are not limited to:
- **Moisture barrier:** With wood siding, a moisture barrier is practically mandatory since even the highest quality wood is susceptible to moisture penetration. Professional installers can put in the moisture barrier before the siding is installed. Usually, this is house wrap, plywood sheathing, or felt paper. Depending on the material chosen you can be looking at an additional \$26 to \$165 per roll/ every 250 feet on top of the installation cost provided before.

- **Grades:** This refers to the appearance of the wood. The higher the grade the higher the cost. Low-grade is roughly \$1- \$3 per sqft while premium options can cost up to \$10 per sqft. While it may be tempting to go for lower grade wood to save money, it's important to keep in mind that premium grade is free of virtually all defects, whereas low-grade is not—meaning the lower quality products will cost you more in the future to maintain.

CONCLUSION: PAYING FOR SIDING INSTALLATION

There's no mistaking it. New siding installation is an expensive endeavor. It's also a worthwhile one. That's why there are numerous ways to make sure you have the means to afford your new siding installation when you need it. The last thing you want to do is take the first financing option that comes your way. Each payment method offers its own pros and cons, and it's up to you to determine which one matches your needs and capabilities best.

We have provided a breakdown of the most popular ways to pay for your next project below.

- **Cash/Saving:** When possible it's always a good idea to pay cash for your siding installation. If you have enough on hand or can liquidate some assets you can pay for your new siding without a tax hit or ongoing payments long after the installation is complete. For those who lack the cash on hand but don't want to use credit or financing, they may want to consider building up their savings. Save for emergencies, new siding is not an urgent expense so you have plenty of time to tuck the money away until you're ready.
- **Home Equity Credit Line:** Also known as a home equity loan, this is when a homeowner receives a line of credit up to a certain limit. You only need to draw out what you need to pay for the siding. For those who have the equity in their home and also are credit qualified, this is a solid financing option especially if you don't want to look into refinancing your mortgage.
- **Mortgage Refinance:** Similar to the previous option only you're getting the money directly from refinancing your mortgage. This option is mostly geared towards owners who want a lower payment or lower interest rate for their home and have projects like siding replacement they want to do. This option requires having the equity be there for your home. If the home doesn't appraise high enough, you may not get the capital you need.

- **Credit Card:** Not as popular of an option thanks to the higher interest rates and the overall expense of siding installation. However, some may find using credit cards appropriate. This is usually when the new siding has become an urgent need.
- **A Personal Line of Credit:** This is basically an unsecured loan from the bank. This option is only appropriate for those who have excellent credit and a long positive history with their bank. For higher priced siding installation, you may also need to meet income requirements. If you lack the cash or the equity this is a solid financing option.
- **Contractor Financing:** Many contractors offer financing options through working with a variety of lenders. The option has become more popular thanks to contractors being able to better secure the sale and create finance packages that are more attractive than traditional financing options. However, this option eliminates the ability for you to choose your own lender.

No matter which option you choose, the most important thing you can do is find a top-quality contractor. In addition, make sure you buy premium quality siding products, whatever material you select to install on your home's exterior. It may cost more upfront, but your wallet will thank you in the future.

Determine what you want and shop around for the best deal. Once you're ready, figure out your financing and then give yourself the siding you need and want for a home that feels like yours.

CHAPTER EIGHT: TIPS FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT CONTRACTOR



Having new siding installed is an exciting time for homeowners. It's a chance to consider a completely new material, change the aesthetic appearance of the home, and possibly save money in the future with improved energy efficiency and weather protection.

However, siding is only as good as its installation. Improperly installed siding can lead to significant costs and damage to your home, which is why most homeowners choose to work with professional siding contractors for their installation needs.

Choosing the right contractors is as much an art as it is a science that goes beyond comparing prices, though the cost is important too. A bad contractor or one that is inexperienced with the siding material you choose can void your warranty at the least and leave your home unprotected against outside elements at the worst. For these reasons and more, it's important that evaluate whom to choose as your siding contractor as closely as you would any other professional.

Besides checking their online reputation and consulting with family and friends, there are a few other ways to verify if the siding contractor you're considering is the right one for you.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A SIDING CONTRACTOR?

The two most important things to consider when choosing a siding contractor are their qualifications and how they run their business. To that end, we have put together the top ten questions to ask to separate the qualified from the unqualified.

WHAT ARE THE FULL DETAILS OF THE COMPANY?

It's important to ask for and receive the full name and address of the company. If they give a P.O. Box, take the time to ask for the full street address. Not only does having a physical address contribute to the likelihood of them being legitimate, but it also allows for better customer service and response times.

DO THEY HAVE INSURANCE?

Professional siding contractors should have at least comprehensive general liability coverage along with worker's compensation insurance. Having these two ensures that as a homeowner, you're protected in case damage to the home or property occurs during installation. In addition, if a worker gets injured and the contractor doesn't cover worker injury it could be you and your insurance liable for the medical bills. Make sure to ask for specific proof of coverage and review the terms so you remain as informed as possible.

ARE THEY LICENSED?

This is to verify if the contractors are licensed by the state and/or city. Keep in mind that not all states require licensing, but chances are that written exam or something similar was required for them to legally provide contractors services. Check local and state guidelines to verify the contractor is in compliance. In addition, a business license is not the same as being licensed as a contractor so be sure to have the contractor provide both proofs.

ARE THEY CREDENTIALLED?

One of the best ways to ensure you're selecting a qualified and trained contractor is to check their credentials. This includes ongoing training, certifications, and other symbols of expertise that go beyond just being a contractor. If they only have credentials from manufacturer-sponsored programs it may be a possible red flag, as those programs are more concerned with sales than actual installation practices.

HOW LONG HAVE THEY BEEN IN BUSINESS?

The longer a company has been in business, the more likely they are to have a steady business backed by experienced and qualified contractors. While new companies are still valid options to consider, it's important to remember that they need to be able to prove their worth in other ways before giving them a chance.

DO THEY HAVE OR PROVIDE REFERRALS?

Just like you wouldn't hire an employee without references, you don't want to hire a contractor without doing the same. Get from them a list of ten names and numbers along with photos of previously completed work. This allows you a chance to see how they do before you commit. A company that doesn't have or won't provide referrals is one you should consider staying away from.

IS THERE A WORKMANSHIP WARRANTY?

In general, there are two warranties. One is the manufacturer's warranty, which covers the siding material against defects in manufacturing. The other is a workmanship warranty. This is provided by the contractor and is a measure of protection against installation problems. Basically, a contractor should be willing to back up his/her work with a warranty. In addition to the length of the warranty period, consider the intent and ability of the contractor to fulfill the terms of the warranty. It doesn't help you if they are incapable of fixing the problem or leave the warranty open-ended enough to not be liable to fix anything.

HOW DO THEY HANDLE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS?

Not usually a category that people think of, but is extremely important. No company that has been around for a length of time exists without a dispute occurring. The key is how did the company handle the dispute? If the dispute was resolved amicably then it's a good sign that the company strives to do their best by their customers. If they have ever had their license suspended, or the matter went to court, it's a potential red flag and should be investigated accordingly.

DO THEY EMPLOY THEIR INSTALLERS OR SUBCONTRACT?

Many siding companies are qualified and are led by a team of equally qualified contractors as their leaders. However, many of them also like to subcontract their work. It saves the company money and allows them to not have to maintain a large employee base. However, subcontractors are rarely as qualified and the installation quality may be found lacking. Take the time to verify if the company employs its own contractors or if they subcontract. At the very least, they should be willing and capable of closely managing the crew they contract out.

WHAT TYPE OF SIDING ARE THEY EXPERIENCED WITH?

Sometimes, you can find a siding contractor that checks off all the right boxes and is perfectly qualified, however, they're still a bad choice for you to consider. This is usually thanks to the siding material you choose. For example, a siding contractor may be experienced with vinyl or steel siding, but not know the first thing about fiber cement siding. Take the time to explore their specialties to ensure that when it comes time to do the job, there's no question of their capabilities.

It's true that a contractor that meets or exceeds the standards set by the questions above, but it's also true that with this kind of work you get what you pay for. With a truly qualified siding contractor, you may pay more upfront, but benefit from savings down the road thanks to the quality of your installation.

MANAGING COSTS

In general, new siding installations cost between \$15,000-\$45,000 for residential customers. The material chosen, the size of the home, the architecture of the home, and your geography all play a role in determining where you fall in that range. Besides those factors, labor is the single biggest indicator of how much your siding installation will cost. While it's important that the siding contractor you choose is well-qualified, it's equally as important that they're able to match your budget without sacrificing quality. When choosing your contractor it's important to consider how much they cost, and how well you can manage those costs.

The good news is that installation estimates usually has the labor already included making the price neat and tidy for your review. The labor is charged by the square foot and is modified according to the material you choose. The heavier the siding, the more workers needed to safely and effectively install the siding.

Sometimes, contractors may charge labor separately. Carefully review what the estimate covers and what is considered extra when reviewing the quote.

We have also included some tips for how to manage your costs from start to finish below.

- **On-Site Visit:** Never accept an estimate or guarantee bid without the companies first performing an onsite visit. The contractor should inspect your home, take measurements, be aware of any architectural challenges, and have the opportunity to advise on how well a particular material will perform. This is your chance to ask questions and get a feel for how easy the contractor will be to work with.
- **Written Estimate:** Never trust a verbal estimate. Make sure absolutely everything is written down and provided to you. Carefully watch for hidden fees, add-ons, or anything that would be considered extra i.e. removal of old siding. Careful analysis now can save you hundreds later.
- **Estimate Review:** There should be at least three estimates from three different companies by the time you're ready for this step. Match up the estimate to the answers you received along with verification of their references and past work. One contractor may have the best price, but not offer something you need making them an unsuitable choice. Carefully weigh the quotes to get the best value, not just the best price.

Labor costs are high for good reason. It takes work and time to get the job done and contractors should be compensated for this. However, you can manage the total costs by taking on some tasks yourself to save time and effort thereby reducing the impact to your budget.

SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO:

- Trim or tie back trees close to the house. This creates a workspace and saves the contractor a step in their prep.
- Mow the lawn. Shorter grass makes it easier to walk across and also makes finding loose nails and staples easier.
- Clear the work zone. Items like patio furniture, plants, and more only serve to get in the way and add to frustration levels. Remove them for the work area and watch the contractors fly through their work.

As a final tip, make sure to clarify the terms of the warranty. The warranties should protect you from adverse problems and lessen the financial burden. It's important to understand what the warranty covers, what invalidates it, and what you're actually getting. Generally, the more expensive the warranty the longer it's valid for. Still, take the time to review and ask questions. A proper warranty provided by a qualified contractor will save you thousands in the future.

CONCLUSION: CHOOSING YOUR SIDING CONTRACTOR



There's no doubt about it. Choosing your siding contractor can be a lot of work, but it's not an impossible job and more than worth the time invested. Gauge their quality of work, expertise with siding materials, and their overall professionalism and more than half the job is done. Besides the contractor, you can make it easier on yourself by sticking to high-quality products thereby ensuring that your next siding installation is a success.

Keep one thing in mind. If you're not getting a good feeling about the contractor, then they're not the right one for you. Always go with your gut when it comes to bad feelings. If they won't answer your questions or can't provide proof of certification or licensing, then walk away and find a different contractor. Siding installation is not a project that you'd want to compromise on quality, so don't be tempted to hire an unqualified contractor that might wind up costing you much more for shoddy work.

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.

In 2014, after his father retired from the business, Steven and his wife Christie rebranded the roofing company as Smart Exteriors—a name that reflects the company's passion for replacing old, antiquated, non-sustainable materials with today's smartest products. The company's transformation also included the expansion of the company's services to include siding, windows and gutter guard installations along with its original roofing services 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 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.