



# Homeowner's Guide to **Replacement Siding**



# Contents

**4** Why are people looking?

**5** What do they have now?

**7** Cost considerations

**8** What affects quality and cost

**11** Installation keys -  
what to ask your contractor

**14** Conclusion - keep goal in mind





## Homeowner's Guide to Replacement Siding Projects

**F**ew building materials play as big a role in maintaining the value and appeal of your home as exterior siding. A good siding job can take your home from looking slightly (or a lot) rundown to being one of the best-looking homes on the street.

But homeowners also hear stories of replacement siding rip-offs, crooked siding salesmen and shoddy installation disasters.

Considering everything riding on the outcome of a siding replacement project, it's not surprising that many homeowners are intimidated by the thought of replacing their home's siding. In this eBook, our goal is to provide a guide filled with useful, practical information you can use for a siding replacement project.

# Siding Replacement: Why Now?

## Improved Aesthetics

There are many reasons for replacing your home's exterior siding. Sometimes it's just the look of the home. Maybe you don't like the color of the siding or the style just isn't to your taste. New siding can give any home an entirely new look and feel, making you proud as you pull into your driveway each night.



## General Deterioration

Sometimes there are quality problems you just can't live with anymore. Many homes in new developments had what is known as "builder grade" siding put on the home when it was built. This grade of siding, often bought in huge quantities by builders looking to cut costs, is often of lower quality on the siding scale. Brand new, it looks fine, or at least it looks as good as all the other new houses in the development, but in many cases it starts to deteriorate in as little as five to ten years.

Severe weather damage, accidents and even vandalism might also be forcing the decision to replace your home's exterior. When these events happen, the risk of water damage to your home is high so you'll need to move quickly to repair the damage.

And finally, even the best siding has a finite lifespan. If you still have the original exterior on a home that's between 25-50 years old, it may simply be time to upgrade to protect your investment.

## Tired of maintenance

Another common reason for replacing your siding is that you are tired of the maintenance required on your current home. If your home is wood, and even with some other kinds of siding, you are probably scraping and painting/staining every few years, which is a big investment in time, energy and money.

Switching to low maintenance vinyl siding can relieve you of many maintenance headaches. Fair warning though – all siding will require some care every year like hosing it off with a garden hose or using a pressure washer, just to keep it looking its best.



# Specific Problems with Current Siding

## How do you know it's time for new siding?

These are some of the most common indications that your siding is past its prime:



**Uneven fade patterns**



**Holes and cracks in the siding**



**Warping that gives a “wavy” effect**



**Obvious seams and gaps between planks**



**Exposed, rusty or missing nails**



**Uneven and shifting boards**



**Mold, rot or water stains on interior dry wall indicating moisture damage from the outside**

## Quality of Life Issues

While not as obvious as the physical deterioration described above, uninsulated or poorly insulated siding may also be causing problems. For instance, if you live in a busy area or near a noisy road, you may find street or highway noise annoying. In these cases, insulated siding can add a much-needed layer of soundproofing.

In addition, poorly insulated siding may be hitting you in the pocket book with higher energy bills caused by “[thermal bridging](#).” Thermal bridging occurs when your home’s heat passes from the inside your home via the studs in the walls. You can break the thermal bridge by using insulated vinyl siding which acts like a blanket and wraps your home with a continuous insulation.



# Average Cost of Siding Replacement



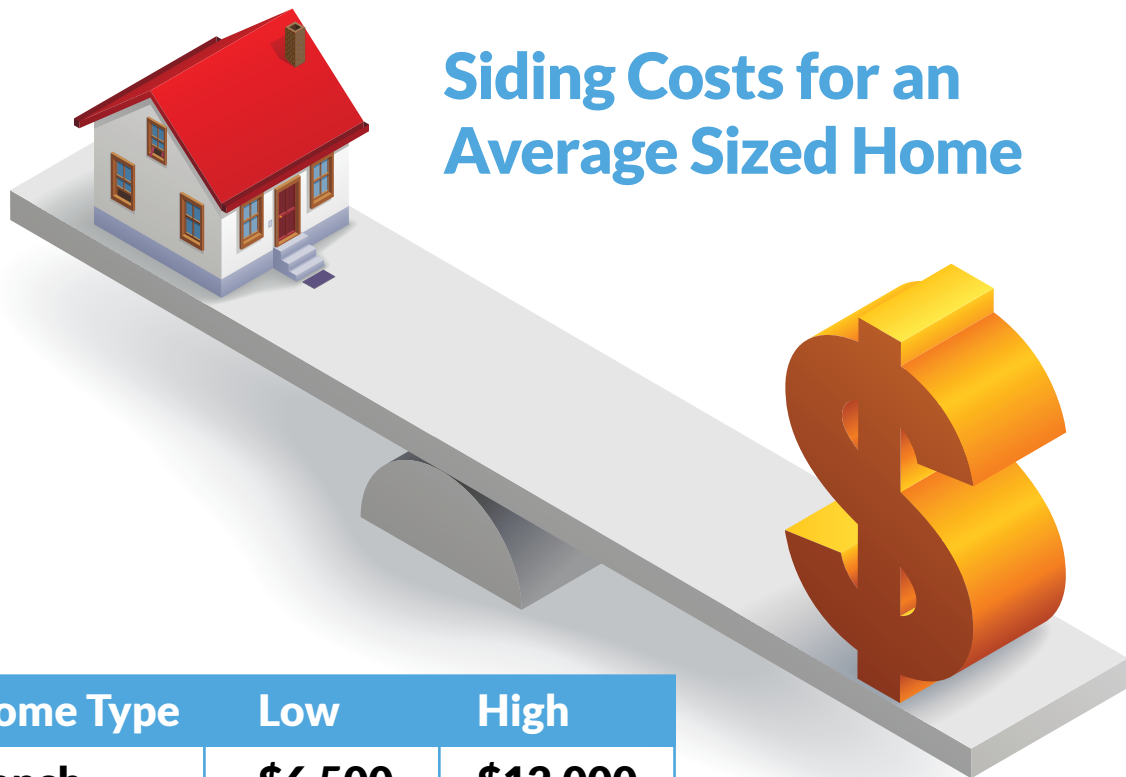
The cost of replacement siding projects varies, depending on the size and style of your home and quality of the siding selected. It's next to impossible for a contractor or a retailer to give you an accurate estimate over the phone or in the store so we always recommend getting in-person estimates.

Even an attempt to price out a siding job by "cost per square foot" can be misleading. It takes a professional to assess how the architecture of your home will affect the amount of materials you'll need and the installation. For instance, since few homes are perfect cubes, just calculating the square footage can be challenging. How many gables and peaks (triangles) does a home have? How many doors and windows must come out of the calculation? How to calculate porches and other structures?

Then there are the extras. Does the cost per square foot include specialized house wrapping or insulation? Fascia, soffits and window trim? Trim, crown moldings and corner boards? These are all questions homeowners should ask when getting a siding quote.

Sticker shock is common when it comes to siding projects. Some people expect the price of a replacement siding project to mirror the “siding allowance” many builders allot on new construction projects. But a builder’s siding allowance is typically much less than the cost of a siding replacement job due to the nature of the new construction process, its pricing structure, and lesser quality.

Still, everyone needs a place to start. To give you a general idea of the costs of replacing siding on different style homes, we’ve developed this chart showing the cost ranges you might expect to pay for a vinyl siding replacement project. These costs all apply to “average” sized home.



Of course, prices will vary based on the size, material, trim, finishes, necessary repairs and any other special considerations.



# Choosing Your Siding Product

The quality of the siding product and the contractor you choose to install it are two of the most important decisions you'll make when replacing the siding on your home. In this section, we'll focus on the how to determine the true quality of the siding product.

You need to understand these three basic components of a siding product to choose the right siding for your home: thickness, composition, and insulation. Of course, there are secondary factors to consider like nail hem, reinforcing rods, profile, length and exposure, but it's the thickness, composition and insulation that will give you the most accurate picture of its quality and durability.



**Thickness of the Vinyl** - Vinyl siding thickness ranges from .035 mil. for cheaper "building grade" siding products to a thickness of up to .55 mil. for the better quality, generally more expensive products. The thickness of the siding material will have a major effect on the durability of the product; however, thickness alone can be misleading.

**Vinyl Composition** – The ingredients used to manufacture vinyl siding determine the integrity and durability of the material. Some manufacturers add fillers like chalk or other recycled material to bump up the thickness of the siding without actually adding any value. As a result, the manufacturer may claim to have a thicker vinyl siding than the competition at a lower price, but these vinyl grades are more likely to dent, crack puncture and fade.



For the best quality siding, you should look for virgin vinyl, a first generation vinyl that includes no recycled material. Virgin vinyl siding has a greater complement of the key additives that impart greater flexibility and resistance. In addition, most quality siding is made with an impact-resistant acrylic formula that reduces wear and tear on the siding and fade resistant UV coatings.

**Siding Insulation** – The thickness of the actual siding can be great, and you can even have the highest quality virgin vinyl siding available, but those factors alone won't do much good if there is no insulation behind the siding. The insulating benefits of the siding can save you money on your energy bills and offers several other benefits. Insulation options range from none at all to very high quality foam backed insulation as thick as 1.5 inches.

For protection from air, noise and impact, we find the best insulation to be progressive foam insulation which is molded to the shape of the siding itself. In addition to improving the overall insulation of your home, this foam backing fills the hollow space between the plank of siding and the home's walls. This acts as a shock absorber against impact of items such as hail, stones kicked up by the lawn mower, errant baseballs and other accidents.

## Installation Keys

There are some basic installation practices that separate a quality contractor from a truck and ladder crew whose main aim is to get the siding hung as quickly as possible, regardless of quality. Once you have a siding contractor in your home for a free quote (and you should never have to pay for an on-site replacement siding estimate), you need to know what to ask.

The most important installation details may be the ones you don't see but they make all the difference in the life of the siding and the final price. What is the current condition of your home's exterior under the existing siding? For instance, sometimes it's obvious that there is damage behind the siding, or that there is no insulation or house wrap in place. In other cases, there may be no obvious damage on the surface but the wall surface may be uneven. A reputable contractor will look at all those issues and more when preparing a bid.



## Is a Tear-Off Required?

Sometimes the type of siding itself will determine if a tear-off is indicated. Here are some scenarios you should consider. If your existing cladding is vinyl siding, you will want to tear it off. When the house is stripped of the old siding, you can have your home inspected for moisture damage, mold, termites or rot. If it's found, you can repair and/or treat to avoid future structural problems. New house wrap and Protect-O wrap can also be added at that point.

If your existing siding is made of Masonite siding, we recommend tearing it off as it tends to chip and break when you attempt to nail new siding to its surface. The same applies to slate siding. **IMPORTANT: Slate siding often contains asbestos so must be removed by the homeowner or licensed, certified hazardous materials disposal contractor.**

If you have cedar or other type of wood siding, there are advantages to installing the new siding over the existing siding. Wood offers a good layer of insulation to your home and provides a solid surface for nailing the new siding. Your contractor should inspect the condition of the wood siding and make a case-by-case recommendation.





## Included or Extras?

If you do decide to tear off the siding, you need to know how your contractor will handle the cost of repair if they do find rot or damage under the siding. Can they complete the repairs? Does the bid include an allowance for repair if there is damage? Or, will repairs be an add-on, jacking up your final costs?

Ask if the contractor will install a house wrap and if so, what kind of house wrap will they use? Quality counts in this area because your house wrap has to breathe or you risk water damage and sick-house syndrome. The same goes for Protect-O around windows and doors for proper seal and protection.

## Finishing Techniques

The right technique for hanging new siding can reduce the appearance of seams between the planks. If the seams overlap away from the line of sight, they become nearly invisible. Lap them the other way and they become an eyesore. On the sides of the house, the installer should start each row at the back corner so you don't see the seams from the street.

On the front and back of the house, the installer should overlap the seams so you don't see them from the areas where you spend the most time, like front doors, decks and patios. If the visibility of a seam doesn't matter at all, the siding should be installed so the prevailing winds blow over the seams, not into them. For best visual appearance, your contractor should not stair step or concentrate lap joints too closely.

The length of time a plank of siding will hold a clean, crisp line is a major factor in its life span. Higher quality siding will have reinforcing rods in the nail hem to improve the rigidity and strength of the siding. Ask your contractor if their siding comes with a reinforcing rod to reduce warping and avoid that "wavy" effect. Higher quality siding will come with "stack-lock" technology, where the sections of siding snap together.



## Trim and Accessories

The trim and accessories may be the most important factors affecting the final finished look of the installation. Be sure to ask how your contractor handles protruding fixtures like lights and faucets. Are they going to use a light block to give your exterior a nice, finished look or just cut a hole in your siding and poke the fixtures through?

Old, outdated or damaged soffits can pose as much of a problem as siding in the same condition. It is best to get all soffits done at the same time as your siding. When your siding is updated, you will want your fascia to match.

# Conclusion

New siding will improve the curb appeal and increase the value of your home but only if it is done right. You'll avoid many problems by sticking with a local contractor who can provide you with personalized attention. Be sure to ask if your contractor includes a warranty on labor as well as materials.

A siding replacement project can seem like an overwhelming project if you are not prepared. With this guide, you should be able to compare each bid not only by price, but also by what is included in that bid. Be sure to get all bids in writing so you can be sure you are getting a fair comparison.

We hope you found this guide helpful. Enjoy your beautiful new home exterior.

