

SIDING Buyers Guide



Insulated Vinyl Siding Buyer's Guide

5 Important Vinyl Siding Terms Defined

Shopping for insulated vinyl siding may introduce you to a new realm of home improvement jargon. While first impressions might be confusing, knowing a little bit about various vinyl insulation characteristics can help you to choose the best material for your home upgrade. Here are five terms you should be familiar with when shopping for insulated vinyl siding.

1. Fullback Insulated Siding

Fullback Insulated Siding is the most energy efficient siding on the market. It includes contoured insulation placed behind the exterior surface of the siding panel. Because the insulation is contoured to fill the gap between the siding and your home, it delivers maximum energy efficiency, along with durability, low maintenance and lasting beauty.

2. R-value

The r-value of a material describes its insulating properties. The higher the r-value, the less likely heat flows through it. R-value depends on the type of material used to insulate and figures in such properties as thickness and density. Your climate, type of heating and cooling system, and the section of the house you plan to insulate also factor into the r-value.

3. Reasonable Life Expectancy

RLE describes the length of time vinyl should remain functional under normal operating conditions. For most vinyl siding types, the reasonable life expectancy is twenty or more years. When compared to a coat of paint--with an RLE of a mere 4 years--you can quickly see why insulated vinyl siding is the material of choice for low-maintenance construction.

4. PATH Attributes

PATH attributes describe the features of vinyl siding brands and models. For example, because vinyl siding adds another layer of protection to residential and commercial structures, structure protection is a PATH attribute of the material. Another PATH attribute of insulated vinyl siding is its ability to conform to structure dimensions.

5. ASTM Standard D3679

The Standard D3679 label describes the industry standard for vinyl siding performance. It takes into account four distinct measurements of insulated vinyl siding; weather resistance, impact resistance, extreme temperature resistance, and product uniformity. Products that meet these industry standards are listed with the Vinyl Siding Institute.

DOs and DON'Ts for Selecting New Vinyl Siding

Vinyl siding is an extremely popular choice for homeowners looking to protect and upgrade their homes. Affordability, durability, variety, and ease of maintenance all contribute to its popularity. Before you rush out to get yours fitted, however, here are a few points to consider:

- **DO** choose a look you can live with; vinyl siding can last up to 50 years!

- **DON'T** install thin vinyl siding if it has to withstand extremely warm or cold weather. You save money in the short-term but thin siding can easily warp in the heat or crack in cold weather.
- **DO** take professional advice about the most suitable vinyl siding. Vinyl siding is available in a range of thicknesses, and the locking system and composition of the materials vary from one manufacturer to another.
- **DON'T** opt for vibrant colors if you live in a hot, sunny climate. Sunshine fades the color and your siding can begin to look old sooner than you'd like. However, colored siding fades more slowly than paint because of the UV protection it contains.
- **DO** ask about wind resistance and any warranty that comes with your vinyl siding. You want your siding to remain attached during a storm!
- **DON'T** do it yourself unless you really, really know what you're doing. A bad job can be a disaster and cost more in the long term. The siding is not actually attached to the house, like wooden siding, because it expands and contracts as the temperature changes. If it is hung too loosely, it can be noisy. Too tight and the ventilation can be poor. Water can also leak inside if the siding is not properly fitted.
- **DO** use a reputable contractor. A professional job can keep your home well insulated, protected against the elements, bug resistant, and looking good for many years.

By keeping these tips in mind, you can select the appropriate vinyl siding for your home to protect and keep it looking fresh for years to come.

Is It Green? Vinyl Siding Considered

There is honest debate on what materials are really green. Vinyl siding is durable, easy on maintenance, and even easier on the pocketbook, but did you know it's also a more environmentally conscious option than most home siding materials?

According to Tad Radzinski, who served as a Waste Minimization Program Expert for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, vinyl siding is sustainable throughout its entire life-cycle, particularly when compared to other cladding products. Here are just a few of the reasons why.

- **Save a tree (or ten).** It probably goes without saying that wood siding is, well, wood. Unless you use a reclaimed wood product, new trees must be harvested. In fact, according to the Sierra Club, some siding companies still harvest from old-growth forests.
- **Insulated, green vinyl siding boosts efficiency.** According to a study from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, insulated vinyl siding can reduce your energy consumption by boosting your home's thermal resistance, or R-value. In other words, insulated vinyl siding styles save energy (and money) heating and cooling your home. Insulation adds about \$1 per square foot to your total cost, but for the environmentally conscious homeowner, its benefits are priceless.

- **Reduce and reuse with vinyl siding.** Vinyl siding manufacturing is incredibly efficient. The Vinyl Siding Institute notes that because returned scrap can be reprocessed immediately, vinyl siding production produces minimal waste a key tenant of Green. Vinyl siding also produces less waste during installation because paint, stain, and caulk aren't necessary.
- **Vinyl siding is built to last.** Vinyl siding is a durable cladding product engineered to last, which means fewer resources are used maintaining, repairing, or replacing it.

If you'd like to invest in a home improvement that is green, vinyl siding is a good choice. While all vinyl siding styles are eco-friendly, insulated vinyl siding styles reduce CO2 emissions while boosting energy efficiency.

Vinyl Siding Tips

Here are some tips that you should consider before purchasing vinyl siding:

- **Insulated Vinyl Siding:** Consider using Insulated Vinyl Siding on your house. It costs more, but in the long run it will save you money.
- **2) Longer Vinyl Siding Panels:** Many companies nowadays make longer vinyl siding panels that you should really consider. Some companies estimate that you can reduce up to 30% in seams or gaps using longer panels. I have regular vinyl siding panels on my house and to this day wish I used the longer panels on my house.
- **3) Customer Support:** Many companies have warranties for their products. However, if you send an email to many vinyl siding manufacturers, you won't get a reply. There are some vinyl siding manufacturers that have excellent customer support. Warranties do matter, but they matter only if you can actually contact that company and get a reply from them! To be sure, send them an email and see if you get any kind of reply from them.