



Window Dressing: The Impact of a Beautiful Window



The **Wood Window** Alliance

A word from our Chairman



Windows are the frame through which we see the world. Whether you enjoy a view of rolling hills through your floor-to-ceiling window or city lights from your urban skylight, windows help us to capture the outside world and root our home to its surroundings. They are a provider of natural light, which is essential for our body and mind and is a primary source for healthy living.

Wood is natural, sustainable and 49% of homeowners say that having natural materials in their homes makes them feel happier, according to The Wood Window Alliance's Windows on the World report. The study also found that one in four respondents are actively planning to decrease the amount of plastics in their home, with 67% of homeowners naming timber as the material they would like to have more of in their house. Indeed, it is being increasingly recognised that surrounding ourselves with natural products is critical to our mental and physical wellbeing.

Wood has been the natural choice for windows for centuries because of its warmth, durability and natural beauty. There are no limits when it comes to design: our members manufacture beautiful window frames to fit every project - from a contemporary, modern style to a traditional, period look.

With huge leaps in technology, wood windows made according to Wood Window Alliance standards are double or triple-glazed and energy efficient. As an organisation that proudly promotes practical considerations without compromising on the desired style, all our members offer frames that are thermally efficient and easy to maintain - so there's no longer any need to sacrifice warmth and durability for character, modern timber windows have it all.

Ironically, windows are often the last consideration when renovating or decorating. Yet, windows are integral to our daily lives and are the natural focus in any interior design - the style and dressing of windows can make or break the look of your house.

This guide illustrates how to make the best of your windows, how to dress them for privacy, warmth and aesthetics. We'll explore window treatments of the past and present and get the latest design trends in window dressing from our expert interior designer Pippa Jameson. Every room in your house can benefit from beautiful windows.

Tony Pell
Chairman, the Wood Window Alliance





Introduction by interior designer **Pippa Jameson**

Choosing the right window for your home is key to its efficiency and the overall appearance. This guide by The Wood Window Alliance is intended to walk you through all the benefits of wood windows – including sustainability and energy efficiency – and covers all factors needed to make an informed decision.

We touch upon the natural aesthetics of wood with its warmth, charm and timeless appeal and remind ourselves that with the advancement of design and manufacturing, wood windows can be customised with colour, making them ideal for modern or traditional homes. As an interior designer, I have designed and worked on many home interiors and can recall some fabulous wood windows, including painted window frames in canary yellow for a magazine shoot and beautiful restored sash windows for a renovation project in an Edwardian home.

Finally, we offer advice and guidance when it comes to dressing your window. Do you choose Roman blinds or curtains and which design or material will best suit your windows? Our comprehensive guide will steer you gently through the entire process allowing you to choose the right window and dressing to suit your home.



The world of wood windows

Wood has been the natural choice for window frames for centuries. Wood windows are versatile, charming and durable – in many towns and cities, you can see wooden frames that were installed over 100 years ago still going strong. Modern timber windows are factory finished with weather protective coatings, fitted with industry-compliant security locks, and are double or triple-glazed for heat efficiency. In fact, because of timber's inherent strength, triple-glazing is more cost-effective with wood windows than with other materials.

Today's wood windows are often installed to replace worn-out PVCu windows, to restore the historic integrity of a property, or as the superior option for a modern build. A study by English Heritage found that "unsympathetic windows and doors" were the biggest threat to conservation areas. For kerb appeal, wood windows can go a long way to raising the value of your property.

Window dressings in history

Curtains and fabric window coverings only began to be used when windows were glazed around the end of the 17th century. Until this time internal wooden shutters were used for privacy and to keep out light and cold. Fabric was still handmade and expensive, so curtains were only for the rich and were usually a single piece drawn across the window on iron hooks. During the Georgian period, paired curtains became popular to fit the symmetrical windows – usually they were made of sarsnet, a thin twilled silk, for grand houses and worsted wool in simpler homes. Ornamental touches of pelmets and valances were introduced, many trimmed with tassels. Curtains that pulled up with cords and hung down in swags and festoons were the height of fashion. Around this time, silk blinds and external slatted blinds were used by the rich to protect interiors from sunlight.

As windows got narrower and taller in the Regency era, curtains became slimmer and were usually floor length or pooling on the floor and held back by cords. Curtain poles were often highly decorative and ornate. Under-curtains of silk and muslin and a blind completed the look.

The Victorians favoured privacy and used up to three sets of curtains per window in main rooms – sheer fabric or a painted blind, a middle set of lined curtains in velvet or damask, and a heavy top pair made of tapestry looped over hooks, so they draped on the floor. It was usually only the middle pair of curtains that were open and closed, while the other two were purely for decoration.

World War II brought a rationing of materials and new kinds of houses such as bungalows and flats with smaller windows, demanding new window treatments. By necessity, curtains became simpler and were usually straight-hung under a pelmet box. The rich velvets and brocades of the earlier part of the century became a pared-down, three-colour design on a neutral background by the 1940s. Colour returned in the 1950s with abstract and geometric patterns, while the 1960s brought bright Scandinavian-inspired patterns. Ethnic designs and bold statement patterns were popular in the 1970s, while Laura Ashley's delicate prints and the Chintz revival took hold in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Today, window dressing comprises curtains, blinds and shutters with the wow factor coming from the design. It is not the materials that continue to evolve but the print and design.

Choosing your windows

Homeowners, architects and social landlords all choose wood-framed windows to enhance the aesthetics and performance of a building. From renewing worn-out plastic frames or replacing single-glazing, to restoring historic style in a sympathetic renovation on a period property, wood windows add modern-day functionality and style.

Wood-framed windows come in a variety of styles. Some of the most popular options include:

Casement

Perfect for period properties and new-build projects alike, casement windows are one of the most versatile of window styles. They can open from the side or the top, incorporate glazing bars for decorative effect and come in a range of sizes. Casements are often the most affordable and can easily incorporate triple glazing.



Box sash

The traditional sliding sash window design uses cords, weights and pulleys housed in a 'box' to counter balance the sash. Most sashes operate vertically with the two panes of glass sliding over each other to allow openings at the bottom and top of the frame. Box sashes are commonly used in period restoration projects and often incorporate design details such as sash horns and authentic mouldings such as Ovolo, Lamb's Tongue, Bevelled and Gothic.



Spiral balance sash

Bringing the sash window into the 21st century, the spiral balance sliding sash utilises spiral rod torsion and tension springs instead of pulleys and weights. Many Wood Window Alliance members provide a 'tilt and turn' version of this window, where a specialised hinge system allows the window to tilt inwards for ease of cleaning. Like box sash windows, the spiral balance sash can incorporate period features on request.



Pivot

Particularly useful for attics, lofts, staircases, high rises or any other unique and challenging space, pivot windows are easy to clean and offer secure ventilation. Using a pivot mechanism, the window sash opens 180 degrees and is held suspended in the middle of the frame, either horizontally or vertically. Pivot windows can come in varying sizes and can be circular, rectangular or square.



Arched

These are sometimes called radius windows and have a curved top that contrasts with the rectangular window below. The curved lines add interest, drama and unique architectural interest to a building and are sometimes combined with entrance doors for a grand frontage. Arched windows can be fixed or opening, and bars can be added for additional styling.



Personalising your windows

One of the great advantages of wood windows is that they can be painted, stained or varnished to suit the property, conservation area, or personal style. Wood Window Alliance members can offer a range of colours and paint finishes that come with a guarantee. Think you may tire of the colour? No problem. Wood windows can be repainted to suit changing fashions and tastes.

Coloured stains are a further option. Wood windows are typically made from engineered softwoods such as Redwood, Scandinavian Pine and Siberian Larch and hardwoods such as European Oak, Grandis and Sapele. For properties located in extreme coastal or exposed areas, Accoya® is usually the preferred material due to it having the highest durability rating of any timber.



Case study: Bereco and a Brighton renovation

When Fifi and Neil Mcgee undertook the renovation of a 1930s semi in Brighton, they realised that the windows would form an essential part of the new country-style design they were after. The PVCu windows that were previously installed had worn out and were in desperate need of replacement.

The couple decided on Bereco Traditional Flush Casement windows that created a modern farmhouse look for their house.

"I knew these were the style of windows for us. I love the way they are traditional-looking with thinner frames, and come in almost any colour imaginable," Fifi says.

For the windows and back door, Fifi and Neil picked a Farrow & Ball colour match No.15 Bone; a neutral and earthy soft grey with a hint of green that gives a timeless, warm and calm finish to their English country farmhouse interior.





Wood for wellness

Q&A with Dr Oliver G.F Jones

Dr Oliver G.F Jones is the Architecture Programme Leader at Northumbria University, UK and advises on wellbeing strategies for the construction sector and Historic England. He has a self-confessed life-long passion for all things made from wood.

How can using wood and other natural materials change the way we experience a space?

It can sound a little deep, but the relationship between humans and natural materials such as wood, stone and clay is more than traditional or historic. Humans were utilising wood and stone to keep warm and build shelters long before modern civilisation. We cannot underestimate the innate bond that forms between us and the resources that have literally ensured our survival. Our relationship with wood spans generations, we almost instinctively make mental and emotional connections with tactility, warmth, craft, strength and protection, and these connections all inform the way we perceive and experience a space.

Are there health advantages to increasing our exposure to natural materials?

Scottish GPs have recently taken to writing residents 'green prescriptions', a non-pharmaceutical prescription introduced by the Japanese government in the 1980s known as Shinrin Yoku, literally translated 'forest bathing' or a slow and mindful walk in the woods. If we put aside the new-age feel of this, there is a very strong underlying case for using more natural timber products in our homes.



Between 2004-2012 the Japanese government spent \$4 million studying its physiological and psychological effects. The studies showed that exposure to wood essential oils in the air and a compound called phytoncide caused a significant measured increase in the production and activity of natural killer (NK) cells in the immune system. These NK cells provide rapid responses to viral infected cells and are associated with immune system health and cancer prevention.

Are there disadvantages in using synthetic materials in a build and in your home?

As an advocate for human-centred design and wellbeing, I have always found it both odd and frustrating that wellbeing is not promoted more in our industry, after all we build buildings for people. The American Environmental Protection Agency noted that indoor environments are two to five times more toxic than our outdoor environments. Given that we spend on average 90% of our lives indoors this should give us cause for concern, yet we still specify synthetic products that give off volatile organic compounds (VOCs) despite decades of research linking these compounds to cancer, heart and lung disease. So, wherever I can, I wholeheartedly champion the use of whole natural materials like timber in all healthy building design, especially workplace and residential design.

Are there long-term cost savings to be made in using timber windows?

We need to refocus the notion of value away from short-term cash savings and place the emphasis on recognising the commercial value of maintaining focus on occupant wellbeing, choosing natural materials and natural light over synthetic alternatives because the hidden physical and mental health costs that continue to come to light vastly outweigh the perceived economic saving.

How might a homeowner introduce more wood into the home?

I have just moved into a period property that needs a lot of work doing to it. Natural over synthetic is one of the key criteria I make decisions on. Natural wood floors, sealed with traditional oil and beeswax over polyurethane varnishes; natural stone or inert materials that leak no VOCs; if I have carpets or rugs then I ensure they are 100% natural fibre. I plan to replace all of the old PVCu windows in the property with timber over the next 24 months. When you start making these changes you feel better.





Why wood?

James Clark of Sashless Windows explains the benefits of timber windows.

Versatility

You can change the colour of timber windows to suit your home and colour trends. For example, Chartwell Green is a popular paint colour right now, but it may soon be Old English White, Gardenia, or Grey. You can also choose a different colour inside to outside to match your décor.

Environmentally-friendly

Wood windows are carbon negative, manufactured with low or no VOCs (volatile organic compounds that damage the ozone layer) and are recyclable at the end of their useful life. Unfortunately, all but a small percentage of plastic windows still go straight into landfill sites. In the light of recent news about plastic waste, this is a concern.

Better aesthetics

Timber windows and doors add a natural warmth and beauty to a home and increase the value of a property. Research by The Wood Window Alliance has revealed that the desire for heritage means that buyers are willing to pay an average of 11% more for a house with well-maintained period features. Unlike plastic, timber windows can be made to replicate an original, ornate window. And if a more modern look is required, Wood Window Alliance members offer a variety of window designs that can be customised to suit a customer's requirements

Better value

The initial purchase price of timber windows may be higher but over a 60-year period of ownership they are less expensive to own than plastic windows. Research from Heriot Watt University has demonstrated that Wood Window Alliance windows have a minimum estimated life of 60 years and a lower whole life cost comparable to PVC-u windows.



Designer-style windows

Ideal window dressing today very much depends on the style of windows in your home - are they elegant Georgian windows, Victorian sash, small cottage-style, 1960s-style floor-to-ceiling, or simple casements? Do you want to reveal the view outside or hide it? Do you want a cosy feel or clean lines? Do you need privacy or want to have an open view? Once you know what kind of statement you'd like to make you can choose your window dressing to suit your personal style and your home. Let's explore a few contemporary options to ensure your windows look stunning.



Using blinds

Blinds can be made of wood, metal or fabric and can sit inside or outside the window recess. Roman blinds fold and unfold in a cascade of panels; Venetian have horizontal slats that can be pivoted to let in or block light and roller blinds have literally a roll of fabric that pulls down like a roll of wrapping paper. Blinds can be used in conjunction with curtains to provide blackout or thermal insulation. Thin blinds that let in light are often used for privacy. Or you can even layer up two blinds - one for privacy and one for blackout, especially where there might not be space for curtains. For fabric blinds, choose a calm neutral or a contrasting colour to the rest of the room for a pop of colour.

Traditional curtains

The fabric colours and variety of materials can be overwhelming when choosing curtains. If you have a period property with a bay or other beautiful window, then draw attention to it by having custom-made curtains made. These will fit the window better than any ready-made option and can be lined so that they drape properly and provide extra insulation and cosiness. Make sure you extend the track or pole so that the curtains can be pushed back to the sides, so you can let in a maximum amount of natural light and show your window off!

Curtain headings

There are so many kinds of curtain headings that will all give a different effect for your project. Goblet headings (where the fabric curves to look like a goblet) are a good choice for a formal room with a heavy, sumptuous fabric and triple pinch pleats give a luxurious, tailored look for the living room. Meanwhile, eyelets and tab tops are usually found on ready-made, casual curtains. If in doubt, pencil pleats are straightforward, yet they are also elegant and work with patterned and plain fabrics.

Classical window treatments

A pelmet, also called a cornice board, is a fabric-covered box that fits over the top of the curtain and hides the fittings, which also has the bonus of keeping heat in the room. Valances are similar but have an open top. Swags and tails are elegant drapes of fabric across the top of the curtain or blind that give a classical, opulent look and conceal curtain hardware. Holdbacks, ties and tassels can be used in a contrasting or complimentary colour to tie back the curtains during the day.

Shutters

Exterior shutters can hugely increase the exterior aesthetics of your property, while interior shutters can be fitted to the full length of the window for extra warmth and light exclusion. Café-style shutters fitted only to the bottom section of your windows allow light in through the top while providing privacy from the street.

Skimming and pooling

In the days before central heating and double glazing, curtains were an essential insulator against the cold and so allowing the fabric to 'pool' on the floor was preferable to keep the cold air trapped against the curtain and the window frame. Nowadays, curtain length is more about aesthetics. Pooling can give an opulent, decadent look while skimming about a centimetre above the floor can be more practical and contemporary.

We asked an expert...

Pippa Jameson

Pippa Jameson is an experienced interior stylist, art director, TV personality and the founder and director of Pippa Jameson Interiors. We asked her about the latest trends in window dressing.

When you're designing the look of a room, how important is window dressing to you?

It's key. People might not see window dressing as important, but it has to fit in with the rest of the room décor. Ultimately, the window is one of the biggest features you have in the room, so your eye is naturally drawn to it. Also, whatever you dress the window with acts as a lovely frame. It allows you to make a big statement.

How would the period and style of the window dictate the way you might dress it?

I think once you know your style of property there's a natural route that you would go for in terms of window dressing. First the design, then the palette would follow depending on the style you've gone for, be it traditional, contemporary or vintage. Shutters look fantastic with sash windows as they can be folded all the way back to reveal the beauty of the window and let the light flood into the room.

With a period-style home you might choose a double rail, one for heavy blackout curtains for the evening, and then a sheer for day-time privacy. For smaller sash windows, I would recommend Roman blinds rather than floor-to-ceiling curtains as this will accentuate the shape of the window.

How important is it to retain the original historic features of a property?

Personally, I feel it would be an absolute tragedy to cover up any of the original

features: timber windows, fireplaces, a ceiling rose or original panelling, as that's why most people buy a period home, by removing it, you are instantly devaluing the property. This doesn't mean you have to decorate your property in a traditional way – that's the beauty of it. With a clever design and scheme, you can effortlessly fuse a traditional home with contemporary decor. If you buy a house and you find that all the features have been stripped out, you can replace them with reclaimed original pieces or simply cheat with more affordable options. Panelling can be installed using MDF and ceiling roses are available in plaster casts.



"Ultimately, the window is one of the biggest features in the room, so your eye is naturally drawn to it"

As an interior designer, are you seeing a resurgence of interest in wood window frames?

If you live in a property with single-glazed windows, they are not energy efficient – that's a fact. Modern wood window frames, are treated, draught-free and double- or even triple-glazed. This means homeowners can now enjoy the beauty of wood and have peace of mind that they are warm and efficient. Because the standard is so high, homeowners would like to retain that natural material and so for that reason they are more becoming ever more popular.

What's the best way to mix vintage and contemporary features?

The rule of thumb is to have a coherent colour palette and materials. For example, if you had a lovely botanical palette – rich, earthy colours, forest green and a touch of brass – that would sit beautifully in a period-style home that has a dado rail and a fireplace. If you were to go for a traditional forest green, then you could go for a very modern sofa. Follow the same palette everywhere; the window dressing, accessories, walls and the furniture. It's when you have too many different colours, periods and materials that it doesn't work.

What are the latest window dressing design trends?

Greens, geometrics and graphic style shapes are on trend and it's still a big 'no' to swags and fussy décor. In line with botanicals you're seeing lots of lovely palm prints, tropical styles and big, large floral designs are really popular on Roman and roller blinds. If you had a pale, minimalist kitchen, for example, you could go for a big, floral design on your blinds.

What are the window dressing colour trends for 2019?

Rose gold and blush are still fashionable, but the blush is moving slowly into apricot and terracotta. Green and mustard are still 'in' but in 2019 we're going to be moving into deeper, richer and more confident colours; midnight blue, rich forest green, teal and russet. We're going to see more jewel colours and people are going to be a lot more daring. We might even see some more floral and painterly prints coming back in. Maximalism is one of the next huge trends – basically that means no rules and go for it!



Pippa's top tips for dressing a window

1 Painting your window frames inside and out if they are wooden is a great quick fix and if the right colour is picked, it's really successful. Sage green on period properties works well but if you have a modern property, to get a stylish hit of colour, try ochre or mustard.

2 If you don't want to touch your frame and you have a big recess on your window, painting the recess can be a really great way to make a room pop.

3 Look for good fabric deals. It's expensive to get made-to-measure curtains so fabric markets, end-of-line collections or hunting out seamstresses on Etsy are a good way to find a bargain.

4 Do you want to obscure the view from your window or make the most of it? The rule of thumb is that if you have a pattern or a colour on your window dressing it holds the eye and keeps it within the room. If you go pale and neutral, you lose the window frame and allows the eye to carry straight out through the window. Pippa Jameson Interiors did a makeover of a house and the owners had hot red curtains, but also the most wonderful view of rolling hills that you couldn't see because your vision stopped at the curtains. I replaced the hot red curtains with beautiful floaty sheers and the view suddenly became apparent. If you have a poor view, bold patterns and bright colours on your curtains are a great way to minimise it.



About the Wood Window Alliance

The Wood Window Alliance (WWA) is an organisation that promotes and champions the beauty, efficiency and durability of wood window frames. We are made up of over 20 members manufacturing many different kinds of doors and windows and all meet our demanding quality, performance and sustainability standards.

We believe windows are one of the most important design features of a building and they make a significant contribution to the efficiency and beauty of a home. Many people don't realise that modern wood windows, whether traditional or contemporary in style, are double or triple glazed for exceptional energy-efficiency.

The quality and engineering of wood windows in the UK has undergone a revolution in recent years, with huge developments in technology leading to an improvement in their performance and durability - making them some of the highest quality and best value windows and doors available. The WWA's mission is to let homeowners know that wood windows and doors are the modern, sustainable, cost-effective and beautiful choice.

Founded and managed by its members, the WWA is the benchmark for the industry, providing the reassurance of high quality, performance and sustainability standards. People who haven't experienced modern high-performance wood windows before will be amazed at the difference they make to the warmth of a home and our website has been created to help them find a supplier they can trust.



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