

Selecting Windows for Log Homes

Selecting windows for a log home is one of the most important decisions to be made. Window locations should be selected based on the views that one needs to present. Some window locations are required due to code requirements such as egress windows in bedrooms.

When planning a log home it is common for people to not put enough thought into selecting their windows. Choosing windows is an important task, because they will not only affect your home's looks, they'll play a major role in its energy efficiency

How important is the “U factor or R Value” in selecting windows?

Just as you hear the term “R factor” thrown about in discussions of insulating materials, you're likely to hear contractors or suppliers discussing the “U factor” of windows. Like “R,” “U” is quite simply a measurement. Windows are tested and assigned a number, the lower being better. Some regions and locales, in fact, have requirements.

Regardless of when you buy your windows, there are some major choices you'll need to make. Currently there are four main types of windows on the market and all have pros and cons.

Wood frame windows – Wood framed windows do not conduct heat well, which is excellent because it means that when you pay to heat your cabin, the heat will stay where you want it – on the inside! The drawbacks of wood frames are normally issues with swelling / shrinking, warping, and water damage / rot. These are normally the most expensive to buy.

Clad-wood frame windows – Clad-wood frames have a regular wood frame that is covered by an exterior layer of a weather resistant material, typically vinyl or aluminum. Clad-wood is a great product; they last a long and have a very low thermal conductivity. However, the wood clad frames are more expensive.

Aluminum frame windows – These windows have a greater durability than plain wood. They also weigh less, are thinner in thickness and are easier to work with. Aluminum frames are very inexpensive and very tough; they also transfer heat out of your home at a high rate, unless the windows has thermal break.

Vinyl Clad frame windows – Vinyl window frames are the current popular choice. Although quality may vary, the right vinyl frame window can be a smart purchase. They do not conduct heat the same that aluminum frames do, also they do not have maintenance problems that wood frames have. They are less expensive than clad wood window frames. Look for good welded corners to ensure that you are getting a quality frame.

The most important factor aside from the appearance of the window itself is heat transfer, since using a window that has a high heat transfer is close to leaving an empty hole in

your wall were the window normally would go. It is better to spend the extra money allowed by your budget to get the quality you want. You'll make the money back in the savings that you will receive on the heat bill.

Always try to buy a 'stock' window size versus a custom size. Stock sizes are usually a lot less expensive than a custom size. Also, it is easy to find a replacement for a stock sized window when it comes time to replace or update your window. Be aware that stock sizes vary by region, so you will need to ask around to determine what sizes are common where you are building.

Do they make windows that won't have condensation?

Depending upon where you live, temperature ranges and humidity levels, the answer is "probably not." Condensation on the exterior of a window means simply that there is a contrast between temperatures of interior and exterior panes that occurred quickly, and it will evaporate on its own. This is more common in spring and fall.

Interior condensation normally means the home has too much humidity. Your manufacturer can tell you what the ideal levels are to maintain a better balance that will reduce or eliminate this problem. But if the condensation appears in a middle pane, you've probably had a seal failure or glass collapse, and you'll need professional help to fix it.

Sometimes a home can be too airtight and condensation can occur. Ventilation equipment can be considered in this situation.

With good window decisions, it will only make your log home have great outside appeal and allow you to see all the views from the inside as well..