



WINDOW TREATMENT TRENDS

Creative window treatments are a key element in decorating any home. Stylishly dressed windows make a room seem complete and add the finishing touch to the overall decor. Some treatments are dramatic and become the focal point of a room while others are subtle and complement existing decorating features. With a century of creative ideas as reference, the options for today's window treatments seem limitless.

Window treatments serve various functions in addition to their aesthetic qualities. They can control light, affect air circulation, insulate against weather and noise and provide privacy. They can also enhance a beautiful view or camouflage an unpleasant one. When selecting a window treatment, carefully consider which function(s) should be the first priority.

HISTORY

New building construction and the remodeling of older buildings keep the demand and interest for updated and practical window treatments in the forefront of interior design. Historically, fabric window treatments meant pinch-pleated draperies. Then four-inch rod pocket curtains came into style and were soon followed by more options in decorative rods and poles. This trend led to an emphasis on tab-top curtain treatments. Now the trend is turning toward shirred curtains and scarves. Unique window treatments are now possible simply by selecting different combinations of curtains, top treatments and accessories.

Blinds and shades have also changed over the years. Venetian blinds and Austrian shades of the 1950's gave way to Roman and fabric shades. Puffy balloon and cloud shades were replaced with mini, vertical and micro blinds. Today, horizontal two-inch wood blinds are enjoying a revival. Many designers now use a combination of blinds and shades with fabrics, especially top treatments.

FABRIC

The end of the 20th century features window treatments that are soft and layered with sheer curtains and scarves often used to achieve this look. Interesting color, texture and pattern combinations show up in both casual and formal styles. Many choices in fabrics are available, including printed formal and plaid sheers, embroidered and crushed voiles, fancy batistes and a variety of laces. These fabrics are often layered with sheer curtain over sheer curtain or tiered with more classic forms, such as crisp panels or non-fabric treatments.

Pattern choices in fabrics are limitless. Popular themes found in fabric motifs include:

- Floral and fruit patterns with an occasional butterfly.
- Classical and Renaissance motifs, softened by draping the fabric and accenting with scarves, trims and accessories.
- Prehistory or ancient history motifs include fossils, engravings and ancient drawings.
- Classic stripes, simple plaids and tone-on-tone solids in interesting textures that mix well with other fabrics and add dimension to the soft looks.

Polyester and cotton are dominant fibers used in window fabrics. Sheer curtains are most often 100% polyester with special chemical treatments sometimes used to create iridescent or soft faux suede finishes. Both 100% cotton fabric and blends combining cotton with polyester, linen, silk, or rayon are popular choices. Cotton finishes vary widely and may include a sateen finish, brushed for a soft hand, and dramatically woven into damasks or brocades. Other options, such as wool and plush velvets, are seasonal favorites or used for special areas.

TRIMS

Watch for trims on all types of fabrics and treatments! Trims add interest and draw attention to draperies, top treatments, swags and scarves. Delicate fringe outlines scarf edges while tasseled fringe adds interest to sheers. Welting cord and braids add distinction to cornices and valances. Layers of cords and tassels become accents over curtains and valances. Braided cord tie-backs, tassels, buttons and rosettes accessorize window treatments and coordinate with table linens, lamps, bedspreads and furniture. Creativity with trims is the key to a one-of-a-kind window treatment.

Consider the cost if you're planning to add trims to decorator fabrics. The cost of the trim may exceed the cost of the fabric itself. Add it up first! Be sure to figure the total cost of the window treatment, including trims and accessories, before making a final purchase decision.

Another factor to consider is care and maintenance of the window treatment. Care instructions for the trim, as well as for the fabric itself, must be taken into account. If a dry-clean-only trim is used on a washable sheer curtain, the sheer curtain then becomes dry clean only. This problem could be solved by attaching the trim so it could easily be removed during laundering.

TOP TREATMENTS

Valances and cornices have played an important role in the history of window treatments, and they are still key elements in window decor for many homes and businesses. Soft and structured top treatments are used either by themselves or combined with draperies, curtains, blinds or shades.

Quick D-I-Y Idea!

Want a new window topping look that's current, elegant and soft? Consider a scarf. You'll need fabric that's 108 inches wide and up to 300 or so inches in length. (The width and length of the window and the desired style determines the size of the piece of fabric.) Simply sew or fuse hems and finish by draping the fabric over a pole or through decorative sconces, shelf brackets or rings. This is a great "do-it-yourself" project, since little sewing or time is required.

Top treatment styling varies greatly. You'll see pleats, points, scallops, cuffs, gathers, tabs, ties and layers. Drapery workrooms create many unusual treatments, but no-sew and quick-sew techniques offer lower-cost options. Experienced sewers may use structured sewing methods and more detailed

A no-sew fabric-covered foam form is the newest product for cornices. The foam is cut or ordered in the desired width. Using a ruler or plastic card, fabric of your choice is then inserted into pre-cut scallops in the foam. Fabric edges are tucked in behind the cardboard back plate. Foam cornice forms are available from fabric shops and custom designers or through catalogs. A variety of pre-cut designs can be easily customized to fit into any decorating plan. Prices are based upon type of foam, fabric cost and accessories used. Total cost ranges from very inexpensive to moderate or more.

styling while new sewing aids are available for those with little time or limited sewing skills. Linens, towels and sheets offer quick remedies for curtains and top treatments. No-sew methods drape, fold, knot and shape fabrics into the desired style while various tapes, pins, tacks, hook-and-loop fasteners and holders secure the fabric in place.

Swags, cascades and jabots are classics that appear individually and in combinations. Styling variations include formal, casual, overlapped, tied and crossed options. Swags and cascades take on a new ambiance when slipped through sconces, draped over rods and poles or knotted in place.

Cornices add variety and interest. Wooden cornices come in various styles with natural or painted finishes or covered with fabric. Use them separately or combined with other fabric treatments over blinds and shades.

HARDWARE AND ACCESSORIES

The vast array of accessories provides one of the most dramatic changes in window treatments. Although decorative poles have traditionally been used, fancy finials and rings add variety and interest. Choices now include decorative brackets, end caps, scarf holders, sconces and hold-backs along with window art and jewelry. Use these items either alone or in combinations.

Wood, acrylic, brass and wrought iron hardware and accessories are available in a variety of finishes for casual or formal styles. Unfinished wood poles can be covered with wallpaper or fabric or decorated with a paint finish, (plain, sponging, ragging or colorwashing). Pole sizes vary in length and diameter. Finials in a design of your choice individualize each treatment. Concealed and decorative tie-back holders and swag holders add still more options.

Don't forget the more traditional sash, curtain, café, tension and traverse rods. Some decorative traverse rods can be converted into poles. Sash and tension rods are good choices for layered looks since they can be placed close to the glass. Use tension rods for inside-frame installation since they won't damage the woodwork. They're also handy for metal frame windows and for frequent movers. Magnetic brackets are also available for metal frame window installation.

Several child safety features are available. A power remote control system eliminates cords and their danger. Remote control features are popular for convenience, too. Prevent accidents by using break-apart tassels on blind pulls. They'll snap apart when a small amount of pressure is applied. Some companies have replaced chain draws with a wand that's not as accessible to children and pets. Your current window treatments can be adapted for safety by adding such items as cord clips and tension tools or ties.

Give your decor a dramatic and personal touch with new accessories and supports. Be creative, but keep in mind that they can add substantially to the cost of the total window treatment.

BLINDS AND SHADES

Blinds and shades are enjoying renewed consumer interest. Manufacturers offer many new products in a wide variety of styles, colors and innovations. For instance, look for blinds that repel dust. One model reduces static electricity which in turn helps to keep dust from collecting on the surface. Another has an ion alignment that repels dust particles. When shopping for blinds, especially the two-inch or larger slats, these dust repellents could be an important factor.

Retail stores and designers show creative stylings and innovative mechanics to update traditional products. They offer many variations of blinds and shades, including wood, vinyl and aluminum blinds; slat widths from ½- to 2-inches or more; horizontal and vertical slats; cellular, pleated, coach shades; and other softly-styled fabric shades. Each category has a variety of features and qualities. Prices vary according to size, material, styling and installation.

	Pleated	Wood	Vinyl, Mini & Aluminum	Vertical	Window Shading	Cellular	Woven
Selection	Good	Stain, Paint Decorator Finishes	Wide Color Selection	Excellent Textures/Patterns	Limited Vertical or Horizontal	Very Good	Very Good
Light Control	Options Available	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Options Available	Good to Very Good
Energy Efficiency	Good	Very Good	Good	Good	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Price Point	Moderate to Expensive	Moderate to Expensive	Low and Moderate	Moderate to Expensive	Moderate to Expensive	Moderate to Expensive	Moderate to Expensive
Moisture Factor	Must Consider	Must Consider	Not A Factor	Must Consider	Must Consider	Must Consider	Must Consider
Maintenance	Vacuum or Dust	Dust	Dust or Wash	Vacuum or Dust	Vacuum	Vacuum or Dust	Washable, Vacuum
Cords/Tapes *	Hidden Cord Option	Option (Check Cost)	Options	Options	Hidden Cord Option	Options	Hidden Cord Option
Adaptable To Special Window	Good	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Good	Limited
Remote Option	Raise & Lower	Tilt Available	Tilt, Mini - Lift & Tilt	Vertical Tilt	Lift & Tilt	Raise & Lower	Limited
Other		Warm Appearance		Appearance of Draperies	New	Wide Widths	Decorative Trims

Styles, prices and options vary from company to company.

*Safety Cord Options available for most styles.

Selecting a Blind Or Shade

Select a window treatment with an eye both toward function and the styling effect desired. Consider first the functions desired from the window treatment. How important are privacy, light control, insulation/energy efficiency and maintenance? Which blind or shade is best suited for the job? Then develop a treatment that will accomplish the needs within your current decorating style. Review the options on price and selection to achieve the desired look. The chart on the previous page will help you evaluate each style.

SHOPPING DECISIONS

Window treatments are an investment, so take time to plan ahead. What functional requirements are needed? Evaluate your decorating desires and investigate options with price, selection, and quality in mind. It's a good idea to check at least three sources. Before buying, take home large fabric swatches or samples for an on-location home comparison.

Read advertisements and literature carefully. Compare information that's given. What information isn't given? Get answers to any questions before making a purchase.

Sources for window treatments are as varied as the choices of styles and colors. Department stores carry a reasonable selection of standard size draperies, curtains, top treatments, blinds, shades, rods and accessories. They usually offer special orders on custom sizes of blinds and shades. Prices range from moderate to high, depending on the final selection. Mass merchandisers have similar selections at low to moderate prices without the special order option.

Home improvement stores generally stock the lower-end products in limited colors and offer other options as special orders. Traditional catalogs offer a good selection of moderately priced products in standard sizes and some selections in custom sizes. Selections offered through specialty catalogs come in a wider range of sizes and unique styles. Catalog descriptions usually give excellent ordering and product information. Prices range from moderate to high end.

The electronic world provides a new shopping alternative to consumers. Both the Home Shopping Network and Internet sources are growing rapidly. Be sure to get mailing and e-mail addresses, phone numbers (toll-free 800 numbers are often available) and all pertinent product and ordering information, including warranties and return policy. Check with the Better Business Bureau for complaints. Prices vary greatly, so comparison shopping pays off here, too.

Interior designers and custom treatment businesses are other good sources for window treatments. Prices may be higher, so expect quality fabrics with stain resistant finishes, insulated linings, weighted hems and quality construction. They'll answer questions, offer design advice and explore your options. When getting price quotes, be sure that the quote includes everything, including measurements and installation, and that this information is written on the contract.

Refer to the Cooperative Extension Service window treatment worksheet for more measuring and selection information. After a purchase is made, be sure to attach all warranties, receipts and care labels to the worksheet and file for future reference.

DO-IT-YOURSELF PROJECTS

Traditional patterns, quick-sew products and no-sew techniques offer alternatives for different skill levels. Books, videos and how-to publications are available from the Cooperative Extension Service, libraries and manufacturers. It's easy to achieve a desired appearance today with the trends toward scarves, casual looks and simple top treatments combined with blinds and shades.

Always consider the availability of fabrics and supplies needed for the project. Compare costs for all supplies and construction time compared to other options. Carefully measure and purchase all needed fabrics, trims and accessories on the initial order as dye lots and finishes can vary. Be sure to check manufacturers instructions on hardware, accessories, blinds and shades for installation methods and measurements needed and make your job easier by using some of the new installation products, such as Zip It, a hollow wall anchor and other products available through drapery shops.

WAYS TO REDUCE COST

There are several ways to cut costs. Consider these options.

- When using a blind or shade and the drapery doesn't need to close, use stationary side draperies and save on rod cost and fabric.
- *Sales on fabrics, hardware, ready made treatments, and on blinds and shades can usually be found. Always compare value or quality to price.*
- Review all the options. With the selection available to consumers, there are many different ways to achieve the same functional requirements and the desired aesthetic appearance.
- *At least two times the window width in fabric is needed for curtains. Scanty curtains, draperies or top treatments do not drape, hang or move well. Choose a style of fabric within your budget.*
- Make an informal window dressing using a tablecloth, piece of lace, or sheet.

Refer to the "Window Treatment Worksheet," from the Cooperative Extension Service for additional information that will help you in successfully completing your window treatment job.

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