

# Choosing the Right Entry or Exterior Door

## BASICS

Doors come either pre-hung, ready to install, or a slab (door only).

If you need to replace the door and jamb (frame)/ threshold, a pre-hung unit would be appropriate.

- To choose the correct size pre-hung unit you will need to measure the *rough opening* where the door will be installed. The thickness of the wall from outside to inside will tell what size jamb you will need. Typically, exterior walls are made with 2" x 6" studs, which means a jamb size of 6 <sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>". However, if you have an older home, this may be 4 <sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" or 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>". To measure the width and height, you may need to remove the interior trim moulding.
- If you need only to replace the door slab, a door shop can bore the holes for locksets, deadbolts, and cut the insets (mortise) for the hinges. Care must be taken to furnish the shop with the precise measurements, as there are few standard specifications for these cuts.



## MATERIALS

There are three common choices for exterior doors: *wood, steel, and fiberglass*.

- **WOOD** offers the most choices of style, glass, sizes, and wood species. They can also be modified most easily. There are solid wood doors, engineered from natural wood components, and there are solid core doors with either a veneered, faux wood, or hardboard skin over a core of wood particle material mixed with resin. Wood, however, is a poor insulator, rated at about R2. Where exposure to weather is a factor, wood can also require the most frequent maintenance and refinishing.
- **STEEL** doors typically come primed (*ready to paint*), though some come pre-painted (*white*). Both steel and fiberglass doors are constructed with a wood frame filled with rigid foam insulation over a steel or fiberglass covering. "R" factors for steel or fiberglass doors range from about 7 to 15, a big difference compared to wood. Steel doors are quite durable, but dent fairly easily.

- **FIBERGLASS** doors are durable, resistant to damage, and available in either a smooth or textured (*resembles wood grain*) finish. Fiberglass doors can be easily painted and the wood textured type can be "*stained*." Because fiberglass itself is an insulator rather than a conductor, fiberglass doors usually have the highest "R" ratings.



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