

# the wonder of windows

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## choosing the right style for a traditional home



Figure 1: If the entrance over the doorway is arched, the windows on both sides of the door should also be arched. Note the round Roman window below the gable, detailed with four keystones.



Figure 2: If the central doorway is framed with a decorative lintel or a classical entablature, the pairs of side windows should also have complementing lintels in either wood or stone. Dormers add a formality to the façade.



Figure 3: A row of vertical bricks centered with a keystone can also offer the complementary balance to the entablature over the door. Note the Palladian window placed directly above the main entrance or front door, with a keystone in the center arch.

So many choices abound in window styles these days. When remodeling or updating one's home, how is one to know which style, shape, color or size window to choose to complement the architecture of one's house? Well, wonder no more. Help is at hand.

The artistic arrangement of windows on a building's façade is called FENESTRATION. In classical architecture, the fenestration should always be symmetrical, equally balanced in number and placement around the central doorway or main entrance. Pairs of symmetrical windows on the first floor should ideally be the same height as the entrance door and reflect the architectural theme of the doorway entrance. If the entrance over the doorway is arched, then the windows on both sides of the door should also be arched (Figure 1).

This is known as decorative ARCUATED architecture. If the central doorway is framed with a decorative lintel or a classical entablature, then the pairs of side windows should also have complementing lintels in either wood, stone (Figure 2) or a row of vertical bricks centered with a keystone (Figure 3). This strong horizontal design influence is known as TRABEATED architecture.

Windows on the second or third floor of a classically inspired brick or stone façade often come in interesting, historically complementing designs of various sizes and shapes. Notice the round ROMAN WINDOW detailed with four

keystones in the top of the decorative front gable in figure 1. These small, round windows were originally designed to let in light in tight spaces. They may seem like a minor design element, but they add interest and drama and pull one's attention upward on the façade.

Look at the formality and dignity dormer windows add to a façade in figure 2. DORMER WINDOWS let in light and ventilation to living spaces on the third floor or attic of a residence. Notice the subtle cased arch of the dormer windows, which reiterate and balance the classic segmental arch in the transom over the front door.

We see another interesting and frequently used classical window known as a PALLADIAN WINDOW in figure 3. It was much favored by the famous Italian architect, Andrea Palladio (1508-80), and became one of his legendary trademarks. The window has three parts; the central one is taller, arched and wider than the two side units. It is always symmetrically placed on a façade, directly above the main entrance or front door, and has a keystone in the middle of the center arch.

BAY WINDOWS can be very dramatic and romantic on a façade. Because of their visual weight, they are usually placed on one side of the front door and balanced with two or three coordinating or complementing windows on the other side (Figure 4). A bay window is a three-part angular window which projects out from the front of



Figure 4: Note the bay window, placed on one side of the front door and balanced with three complementing windows on the other side.

a house and is usually capped with a tin roof. The windows are glazed with small-paned leaded glass in a diamond pattern (traditionally), or with vertical, solid glass panes (contemporary). If the window unit is curved, it is called a BOW WINDOW. If it



Figure 5: Green ivy surrounds this window, adding interest and romance.

Figure 6: Coping around windows lends an elegant touch to windows. Ornamental iron railings add a touch of romance.



Figure 7: Note the classical elements the stone coping lends to this contemporary home.

Figure 8: New, modern windows give this cottage-style home a 21st-century look with a gracious nod to the past.



projects out from an upper floor, (is not connected to the ground), it is called an ORIEL WINDOW.

There are several ways to add charisma, charm and romance to traditional windows on brick and stone façades, and create a sense of history and provenance for your home.

Traditional arched, bow or bay windows take on a cozy, romantic look when surrounded by lush green ivy and anchored to the ground by a low hedge of azaleas or neatly trimmed boxwood (Figure 5). On the second floor, "plain Jane" windows can be instantly transformed with old-fashioned window boxes beneath them, overflowing with seasonal bulbs and blooming annuals, or ferns, ivy and other beautiful foliage.

Windows outlined in cast stone coping add an elegant, distinctive touch to old-world, European-style stone façades (Figure 6). COPING is an attractive, protruding covering around a window or door originally designed to throw off water. Today, coping is made of cast stone (instead of natural stone, such as limestone), and is widely used to add distinctive detail to interior and exterior windows and doors. To further accentuate these exterior decorative window surrounds, ornamental iron railings are often added across the bottom portion of the windows. This increases the romantic, old-world ambience on the façade.

Cast stone coping can also be used effectively and dramatically on contemporary style homes (Figure 7). In this home, the post-modern interpretation employs all the traditional design elements: two large symmetrical windows are balanced on either side of the

dramatic arched entrance, second-floor windows are balanced and arranged repetitively, the contemporary dormer window piercing the roofline replaces the traditional Palladian window.

Many times it is the window style and fenestration alone that can create a fresh new look for a home. For example, an Old English cottage-style home can be given a 21st-century lift by replacing tired, dated windows with modern ones arranged in a contemporary, asymmetrical manner on the façade (Figure 8). Small, narrow, tightly grouped windows are reminiscent of Old English casement windows, so predominant on cottage-style homes. In order to "contemporize" the home while retaining the flavor and nostalgia of this style, tall, narrow windows with horizontal mullions were used, then grouped closely together to simulate the historical cottage style.

Windows are a house's "eyes to the world." They can romanticize us, fantasize us and make us long to enter their domain. They shed light into the soul of a house and create the envelope of the interior environment. Windows add strength, dignity and character to a house, create and define an architectural style and, ultimately, make a house a home. ■

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