

## Arrol Gellner: Match windows to your home's architecture

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Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part series.

I recently came across a nice 1960s-era California Rancher that had been "upgraded" with new windows and doors. The trouble was, every single replacement evoked a different architectural style, none of which was, alas, appropriate for a Rancher.

The original aluminum window in the living room had been gracefully divided into three parts, but its replacement was a single huge, doughy-looking vinyl picture window. An adjacent sliding door, on the other hand, had been swapped for a vinyl one with fake Colonial-style divided lites.

Another nearby window had the now-inescapable Craftsman style divided lites with crisscrossed corners. To top it off, the original clean-lined Rancher front doors had been replaced by a pair of faux-Victorian leaded glass models with an ornate floral motif.

This kind of jumble is the building equivalent of striped pants, a Hawaiian shirt, and a houndstooth jacket. They just don't work together.

Different styles of windows unavoidably evoke different architectural eras, both traditional and modern, so it's important to choose windows that complement rather than contradict the style of your house. Here's a quick rundown of which windows go with which style:

Casement windows are probably the oldest type of operable windows, and their use dates back many centuries if not millennia. This long pedigree suits them not only to almost all period revival home styles except Victorians, but also to postwar styles ranging from Bauhaus to contemporary. Although the proportions of the individual casement units are tall and narrow, they can be ganged (combined side-by-side) into broad visual "ribbons," as Frank Lloyd Wright often did in his Prairie style work.

Double-hung windows are typically found in Colonial, Victorian and interwar home styles, and have relatively tall, narrow proportions. Hence, they can look very strange indeed on postwar homes, which typically emphasize horizontal lines and broad proportions. It's fine to replace existing double-hungs with new double-hungs, but otherwise, avoid them.

Horizontal sliding windows are a hallmark of 1950s and 1960s design. Usually made of aluminum, with delicate frames and broad proportions, they're well suited to the low-slung California Rancher styles that dominated this era. Hence, arbitrarily replacing sliders with other window types is generally a bad idea. In particular, substituting

"modern" vinyl windows for aluminum ones is, ironically, just as misguided as the common mid-century practice of replacing Victorian wood windows with "modern" aluminum ones.

Awning and hopper windows (awnings are hinged at the top and open out; hoppers are hinged at the bottom and open in) are both products of mid-century modernism. As such, they look quite alien on any home style predating World War II, and indeed on neo-traditional late-century styles as well.

If replacing your existing windows makes sense — and as we'll find out next time, it often doesn't — you'll get the best aesthetic results by replacing like for like. In other words, replace casements with casements, sliders with sliders, and so on.

Just as important, don't arbitrarily add decorative divided lites or other features if the originals didn't have them. That way, you can be sure the style of your windows won't fight the style of your house.

Next time: OK, we've settled on the style. Now which material?

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