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## HOUSE CLEANING TIPS

### Spruce Up Your Home

It can be nice to finally get some fresh air after it starts cooling down outside, but wouldn't it be nice to have a home that looks and smells fresh too? Simply taking a day or two to do some deep cleaning around the house can make a significant difference when it comes to the overall sense of a fresh & clean home. This is a few of the less thought about things in our homes.

Check out these helpful cleaning tips to brighten up your home:

• **CHANGE YOUR AC FILTER.** So many homeowners

forget to change return air filters out. Clean filters really cut down on dust throughout your home. Be sure to get the right one for your HVAC system. Ask your local HVAC service company or the manufacturer what MERV rating they recommend for the load on your system.

• **PROFESSIONAL AIR DUCT CLEANING.** There are numerous benefits to having air ducts cleaned. While allergies are usually heightened as the season change, they can be even worse if there are floating dust and dirt particles

around the home. But having a clean HVAC system and serviced can help solve this issue as well as even help save money on the utility bill.

• **CLEAN THE REFRIGERATOR.** It's almost impossible to keep the refrigerator 100% clean. Make this into a habit and you'll save money & keep your fridge clean on a more regular basis. To save time, wait until you are about to go grocery shopping. Take a few minutes to remove as much as you can, discard old leftovers, out of date items, and then clean with

dish soap and water then towel dry. If you have some stubborn areas simply combining and adding carbonated water and salt will make wiping away crusty, hardened food spills much easier. When doing this you will also be able to update your list and not get duplicate items, and maybe see others that need to replace as well. When your home from the store, your items can go in a clean freshly cleaned fridge.

• **KEEPING YOUR REFRIGERATOR RUNNING EFFICIENTLY.** You will want to regularly clean out your drain pan. If your fridge has a vent on the bottom front, keep it clean by vacuuming it as well as the back of the fridge. Make sure there is a few inches of clearance between it and the wall. Lack of air flow can cause your refrigerator compressor to not be as efficient as it can be, or worse run hot and possibly break down. An empty fridge is not very efficient because every time the door opens it has to cool all the air down again. Consider putting some water bottles (of any kind) the fridge when you have extra space. These items will be stay cooled down as well as lower the

total volume of air and help the fridge get back down to the desired temperature much faster with less energy.

• **FRESHEN UP THE DRAPES.** While curtains can be a little more difficult to clean, simply remove them from the window, take off the hooks, throw them in the dryer with a moist towel, and run a light cycle for 15 minutes. As soon as they are done, hang them back up right away.

• **CLEAN THE CEILING FAN AND CHANGE A FEW LIGHTS.** Instead of using a duster, wipe them down with Murphy's Oil Soap and water. Don't use furniture polish, it will attract even more dust. While you have a ladder or stepstool out already; go ahead and take the time to change out your smoke alarm batteries, change out any bulbs that have gone out. You might want to switch to bright but low energy LED bulbs.

• **PROFESSIONAL CARPET CLEANING.** Do you have any pets? Any stains on the carpet that make it look old, worn-out, or deteriorated? Contact Service-Master Clean of Paris & Jackson for a professional carpet cleaning job,



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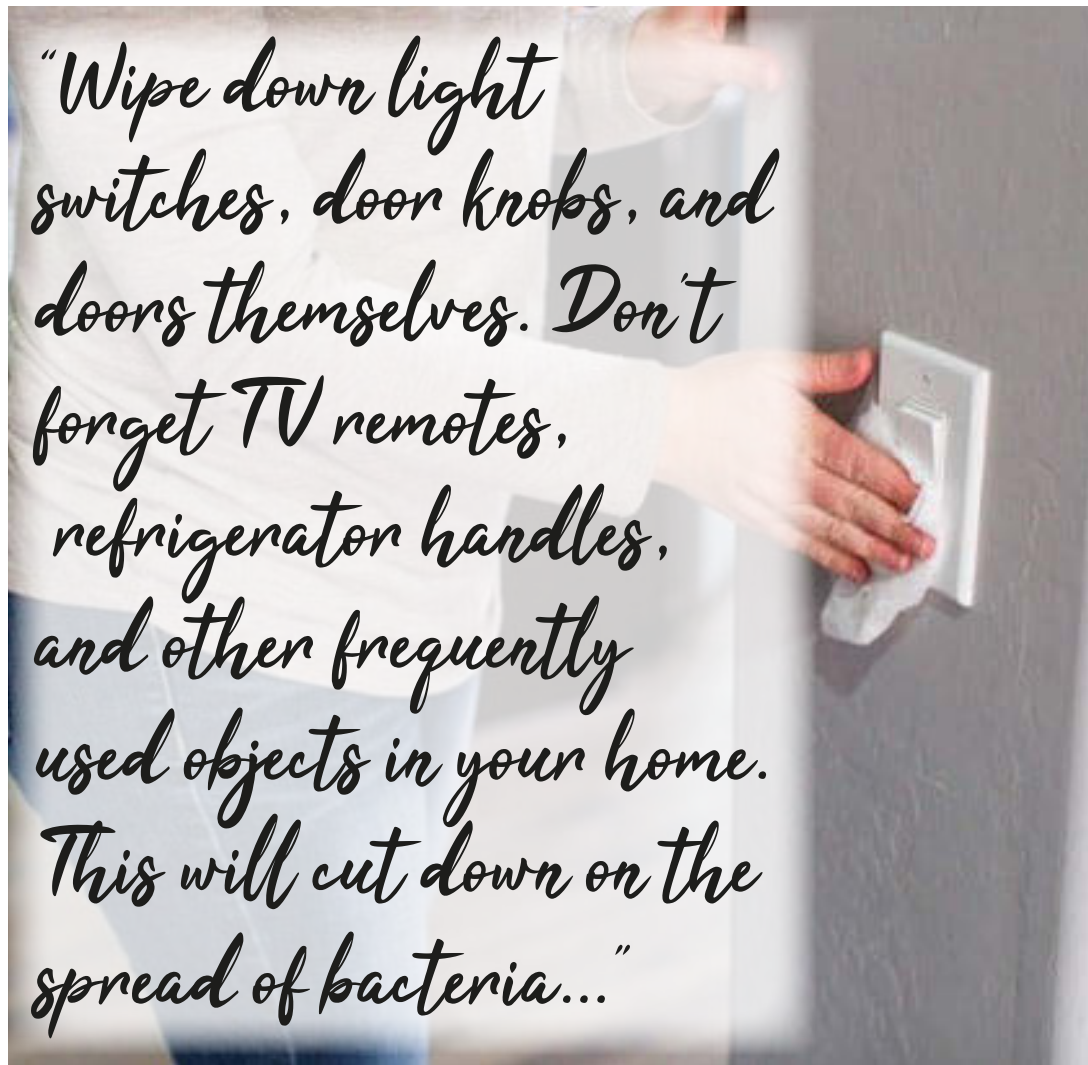
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*“Wipe down light switches, door knobs, and doors themselves. Don't forget TV remotes, refrigerator handles, and other frequently used objects in your home. This will cut down on the spread of bacteria...”*



using heavy-duty machines that are designed to pull out dirt and debris from the fibers. Be careful about rental machines that mostly circulate dirty water without raising, they can at best spread dirt around your carpet and leave a soapy residue that can actually leave carpet tacky which often leads to dirt sticking to the carpet.

• **WASH THE WINDOWS.** Instead of using glass cleaner to clean the windows, use a towel and soapy water to remove all particles and smears. Be sure to wipe them down thoroughly with a dry towel to avoid leaving streaks behind. Have plenty

of towels and wipe off the frames and sills as you go.

• **CLEAN THE SCREENS,** you may need them to let some cool

fresh air in during the coming Fall months. Get rid of the dust and debris from the screens by brushing them down with a soft brush. This way

you can get in the tiny holes to remove the particles. If you have a small tear in them, you can pick up a patch kit at Lowe's or Home Depot.

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• **CLEAN TOUCH POINTS.** Use a disinfectant cleaning and a few moist towels with disinfectant to wipe down, light switches, door knobs, and doors themselves. Don't forget TV remotes, refrigerator handles, and other frequently used objects in your home. This will cut down on the spread of bacteria and may even keep members of your family from getting sick from flu and other seasonal illnesses.

• **CLEAN STAINLESS STEEL.** This kitchen material certainly provides a modern, luxurious

look to the home, but it's also easy to see every water mark and streak on the surface. Be sure to use a cleaner that is specific for stainless steel surfaces and wipe it down gently. If you have a problem with fingerprints try using rubbing alcohol with a microfiber or buffing towel. For best results buff in the direction of the grain.

• **CLEAN THE SHOWER.** The shower area in the bathroom can have build-up residue if it hasn't been regularly cleaned due to all number of summer activates. But

instead of using a harsh chemical cleaner, fill a spray bottle with half water and half vinegar to spray on the surfaces, wiping them down with a scrub brush.

• **REMOVE LIME BUILDUP.** The best way to eliminate that gross residue around bathroom faucets is to lay paper towels over it, pour on some cleaning vinegar, and let it sit for an hour. The acid will break down the residue, making it easy to wipe away.

• **CLEAN THE DISHWASHER.** Do you have a slight

bad odor in your kitchen that you just cannot find? A dishwasher seems like one of the last things that needs to be cleaned because it cleans itself, right? Well, not exactly. If you look inside, you may find food particles on the bottom that need to be removed. Then you can run an empty load using a specialty cleaner made for the dishwasher.

• **DISHES – NOT GETTING CLEAN?** It may not be your dishwasher's fault. It is not a good idea to overload your dishwasher. Leave spaces between

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dishes, never stack them. Do not put too many utensils in the basket. If there is not space between the dishes, they are not getting cleaned properly. On pots & pans, most dishwasher detergents will cause pans to rust and coatings to come off, it is best to wash those by hand with dish soap and water.

• **CLEAN THE WASHING MACHINE.** This is another appliance that is often thought to clean itself, but if it smells musty, you can use vinegar, baking soda, and hot water to clean it out. Allow it to run a load of hot water first, and then add the cleaning agents, letting them sit for a half hour to hour. If it is a front loading machine, make sure you are not using too much detergent and take a damp towel and clean around the door seals. There may also be a trap that can be cleaned out consult your manual.

• **LOOK FOR SIGNS OF WATER LEAKS.** They could be anywhere you have a pipe behind the wall, not just around sinks and the like. Checking frequently can help stop damage from long term small leaks. Those small leaks, if left unchecked can cause

big issues. If you find mold, proceed with caution, or call a professional mold remediator if the mold has already spread to other areas. Mold can be cleaned, but someone will need to track down the source to prevent it from just returning.

• **CLEAN THE MICROWAVE.** Cleaning this everyday kitchen staple can be annoying, especially if food is not covered during each use. Investing in plastic food covers, that are dishwasher safe will save you time. But simply putting in a cup of water and running it for a few minutes will loosen most crusty food particles when wiping them away. You can have this done in just a few minutes.

• **CLEAN THE SHELVES.** Just over a few months, books and knick-knacks can become loaded with dust that can trigger allergies. You might also take this time to clean the horizontal surfaces of picture frames, and other items in your home. Simply wiping them down can make your decorations look new again.

There are so many things to be cleaned in the house it can seem overwhelming at times. Just remember that

when completed these cleaning tasks can show a significant difference. There are also a number of ways that the cleaning can be made easier instead of spending hours on one chore. Many homeowners get help quarterly or twice a year on the bigger chores, then it is easier on them to keep up with the smaller less time consuming tasks.

**CONSIDER WORKING WITH A PROFESSIONAL CLEANING COMPANY**

While the results are worth the amount of cleaning that needs to be done, not all homeowners have time to be cleaning the entire house. This could be due to work, trips, simply wanting to spend more time outside,

or the home is just too big for one person to handle all the cleaning.

If you have found yourself in this position, you're not alone. The experts ServiceMaster Clean & Restore of Paris and West TN are always available to help around the house. Whether you need a certain area of your home cleaned or the entire property deep cleaned, you can count on our professionals to get the job done in a time efficient manner.

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Written by Barry Flood, BPU Energy Advisor

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# 5 Fall Tips for a Healthy Yard

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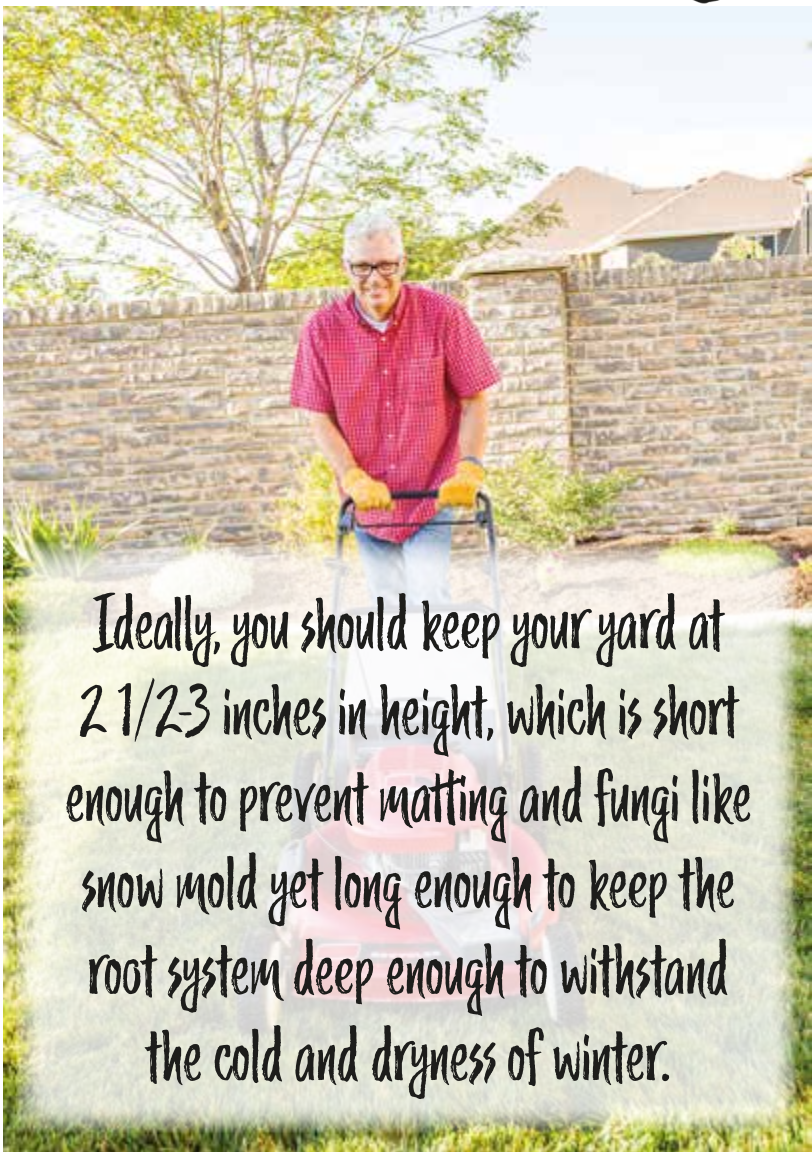
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yard next spring. Consider these tips to take advantage of the fall growing period:

## Mow

Ideally, you should keep your yard at 2 1/2-3 inches in height, which is short enough to prevent matting and fungi like snow mold yet long enough to keep the root system deep enough to withstand the cold and dryness of winter.

Grass continues to grow until the first frost, so it's important to keep mowing throughout the fall. Ideally, you should keep your yard at 2 1/2-3 inches in height, which is short enough to prevent matting and fungi like snow mold yet long enough to keep the root system deep enough to withstand the cold and dryness of winter. Leaving small clippings on the yard can also add organic matter, moisture and nutrients to the soil.

## Aerate

Because your yard typically suffers some degree of soil compaction and heat stress, which can lead to brown or thinned grass, regular aeration can prevent soil from compacting and defend against thatch - a layer of roots, stems and debris - that blocks water, oxygen and

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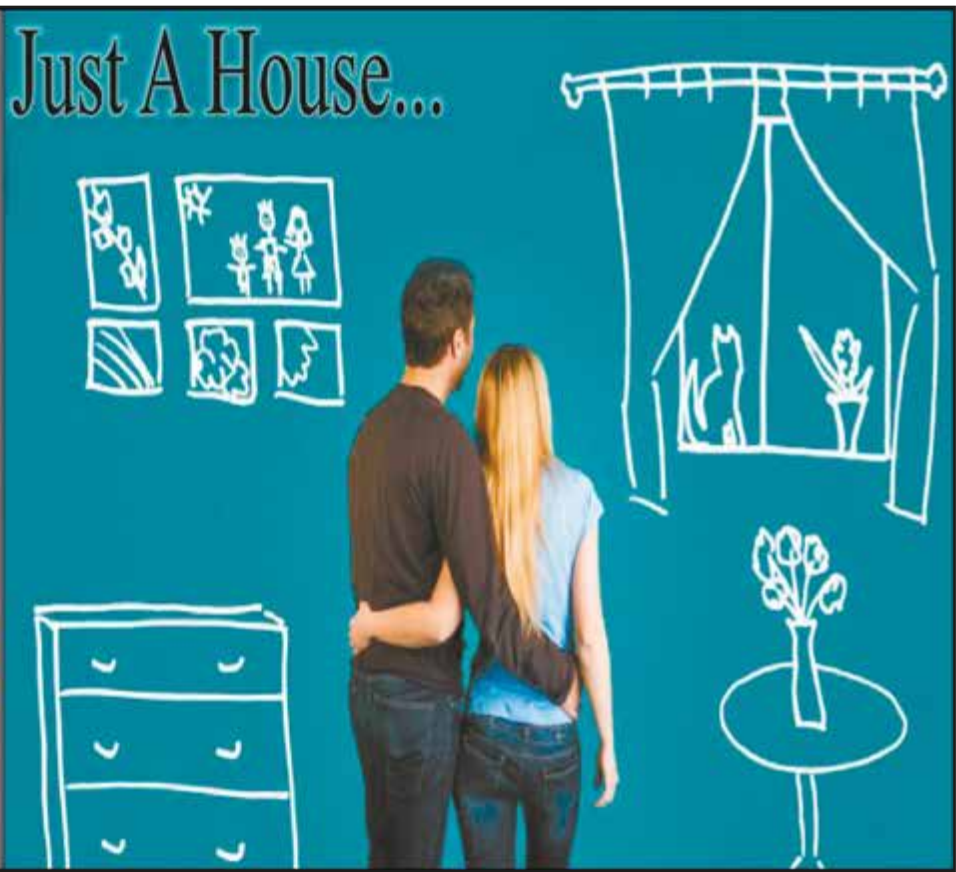
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(eLivingtoday.com) While many homeowners think lawns need less care during the fall months, it's actually the perfect time to give your yard the extra boost in needs to make it through a dormant winter. Giving your lawn a little autumn attention as it works to absorb energy, moisture and nutrients to sustain it through the colder months can pay dividends with a lush, healthy



fertilizer from reaching the roots. The process of aerating removes soil plugs from the yard to encourage root growth and free up passageways for nutrients.

## Rake

When leaves fall on your lawn, they can block out sunlight and, if left too long, stick together to form a suffocating mat on your grass, potentially leading to fungal diseases. Start raking as soon as leaves begin to fall or blow into your yard, and rake at least weekly. Alternatively, use your lawnmower fitted with a collection bag attachment to remove leaves from your lawn's surface.

## Fertilize

Because grass grows slower as the weather cools, fall is the ideal time to fertilize. In mid-to-late-fall, apply

a dry fertilizer to your grassy areas to provide necessary nutrients and encourage deep roots and denser growth that can better compete with weeds and tolerate disease and insects. For optimum coverage, use a drop spreader, though crank-style broadcast spreaders also work.

## Over-seed

A dense lawn not only looks good, but also helps protect against weeds. Over-seeding your existing turf can help fill in any thin or bare spots and also introduces the resilient grass seed. For best results, over-seed immediately after aerating when the ground is still warm, nights are cooler and the sun is not as hot during the day.

For more strategies to build a healthy, better looking lawn, visit eLiving-today.com.



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(StatePoint) Do seasonal temperatures sometimes leave you frustrated with your home's lack of insulation? Staying comfortable indoors is a top priority for most people, and luckily, it's easy to ensure your home is an optimal temperature.

With a few quick tips and home defense strategies, you'll be on your way to a more comfortable abode in just a few hours.

Why weatherize?

Preparing your home to combat temperature change is an important task for both homeowners

and renters throughout the year. Feel uncomfortable drafts? Notice your heating and cooling equipment is continuously running? Tired of expensive energy bills? You're not alone: almost two-thirds of American adults live in a home that needs to be weatherized, according to recent research conducted by Duck brand.

There are many motivations for weatherizing. In fact, did you know...

- 44 percent weatherize to make the temperature of their home more comfortable
- 22 percent do it for greater energy efficiency
- 54 percent of people weatherize to save money on energy bills

So, now what?

Once you've identified the leaks, it's time to stop them. Window and door seals take a beating from normal wear-and-tear and can be a large source of drafts coming into the home. Replace old, cracked seals with such products as Duck Brand Heavy-Duty Weatherstrip Seals, which are made with durable, flexible material, allowing them to stand up against extreme temperatures that cause other seals to freeze or crack. They help to block cold winter air from entering, as well as dust, pollen and insects during the warmer months.

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Is that a draft?

First, you'll need to identify the source -- or sources -- of leaks. Don't stress -- it's easy! Hold an incense stick near potential draft sources, such as windows and doors. If the smoke blows sideways, you'll know an air leak exists and it's time to weatherize. But don't stop there. Areas such as attic access openings, pull-down stairs and exterior electrical sockets are additional, often overlooked sources of air leaks.



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tection with older windows, an easy-to-install, crystal-clear option like Duck Brand Roll-On Window Insulation Kits can create an additional barrier against cold air. The pre-taped top and easy roll-on film require no measuring, making installation painless. When applied to indoor window frames, the film provides an airtight seal that's easily removed once warmer weather arrives.

Finally, address the hidden leaks with solutions like Duck Brand Socket Sealers Insulating

Seals. Quick and easy to install, they fit behind outlets or light switch faceplate covers. When installed on exterior walls, they act as a buffer between the inside and outside air. Next, attic stairway covers protect against an often-uninsulated area, and offer a flexible, lightweight solution that can be repositioned to maintain direct access to the attic.

For more information on increasing home comfort, along with easy-to-follow weatherization installation videos, visit [duckbrand.com/weatherization](http://duckbrand.com/weatherization).

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# WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE REPLACING HOME WINDOWS

(StatePoint) As with any home upgrade, a little research can help ensure a top-quality installation with the best materials on the market. Here are the most important factors to consider before purchasing replacement windows:

STAR label, which indicates a product is energy efficient according to standards from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy.

Numbers don't lie so be sure to also check the National Fenestration Rating Council Label to compare performance between energy-efficient windows in the following categories: U-Factor (how well the window retains heat), Solar Heat Gain Coef-

ficient (how well it resists unwanted heat gain), Visible Transmittance (how well it lets in natural light), Air Infiltration (how drafty the window is), and Condensation Resistance (how well it resists inside surface condensation).

**• TEST SPECIFICATIONS:** All windows on the market are tested for their structural integrity, as well as their resistance to air and water. Investigating these

ratings is important, particularly in regions that see wicked weather.

**• INSULATION:** For maximum energy efficiency and comfort, look for new technologies such as Neopor insulation and INNERGY thermal reinforcements that deliver high-performance and meet ENERGY STAR certification standards. Windows offered by ProVia, for example, include these features and are tested against

## • ENERGY

### EFFICIENCY:

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the most stringent requirements for air and water infiltration, wind load resistance, ease of operation, forced entry and more.

• **MATERIAL:** Windows are available in such materials as vinyl, wood, aluminum and fiberglass. Understanding the benefits of each can help you arrive at the right decision for your home, priorities and budget, and new options

even mix materials, combining different advantages into one product.

• **WARRANTY AVAILABILITY:** Replacement Windows can cost thousands of dollars and should last a long time, so consider protecting your investment by opting for windows that come with a comprehensive lifetime warranty that's transferrable

to the next homeowner. This can potentially increase your home's value should you put it on the market.

• **STYLE:** The style of your new windows can complement the architectural features of your home, provide visual interest and boost curb appeal. Using online design resources and

visualizer tools can help you see how particular hardware finishes, colors, add-ons, finishing options and accessories will look on your home.

• **RECOGNITION:** Third-party recognition for a particular brand or product is a strong indicator that you're investing in a quality product.

A recent "Remodeling" magazine survey of remodeling contractors ranked ProVia vinyl windows as number one in window quality, citing its unique ability to customize as needed, its personalized customer service, strong

warranties and mix of state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment and human craftsmanship. Lastly, the brand was recognized for strong attention to detail, as it follows an 80-plus item checklist for quality control. More information can be

found at [provia.com/windows](http://provia.com/windows). Before upgrading, get savvy. Doing so can help you make a decision that will improve your home's beauty, keep your family comfortable and safe and save you money.

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Home inspections are an important part of a home purchasing process. Once the buyer and seller have come to an acceptable agreement on the purchase price of the home the realtor may ask if you would like to have the home inspected by a home inspector. If the buyer decides not to have the home inspected the purchase continues on an as is basis. When the buyer chooses to have the home inspected, the normal process is the offer on the home is contingent of the inspection. This meaning once

the home is inspected there could be costly issues and the buyer can withdraw or alter the offer.

Most realtors can provide a list of home inspectors one can be found online. Inspectors qualifications can vary from professional inspector to Master inspector. Once the inspector is chosen he/she will conduct a visual inspection for quality on all major aspects of the home to include the Roof, attic, plumbing. Heating and air conditioning, electrical structure and safety. Ugly

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paint colors and the septic system are not part of an inspection.

Once completed, the inspector will provide the client with a detailed report of every item as well as any deficiencies. This process is the most important as it will help the client make an informed buying decision. We have asked one of our local realtors, Susan Bradberry, why she thought it was important to get a home inspection, here is what she had to say about it, "As a realtor I always advise my buyers to have a home inspection. Without a home inspection you are buying the home "as is" with no way of knowing if there are issues."

A thorough home inspection should include everything from the roof to the basement/crawl space. Once the inspection is done and you have the written report, you can discuss with your agent how to proceed. You have options.

If everything is in good order, you can proceed with the purchase. Or, there may be some repairs you feel the seller should be responsible for. Your agent will request these with a written Repair/Replacement Proposal. Worst case scenario is the home inspector finds a major issue and as a result you decide not to purchase the property. Without a home inspection, these options would not be



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available to you.

I also think a home inspection works for the seller of the property. If you have a home inspection before putting your home on the market, it can save a lot of time and expense later. With a pre-inspection you can take care of any issues up front. This way you can take

the time to get bids on the work and can avoid slowing down the closing. You are also “putting your best foot forward” when the showings start. So whether you are buying or selling a home inspection can save time, expense, and frustration!”

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