



4 EASY STEPS TO FINDING THE PERFECT GARAGE DOOR



With advances in today's technology, there are nearly infinite options in garage doors. Unfortunately, this flexibility introduces a lot of extra decisions that can leave you feeling overwhelmed and stressed about which decisions to make first. These 4 Easy Steps to Finding the Perfect Garage Door will help you make the right decisions at the right time and help ensure your garage door buying experience stays simple and enjoyable.

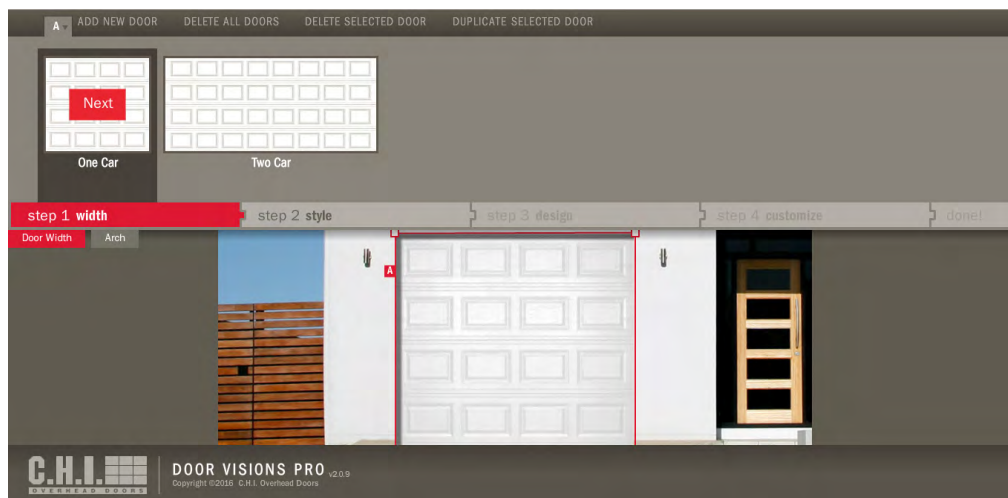
Step 1: Find Your Look

The first decision is to find the look that matches your home and your style. Most garage doors fall within a few broad categories:

- **Carriage House:** While still operating as an overhead door, the carriage house style brings back the classic appearance of garage doors that opened using heavy duty hinges.
- **Raised Panels:** This is the most common style with panels that are either long, horizontal rectangles or a grid of shorter panels. Beveled angles create a lovely raised profile which adds beauty and depth to the garage door.
- **Recessed Panels:** Recessed panels provide a simple, clean look with a bold grid and plain panels.
- **Flush Door:** You may prefer the clean look of a flush garage door, which abandons the typical panels in pursuit of a broad, smooth surface.
- **Full View:** A modern look, full view doors typically require the structural stability of an aluminum frame to support glass windows throughout. This is a good fit for contemporary homes and popular retro mid-century designs.

Each of these styles can be tailored with windows and other options; don't worry about that quite yet. Just pick your foundation style and move forward from there.

If you're having difficulty deciding which style would match, try out one of the many door visualizer tools that enable you to upload a photo of your home and virtually try on as many styles as you'd like.



Step 2: Choose Your Material

Once you know what look you want, you'll then need to decide on the material. Most design styles are available in a wide variety of sizes, styles and colors, including woodgrain finishes. Be sure to select the material that's right for you.

- **Steel:** By far the most popular and affordable choice, steel doors are available in a wide variety of styles and colors, including woodgrain finishes.
 - Pros: Strength, low maintenance, longer warranties, broad variety of color choices.
 - Cons: Can be susceptible to dents and may rust if not properly maintained.
 - R-Value: Range from R-3 to R-17
 - Price Range*: \$550-\$2,800
- **Wood:** This traditional construction material brings a natural beauty to your garage door and will complement any home.
 - Pros: Highly versatile material to work in, natural beauty.
 - Cons: Expensive, significantly shorter warranties, requires consistent maintenance to preserve door integrity.
 - R-Value: Range from R-5 to R-9
 - Price Range*: \$4,450 – \$11,500
- **Aluminum:** In addition to providing a modern look, aluminum garage doors are particularly well suited in marine environments.
 - Pros: High strength frame, corrosion resistant.
 - Cons: Cost, aluminum panels may dent easily.
 - R-Value: Minimal
 - Price Range*: \$1,500 - \$3,500
- **Fiberglass:** Fiberglass doors are molded doors that can achieve architectural details that are unavailable in steel panels.
 - Pros: Paintable, corrosion resistant, high impact resistance, high definition faux wood grain available.
 - Cons: Cost, can become brittle in colder weather, may yellow with age.
 - R-Value: Range from R-10 to R-17
 - Price Range*: \$2,100 - \$6,000
- **Vinyl:** Much like vinyl fencing and decking, vinyl garage doors are typically manufactured from PVC material and bring high durability and low maintenance to garage doors.
 - Pros: Very difficult to dent or break, easy maintenance.
 - Cons: Available in fewer colors, some dislike the 'plastic' look.
 - R-Value: Range from R-8 to R-12
 - Price Range*: \$800 - \$1,300



*Prices can vary depending on sizes, options and associated installation costs.

Step 3: Select Your Construction Quality

Even after choosing a look and material, you'll still need to decide the overall construction quality of your door. These decisions may include insulation and wind resistance.

- Insulation:

There are three primary reasons to consider an insulated garage door:

- **Energy efficiency** – Insulated garage doors help regulate the temperature in your garage, making it more comfortable in both the summer and winter months. This can be especially important if you spend a lot of time working in your garage or have living space above it. Just remember that most garages aren't included in the home's heating/air conditioning, so insulating your residential garage door may have limited impact on your overall utility bill.
- **Noise reduction** – An insulated garage door can reduce the transfer of sound by up to 20%, keeping noise out or making your garage band or woodworking shop a little more neighbor-friendly.
- **Structural stability** – Insulation can bring extra strength to garage door panels, helping them operate quieter and last longer.

While fiberglass and vinyl usually come insulated, most people who purchase steel garage doors are faced with three common grades:

- **Single Layer:** These uninsulated garage doors are often called 'pan' doors and are simply stamped steel with no backing. These are the lowest cost steel doors available.
- **Double Layer:** The next grade of insulated steel garage door is a pan door with a sheet of polystyrene (common packing material) placed inside with a vinyl backing. The insulation may be exposed on the interior and has a relatively low insulation value.
- **Triple Layer:** The highest quality insulated steel garage door is also known as a 'sandwich' door because it has both an exterior and interior panel that encases the insulation. It may be filled with either polystyrene or polyurethane. Polyurethane is an expanding foam that fills every little gap in the panel and results in a more rigid structure.
 - *Panel Thickness:* If you need the highest R-Value door available, you'll also need to consider increasing the thickness of your panels. Common residential dimensions are 1 3/8" and 2" thick panels.



- Polyurethane is expandable foam popular for filling gaps around plumbing. Once mixed, it expands to fill the insides of the door and cures to create a rigid form-fitting core between the panels.
- Polystyrene is produced in many shapes for insulation and packaging. To insulate garage doors with polystyrene, sheets of the foam are inserted on the back side of a pan door or laminated between the steel skins on a sandwich door.
- **Wind Rating:** If you live in hurricane regions (Atlantic Coast, Florida, Gulf Coast) or locations where persistent wind is a problem, you may need to consider wind rated doors. These doors are reinforced with extra structural members and rigorously tested by manufacturers to ensure the door will stand up to harsh environmental conditions. Check with your local door dealer to learn more about building codes that may affect your decision.



Step 4: Add Finishing Touches

Once you've determined the look, material, and quality of your door, it's time to make it uniquely yours. A few of these decisions include:

Color: Doors can be stained, painted, or powder coated from the factory, depending on the material.

- Steel doors come in several pre-painted colors or can be painted to match your home after installation.
- Wood doors are supplied in their natural finish, ready for staining or painting.
- Fiberglass also comes in a variety of pre-painted colors, but can also come unfinished ready to be painted.
- Aluminum or full-view garage doors can be powder-coated in almost any color imaginable.
- Vinyl doors come in a limited number of pre-painted colors.

Windows: With a wide variety of window frames and glass options to choose from, you'll be able to find the right look for your home.

Decorative Hardware: Many companies offer extensive lines of decorative hardware that add a unique look to your door. Carriage house doors most often include decorative handles and hinge straps.

Interior Upgrades: Options for the inside of your door may include painted hardware, upgraded rollers, or custom imagery applied directly to your door.



Conclusion

When it comes to buying your new garage door, stick to these 4 easy steps and you'll find the decision making process will go much more smoothly. This is a purchase most people will only make a few times in their life, and it should be a fun process where you learn more than you ever thought you would about garage doors, and ultimately end up with the perfect door to complement your home.