

## Exterior Shutters - Functional vs. Non-Functional

Exterior shutters have evolved into a standard feature on American homes. Functional exterior shutters were initially designed for ventilation, light control, and to protect from wind and rain. With functional hardware, the shutters rotate closed to block direct sunlight while simultaneously allowing for air to pass through the house. Shutters could also be used as the first line of defense from precipitation and storms.

In the early American development all shutters were constructed from wood. Wooden shutters were strong and maintained integrity when built from an exterior grade lumber (often Cedar or Cyprus).

In years past, functional wood exterior shutters were far more practical than they are today. Modern conveniences make movable outdoor shutters unnecessary. Air conditioners allow homes to maintain consistent indoor temperatures when conditions rise above an acceptable level. Window screens used to protect homes from insects also prevent homeowners from operating exterior shutters when weather conditions are enjoyable.



Southern communities such as New Orleans or the Florida Keys regularly utilize functional exterior shutters. Without much concern for bugs, residents often close exterior shutters to allow cool moderate breezes to pass through the home. Common throughout these areas are multi-functional shutters that are constructed with movable louvers that rotate for adjustable light, ventilation, and privacy. Most all outdoor shutters are solid wood which offers moderate protection from high winds from seasonal hurricanes.

In most American regions functional shutters are primarily used to preserve an authentic historical appearance. Wood shutters mounted with solid metal hinges and shutter dogs present a distinct feel that non-functional vinyl shutters simply can not achieve. Towns or neighborhoods that strive to govern some level of historical accuracy regularly require the use of solid wood functional shutters. Louvered panels are the most versatile functional exterior shutters. Raised panel or closed-weave board-and-batten shutters block all light and allow no ventilation, but may offer more protection.

Non-functional exterior shutters also have their place in American architecture. Stationary shutters are a practical, inexpensive alternative to functional shutters that add definition and character to a building. Often non-functional shutters are constructed in vinyl, plastic, pvc, or other composite material. Synthetic shutters are often easy to maintain, requiring an occasional washing. An open back results in a light shutter that installs quickly and does not trap water between the shutter and the building. Wood shutters can also be non-functioning, but need to be attached directly to a building with spacers to prevent trapped moisture between and often require a strong anchor. Outdoor hardware can be installed to give the appearance of functional shutters. Non-functioning exterior shutters only need to vaguely appear operable, so size is not critical.

All styles are appropriate for non-moving exterior shutters. Raised panels, louvers, or a combination of the two are the most universal and are applicable on most homes. Board-and-batten panels work best on more rustic or rough-sawn decors. Custom designs are offered by some companies for a unique one-of-a-kind application.

Functional or non-functional exterior shutters will add distinction to most any American home.

**Ready Shutters** supplies durable vinyl exterior shutters in a variety of sizes, colors, and styles. Select from louvered, raised panel, board and batten, shaker, combination, and arch top exterior shutters.

**ShutterLand** provides solid wood exterior shutters. These cedar shutters can be hinged to be functional or attached directly to the house to be non-functional.