

# Let the Light in with Lifestyle Shutters

How to transform the look and feel of your home

From **Nathan Clarke** and **Mark Costar**  
*Founders of Lifestyle Shutters and Blinds*

Copyright©2013 **Nathan Clarke & Mark Costar**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the author(s).

Edited by Max Drinan

Cover design and page layout by NABO

Member of NABO

To join visit: [www.nabo.biz](http://www.nabo.biz)

## Introduction

Curtains mean compromise. Unless you have them tailored specifically for you, they can be hard to match with the surrounding décor. They block out light but they also attract dust and need to be regularly taken down and cleaned. With the only options being open and closed, it's hard to find the precise level of light which you want for your room. They are a small part of your life but a big part of your home and a daily inconvenience.

The solution is shutters. Over the past few years they've become the go-to window dressing in contemporary design. They let in more light when you want and less when you don't, they provide additional insulation to cut down your heating bills and most of all they look simply fantastic. Every time we install them in someone's home there's a "Wow" moment which makes our day and makes theirs too.

When we first started in this business 9 years ago there were a handful of companies designing and installing shutters in the UK. Now there's more than we can count, with new faces popping up by the month. The competition is fierce now but our level of experience can never be beaten. We've measured tens of thousands of windows and have built as many shutters to match.

The two of us are something of a shutter dream team. Nathan heads up the design and surveying team with inimitable skill and experience in the field, while Mark is a fully qualified master carpenter who makes sure everything we produce is the absolute best in the market. Together we head Lifestyle Shutters & Blinds and provide a bespoke, high quality service for even the most difficult sizes and shapes.

We've prepared this comprehensive guide to spread the word about the fantastic benefits of shutters and guide you on your purchasing decision. Don't hesitate to give us a call on 01825 760722 if there's any more information and advice you need for transforming your home.

Thank you,

**Nathan Clarke and Mark Costar**

Founders of Lifestyle Shutters & Blinds

# 10 Tips for Choosing Shutters

It's exciting buying shutters. By changing one feature you can totally transform the look and feel of your home, making everything feel brand new again. But shutters, if they're of high quality, are a significant investment. As with any investment you make, for it to keep its value you can't rush in. Over the years we've seen customers and competitors make many mistakes and we want you to avoid them. Here are 10 tips for choosing the right product and the right manufacturers so you end up with shutters that last for a lifetime.

## 1. Research the product

There are various woods and milling techniques used in the manufacture of shutters, with everything from solid wood that'll last a lifetime to cheap planks that will splinter under stress. Naturally, better quality materials tend to cost more, so if prices seem too good to be true, they probably are.

Of course, it's not expected that everyone who wants shutters in their home is a woodworking expert, so find a supplier with sufficient experience, product knowledge and patience who can explain the advantages and disadvantages of the various materials used in shutter construction. Get a feel for the materials in their samples and visit a showroom where you can test the finished product. This way you'll avoid costly mistakes down the line.

## 2. Research the design

Shutters are simple to use but complex to build. There are various design choices available in shutter construction such as visible or hidden control rods, a wide range of louvre sizes, full height shutters, café shutters, how the panels open and as many frame design and colour combinations as you can imagine.

Much of the information on the range of design options can be found in the next section of the guide but nothing beats getting some hands on experience with the shutters you want, so find a showroom you can visit to see what strikes your fancy. Most interior shutter companies quote a price based on the square metre of the total installation regardless of style, the price varying with the product and materials used. Therefore, you should make sure any options suggested are for your benefit and only place your order after you've had a good explanation for the design used.

### **3. Ask for references/testimonials**

Many homeowners base their choices on recommendations from a neighbour, relative or friend. There's a chance they'll set you up with a fantastic shutter provider, but you shouldn't base your decision on just one satisfied customer. There may be many others who have had a far less positive experience with the company and even the worst companies can please a few customers. Designing and fitting shutters well is a complex task which can leave a terrible mess in your home should something go wrong, so seek out companies with a proven track record of recent satisfied customers.

Such a company will be more than happy to provide you with details of their prior clients, so find a handful you can speak to or even visit to get a complete picture of the experience and product the company can provide. Ask tough questions about the shutter quality, workmanship, communication and politeness of staff, disagreement resolutions and the cleanliness and care during and after installation.

### **4. Use accredited companies**

Companies belonging to recognised trade associations will usually be the more reliable choice as there is an additional level of accountability and quality control. You can and should of course check with the association to ensure their membership is current, or at least have sight of their membership certificate. Also, many county council Trading Standards Departments are now running "Buy with Confidence" schemes. Trading Standards officers are particularly thorough when investigating companies they are to endorse, requiring continued proof of a high standard of work and monitoring performance with ongoing checks of all aspects of service, guarantees and the integrity of all members of staff.

### **5. Also use experienced companies**

Shutters may now be taking the country by storm, but they're still a relatively new product in the United Kingdom. Until recently, people were unaware just how attractive, versatile and convenient they could be; just 7 or 8 years ago you would have been hard pressed to find more than a couple of companies offering shutters. Today you could find dozens. Thanks to the popularity of shutters in contemporary interior design, there are many companies eager to start providing them, but despite their enthusiasm, they have relatively little or no experience. They will gain it in time but inevitably that will be at someone's cost. Better that somebody isn't you.

## 6. Be patient in the busy season

Many home service industries are seasonal. During peaks in demand, the best companies start growing a queue of clients which can take some time to get through. But don't stop waiting for a reputable company because a lesser known alternative is offering a survey quicker. Ask yourself, "If I were in an unfamiliar town on a Friday night, would I eat in an empty restaurant that could serve me right away, or would I wait to eat at a restaurant that was bustling with customers?"

Patience is a virtue and in this case it's a virtue that can save you from the hassle, costs and mess of bringing an inexperienced or poor quality shutter company into your home.

## 7. Compare quotes

Some shutter companies win customers with quality products, efficient workmanship and honest guarantees. Others aim to convince on price alone, using low quality materials to drive down the bottom line. There's even unscrupulous companies who will use these same materials but still charge you top price, using a slick salesman to make the sale.

An honest company will provide you with a detailed proposal of the work and explain the products, wood and manufacturing techniques you will receive and shy away from the use of inferior shutters. So, when comparing quotations, it is far more important to compare products and design specifications rather than pricing alone.

## 8. Clarify those quotes

Carefully check every aspect of your quote, making sure all requirements are clearly itemised and pay special attention to the manner and direction in which your shutter panels open and fold. All of this should, of course, have been fully explained to you during your design survey. If they were not, perhaps you would be wise to get another quote from a company that will be bothered to explain. In any case, if you are unsure, you will need to clarify the points in question. This will not be a problem to them if you have made the right choice of company.

Remember that even though you may have been quoted between 6 – 8 weeks before your installation, as a bespoke product, once production of your shutters has commenced, it is too late to change anything. Ensure that the price agreed covers everything you expect and that no extras will be added after the sale is committed. And don't forget to check for VAT!

## 9. Liability insurance

As with any company you employ to carry out work in your home, make sure they carry adequate insurance to cover any damages or injuries to your family or their employees should an incident arise. In the absence of adequate cover, there is a chance that a claim could be made against you should an employee of the company suffer loss or injury within your home. Companies that are a member of trade associations with industry and government backed accreditations should have liability insurance as standard.

## 10. Guarantee

Once your shutters are installed, you'll want the peace of mind that should anything go wrong you won't have to pay out of your own pocket. Make sure the manufacturer's warranty covers everything you require it to, for as long as you need it to. Guarantees vary depending on the material used to manufacture your shutters and reputable companies will also cover the installation. After your shutter installation, be sure to get your guarantee in writing and put it somewhere safe.

Follow these 10 top tips and your interior shutters will give a wonderful sensory experience every time you walk in your room instead of years of regret.

## Benefits of shutters

Now that you know how to avoid getting caught out by poor quality and unscrupulous manufacturers, it's nothing but good news. Shutters offer a wide range of benefits and lifestyle improvements, beyond how obviously fantastic they look.

### The "wow" factor

It happens every time we install shutters in a home. The owner comes back when we're finished and says, "Wow, the room seems bigger!".

Because shutters allow in so much more natural light, they have the stunning effect of opening up and transforming the appearance of the room. Windows gain far more prominence in the room as the shutters are fitted perfectly around the frame, letting more of the outside in while still providing the privacy you require.

Not only do shutters make the room suddenly seem so much more spacious, they also simply take up less space. As you know, curtains hang into the room itself so furniture can't be placed against the wall below a window, as there needs to be a gap for the curtains to move, especially a problem with the long, thick curtains which are best at keeping out light and cold. With shutters, you don't have to plan your layout around the window space, you can fill the room however you like.

## Allergies

Even though we specialise in shutters, there's no denying curtains can look great. There's also no denying they're nightmares when it comes to trapping dust and hair. Not only does this require the hassle of having to take them down, wash them, then go through the agonising process of attaching them back to the rail, they're also a potential breeding ground for dust mites which live deep inside the fibres of the curtains. The waste produced by these microscopic pests is the most common cause of year round allergies and asthma.

If you have asthma or a dust mite allergy, then washing curtains goes from an occasional chore to a regular necessity. Instead of living with the coughing, sneezing and washing, a permanent solution is to install shutters. The solid materials of shutters offer nowhere for dust mites to hide and cleaning them is a simple case of wiping down the slats with a damp cloth. It's simply a cleaner and more hygienic way of dressing your windows.

## Security

Windows can usually be kept bare during the day without you having to worry about people looking in, but at night the glass glows like a TV screen, projecting your private life and all your belongings to the outside world. Closing the curtains is the only choice for most but you might not want to shut out the world or deprive yourself of airflow, especially on hot summer nights.

Shutters let light and air into your home while still obscuring the view into your home. If you go on holiday, your pets and plants don't have to live in darkness while you're away. You can also open the top half of the shutters while keeping the bottom closed, giving you total privacy while still letting daylight in to fill the room. No matter what time of day, shutters provide privacy, permanently shielding your valuables from prying eyes.

## Insulation

Because shutters seal up when closed, they're far better at keeping out draughts than curtains, essentially acting as a second layer of glazing over the window. Anyone who's



used them in winter can attest to how much cold air hits them in the morning when shutters are opened after an icy night. This cold air, which would usually seep into the room as you sleep, remains trapped when the shutters are closed, creating an additional insulating pocket of air over the glass. You can retain about 40% more heat in the room which means that things aren't just cosier, you'll also save significantly on your heating bills.

The reverse is true in the summer. Because the sun reflects off the louvres, heat is bounced back outside while light still enters the room. On a baking summer day, you don't have to live in the dark to keep your room cool, shutters can drop the temperature by around 12 degrees compared to bare windows.

## **Soundproofing**

Curtains may do a decent job at blocking light but they do very little to keep the sound out. We've all experienced lying in bed at the weekend while noisy people or work blares outside our window when we're trying to get some well-deserved sleep. Double glazing helps somewhat but sometimes you need an extra level of soundproofing.

Because shutters are made from a solid material, they're more effective at bouncing back sound waves than curtains. If your calm is being disturbed, it's a simple case of getting up and closing the shutters or if they're remote controlled, simply pressing a button and going back to sleep!

## **Durability**

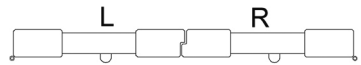
Perhaps your curtains will last for many years and become a family treasure, but chances are if you live in a normal house, they're going to wear out or get damaged at some point. Pets, children and accidents all take their toll on the life expectancy of your curtains. There's also the simple fact that the materials most curtains are made from simply won't last more than a couple of years of wear and tear. Replacing curtains is an expected cost in most long term homes.

Shutters are made from tougher stuff. We can't speak for all manufacturers out there, but we know every component in our shutters from the slats to the louvres, every little bit of the mechanism and all the fittings are durable, high quality materials. The operation is perfectly smooth and snag free, UV coating ensures they're protected from the sun over the years and our paint is specifically selected to be peel-free. Shutters should last you a lifetime or more of normal use and once you've installed them, you'll likely never have to replace them – unless something goes horribly wrong!

## Light control

Curtains have two options: open and closed. If you've ever tried to watch the television in a dark room, we're sure you've experienced the frustration of trying to block all the light out of the room but a little slither of light keeps poking through the curtains, or they're not thick enough to block the light out properly. Or maybe you want something in between total light and darkness but curtains simply don't offer the finesse required to get the exact level of light you want.

## Rebated edges



With shutters, you can adjust the amount of light entering the room by adjusting the opening of the slats down to the millimetre. You can easily shut out the light, let it all in or anywhere in between, and our Blackout shutters let you achieve almost complete blockage of light. There's also no need to compromise between light and security as you can obscure the view into your house while still letting the sun shine in, and the louvres protect furniture and flooring from harmful UV rays by angling the light upwards. And whenever you want to let the world in, you can simply open up the shutter panels.

## Ease of use

As mentioned above, curtains require adjustments throughout the day in order to achieve the balance between security and light which is ideal for you. If you are elderly or disabled, this is a lot more for you to do throughout the day than you need. Shutters can be set to the openness you like and stay that way, providing privacy while still letting plenty of sun into the room. This can be a real relief if curtains are problematic for you and even the most able-bodied person can appreciate how easy shutters make day to day light control.

For the absolute easiest light control, there are now motorised shutters that can be operated via remote control. Too much light on the screen? Too little light to read? The light levels you need are just the touch of a button away – no more stretching over the furniture to fiddle with the slats!

## Property value

Shutters give your home an elegant, contemporary look which can be easily colour matched to the rest of the house. The “wow” factor of shutters can be a significant selling point for a property, making not just the windows but the whole house look so much more open and inviting, not to mention the incredible savings shutters cut from energy bills. Plus, if you're embarrassed by unsightly window frames, they can easily be hidden by the louvres. Shutters are a safe investment which can revamp a property with true roadside

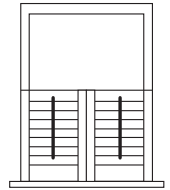
“kerb appeal” and as they are a permanent feature, rather than curtains or blinds hanging in front of a window, they become an intrinsic part of the character and value of a house.

## Types of shutter

If you’ve made it this far, then you’re pretty convinced of the benefits of adding shutters to your home. Now you need to choose the right design. This is going to change from window to window, from room to room, so take time to weigh up the pros and cons of each to find the ideal solution for your home.

### Café style

If you want privacy but still want the maximum amount of light in your room, then café shutters are the perfect choice for you. They only cover the bottom half of the windows so people can’t look in but light can pass unobstructed through the bare glass above. They’re ideal for very large, tall windows where reaching the top shutters would be difficult.

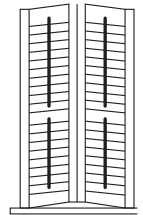


Café Style

Of course, you lose some of the insulation benefits that full shutters offer as they cannot trap cold air behind them but if your home is already toasty, then café shutters are a gorgeous addition to your windows without any unwanted darkness.

### Full height

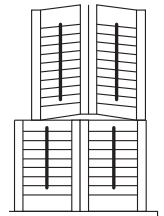
The standard model, full height shutters are made to fit your windows down to the millimetre. By covering the whole of the window frame from edge to edge, they provide the best solution for total privacy, light control and insulation while fitting elegantly into the design of your home. Special light blocking slats can be used if you want to entirely shut out light and when closed, they create a pocket of air which traps cold air coming off the windows in the winter months.



Full Height

### Tier on tier

To get the best of both worlds from café and full height, you need tier on tier shutters. These use two or more separate shutters placed on top of one another so you can open up one section while keeping the other closed. If you want to fill your room with light during the day while maintaining privacy but seal up tight in the night time, then it’s a simple matter of opening and closing the relevant parts.



Tier on Tier

Tier on tier is the ultimate shutter design for versatility and control.

## Partition

Shutters don't always need to be attached to a window; they can also serve as fantastic, flexible partitions and doors throughout the house. Instead of doors which block out light when closed, why not use shutters to make the whole house feel more open? You'd probably be surprised at some of the uses that can be found for shutters and the striking addition they can make in all areas of the home.

## Special shapes

You may think shutters can only be installed on square windows, but a skilled manufacturer can fit them to just about any frame. Don't assume an unusually shaped window will be left out when you're adding shutters to your home as shutters work just as well whether they are circular, triangular, octagonal or any other shape you can think of. The slats can be cut horizontally across the shape or wrap around curves or angles. Shutters fitted into unusual shapes can look simply stunning.

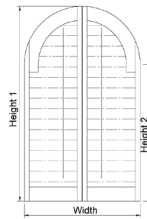
## Mounting options

Once you know what type of shutters you need for your room, the next step is to decide how they're going to be mounted. There's a number of variables that affect the mounting method used, from the depth of the recess to the strength of the surrounding wall. There are three mounting methods available:

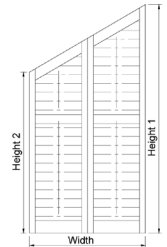
- **Deep recess mount**

This is where the shutters are fitted as close to the window as possible, deep inside the recess. This option provides the best insulation but are more difficult to open fully as the shutters open against the recess.

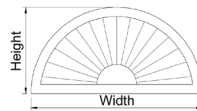
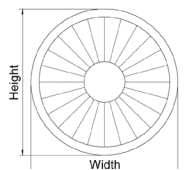
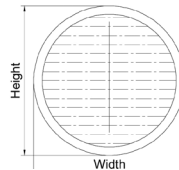
Louver Arch



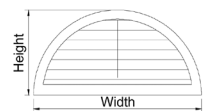
Tapered:



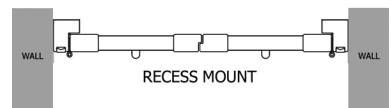
Circle:



With Sunburst Louvers

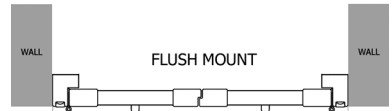


With Horizontal Louvers



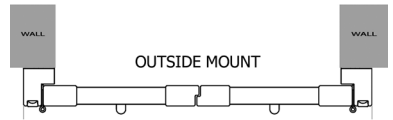
- **Flush recess mount**

The shutters are fitted inside the recess as above but are positioned towards the wall rather than the window. This is less effective for providing insulation but they're easier to open as the shutters open out into the surrounding wall.



- **Exterior mount**

Unlike recess mounts, this option attaches the shutters to the wall surrounding the window. This is the simplest method for maximising the amount the shutters can open but they don't fit as snugly around the window as recess mounted shutters and much of the insulation benefits are lost.



## Control rod options

An aspect of shutter design which dramatically changes their appearance is the location of the control rod. This is the rounded rod you may have noticed running up over the slats which controls their angle when moved up or down. Just like the mountings, there are three options available:

- **Centre Rods**

This is the traditional design, with the rod placed in the middle of the slats.

- **Offset Rods**

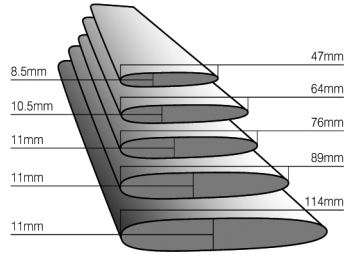
These place the rods off to one side for a mechanism which is less distracting to the overall design.

- **Hidden Rods**

These rods are concealed inside the shutters so instead of pulling the rod to control the angle of the slats, you simply tilt one and the rest follow. This elegant method is popular in contemporary design.

## Louvre options

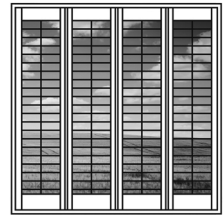
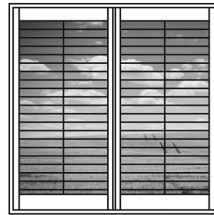
Choosing the width of the louvres, or the slats as they're also known, is a matter of balancing the amount of light you want coming into the room against the amount of privacy you want, along with how close to the window the shutters are mounted and the style you want to achieve.



Wider louvres allow more light into the room but the wide gaps also allow more visibility from the outside and may not be attractive to you. What width looks right is going to depend on the size of the shutters themselves with the density of smaller louvres usually suiting smaller windows. If your shutters are fitted with a deep recess mount, the width of the louvre is limited by the space between the shutter and the window. Ideally, you want the minimal amount of clearance between the window and louvre for the tightest, most elegant fit.

## Panel options

Nothing complicated about this one! Your panel options simply means the number of panels that make up your shutters per window, ranging from just the one to as many as you want or need. Multiple panels give more flexibility but slightly reduce the amount of light that



enters the room. Multiple panels are a better fit for doors while single panels are ideal for windows, though you can mix and match to whatever suits your taste and your home.

## Materials

To perfectly match the look and feel of your shutters to the design of your home, you need to find the right material. There's an almost infinite range of potential combinations of material and colour so you can pinpoint the exact style you want.

- **Cedar – premium timber**

Our Western Red Cedar is available in a painted, lacquered or oiled finish. The oiled finish provides the most natural appearance of any shutter available and is the perfect choice for barns and warehouse conversions. The timber is so durable and stable it could be left outside untreated due to its resin content.

- **Teak – premium timber**

This high quality hardwood's smooth and consistent grain make it well suited to areas where extra durability is required, whether it's a children-packed home or a commercial premises. Teak is strengthened with an engineered core to prevent any possibility of warping, so it can easily last you a lifetime.

- **Basswood – low cost timber**

Basswood is a popular shutter choice due to its highly competitive price. Initially available in limited styles and three white shades with the introduction of limited stain colour options over time.

- **Phoenix – mid range timber**

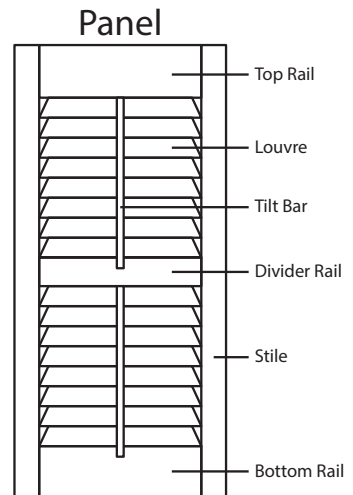
Most hardwoods, though durable, aren't ideal for light penetration. Phoenix, despite being hardwood, has an almost white finish which allows plenty of light into the room while still possessing a grain reminiscent of oak giving it a rich, natural appearance even when painted.

- **LDF**

For an unbeatable balance of durability and value, LDF binds the best off-cut timber with rock solid epoxy resin which is coated in a durable, wipe clean finish. Maintenance free, very strong and available in shades of white, this range is popular for its budget price but premium looks.

- **Waterproof shutters**

Specially designed with new closed cell composite technology, these robust shutters are resistant to moisture, heat, UV rays and can be certified flame retardant. Most importantly, they achieve all of this while still looking fantastic, with a premium white finish and smooth, clean lines.



## About Lifestyle Shutters & Blinds

Now that you have everything you need to know about adding shutters to your home, you probably want to know a little bit about us.

We've been manufacturing and installing shutters for over 9 years, travelling around the UK for everything from the most basic jobs to whole house or business conversions and every time we get the same response: that "wow" which we love to hear. And it's more than a great first impression. We carefully select every component and material so your shutters will look, function and feel as good in 20 years' time as the day they're fitted and that's just a conservative estimate!

The first thing you'll get from us is a free, complimentary consultation from our expert surveying team. They'll measure the areas where you want shutters, show you examples of the materials and louvre sizes available, then give you a rough estimate of the price. We'll detail all the pros and cons of each design so you can reach a fully informed decision supported by expert advice. Once the shutters are installed, we'll show you how they're operated, how to care for them and any other bits and pieces you need to know.

All of this is backed up by an industry leading 5 year guarantee so if there are any problems during installation or after, we will come and replace free of charge. Damage from negligence isn't covered but we can replace small parts for a minimal charge next time we're in the area. Our shutters are so well made and durable that we very rarely have to replace a thing and in 9 years of business, we've never had a dissatisfied customer and we want to keep it that way for many more.

We hope you feel confident in choosing the right shutters for your home and remember if you need any more advice or guidance, just call **01825 760722**.