

RAIN GUTTER BUYER'S GUIDE

What homeowners need to know before purchasing a gutter system.



RAIN GUTTER
ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Gutter Buyer's Guide, published by the Rain Gutter Association (the RGA). This guide is designed to arm you with the knowledge and understanding needed to make an informed decision when it comes to purchasing a gutter system for your home.

Gutter play a critical role in safeguarding the structural integrity of your home. They manage and divert rainwater away from your property, preventing issues such as water damage, soil erosion, and a compromised foundation. They also help to maintain the aesthetic appeal of your home by preventing water stains and rot on your exterior walls. However, not all gutter systems are created equal, and choosing the right one requires careful thought and consideration.

Through this guide, we aim to enlighten you on the different types of gutter systems available and what they cost. You'll learn about the value of gutter protection systems and the importance of regular maintenance and repair. Additionally, you learn how to choose a reputable gutter contractor should you choose to hire one for your installation.

By the end of this guide, you should feel empowered and ready to make the best choice for your home. A well-functioning gutter system is not just an investment in your home, but also an investment in your peace of mind.

UNDERSTANDING GUTTER SYSTEMS

A gutter system is an integral component of a building's roofing structure, specifically designed to collect and channel rainwater away from the building's foundation. Think of them as an extension of your roof.

The primary objective of a gutter system is to prevent rainwater from causing damage to the building, including its roof, walls, and foundation.

Gutters are composed of a series of interconnected gutters (also known as eavestroughs or rain gutters), and downspouts.



EAVESTROUGHES

Eavestroughs collect water as it spills off a roof and channel it towards downspouts.



DOWNSPOUTS

Downspouts bring the water down from your roof along the walls of your home, and then direct the water away from your foundation.



THE IMPORTANCE OF A PROPERLY FUNCTIONING GUTTER SYSTEM



A well-maintained and fully functioning gutter system is crucial for numerous reasons:

Protect exterior features



Prevent landscaping erosion



Help prevent basement flooding






Maintain structural integrity



GUTTER TYPES

Gutters are available in different styles. This choice impacts not only the cost of the project, but also the aesthetics and overall appeal of your home.

MOST POPULAR OPTIONS

	COST	LOOK	INSTALLATION
 <p>K-STYLE</p>	\$9-\$20 a foot installed. Cost varies by region and material.	Profile designed to blend in with the fascia of a home.	Most popular - available with nearly all gutter installers.
 <p>HALF-ROUND</p>	\$13-\$40 a foot installed. Cost varies by region and material.	Designed to compliment the exterior of a home. Usually a contrasting color.	Specialty. Not offered by every company due to the equipment required.
 <p>VINYL*</p>	\$5-\$12 a foot installed.	Vinyl gutters prioritize cost over function and aesthetics . They do not last as long as the other options.	Most gutter companies do not install vinyl gutters as they cannot warrantee the material or install.

Discuss available options and make a choice that not only suits your budget and aesthetic preferences, but also the structural requirements and weather conditions of your region.

*While not technically a style as much as a material, vinyl gutters have a distinct plastic look that warrant their inclusion in this section.

Vinyl gutters are sold at most major home-improvement retailers.

GUTTER MATERIAL

The **material** of your gutter system is a crucial factor to consider as it directly impacts the durability, cost, aesthetics, and maintenance requirements of your gutters.

Different materials have different strengths and weaknesses, and the right choice for your home will depend on various factors, including your budget, local climate, and the architectural style of your home.



	COST	MAINTENANCE	DURABILITY
ALUMINUM	Moderately priced	May require occasional sealing and caulking, especially at corner seams.	Prone to denting and damage in areas with severe weather conditions. Usually lasts about 20 years.
COPPER	Most expensive	Need to be professionally installed and occasionally polished to maintain their appearance.	Copper can last up to 50 years or more. Patinas with time.
STEEL	High Cost	Steel gutters require maintenance to prevent rust.	Can withstand heavy loads and severe weather. Usually lasts about 20 years
ZINC	High Cost	Zinc requires minimal maintenance.	Zinc gutters are highly durable and can last up to 50 years or more.*

*High salt content in air by the coast will cause zinc to permanently stain.

PICKING A COLOR

Choosing the color of your gutter system is more than a simple aesthetic decision; it's also an opportunity to blend your gutters with the existing colors of your house or use them to complement and accentuate your home's exterior design.

When selecting colors for your gutter system, it's worth noting that your gutters and downspouts don't necessarily have to be the same color. In fact, choosing different colors can sometimes achieve the best aesthetic results.

For instance, you could choose gutters that blend with your house's trim, making them less noticeable, and then select downspouts that match the color of your house's body or siding. This can help your downspouts blend in with the rest of the house, minimizing their visual impact.



White gutter blends in seamlessly with most homes.



Alternatively, gutter can compliment a home's exterior. This is usually accomplished with darker colors.



Remember that copper gutter will **patina*** with time, losing its signature bronze tone. Faux copper gutters will not patina.

**Patina: a green or brown film on the surface of bronze or similar metals, produced by oxidation over a long period.*

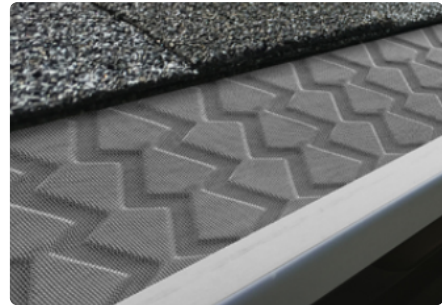
GUTTER PROTECTION

Gutter protection is designed to prevent debris such as leaves, twigs, and other materials from entering and clogging your gutters.



SMALL HOLE SCREEN

Perforated vinyl or aluminum screens that cover gutters. These can be installed against the top of the gutter or may be tucked under the shingles. Optimal for large debris, like leaves or twigs.



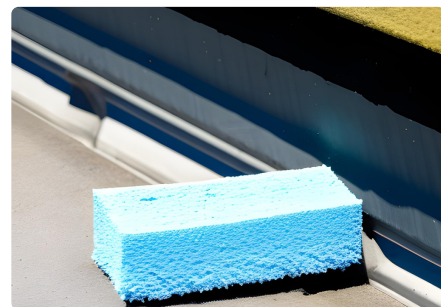
MICRO-MESH

Micro-mesh screens refer to systems that use a mesh or wire screen to separate debris from the water. These keep out smaller debris, but can clog faster than small-hole screens due to roof silt sitting in the pores.



GUTTER COVERS

Gutter covers typically refer to solid covers that only have a small opening or slit for the water to enter. The design uses the surface tension of water to guide it into the gutter while leaves and other debris are guided over the edge and onto the ground.



GUTTER INSERTS

Inserts refer to porous materials, like foam or brushes, that can be inserted into gutters to help keep debris out.

These are considered low quality options and not offered by most gutter contractors.

Consult with your gutter professional to understand the best protection system for your home. Keep in mind your local climate, vegetation, and the design and material of your chosen gutter system, can all affect which option is the best choice for your needs.

ACCESSORIES

Gutter accessories can enhance the performance or aesthetics of your gutter system.



A **drain guard** in a downspout - these help prevent downspout and drains from becoming clogged.



RAIN BARRELS

Rain barrels collect water from downspouts. They come in a variety of sizes and materials, ranging from small, decorative models to large industrial barrels.



SPLASHPADS

Concrete or plastic splashpads help prevent landscape erosion where downspouts terminate.



RAIN CHAINS

Rain chains offer an attractive alternative to traditional downspouts. Water streams down the chain onto the ground.

These are usually made of copper and come in a variety of styles.



LEADERBOXES

Also called "scuppers" or 'conductor heads,' leader boxes add an elegant touch to downspouts. These come in a variety of colors and styles.

Other accessories may be available - consult with your gutter professional to see which ones are right for you.

SELECTING A CONTRACTOR

Installing a gutter system might seem like a task that a dedicated DIYer could handle. However, for most people, hiring a professional is the safest and most effective choice. Gutter installation requires precise measurements and specialized knowledge to ensure proper slope and fit. A professional will also be familiar with local building codes and regulations.

When choosing a gutter installation professional, consider the following factors:

Experience and Reputation

Check the number of years the contractor has been in business and look for customer reviews and testimonials. Reputable professionals usually have a solid track record and positive customer feedback.

Licensing and Insurance

Ensure that the contractor is licensed to perform work in your area and carries adequate insurance. This protects you from potential liability if an accident occurs during the job.

Warranty

Ask about the warranty on both the materials and the installation. It's essential to know who to contact and what steps to take if something goes wrong with your new gutter system.

Quote and Contract

Request a written quote and make sure it includes everything you've discussed, such as the cost of new gutters and downspouts, labor, and any other associated costs. Before work begins, you should have a detailed contract that outlines the scope of work, timeline, costs, and payment terms.

Customer Service

Consider the contractor's responsiveness and professionalism. A good contractor will take the time to answer all your questions and make sure you understand the process.

References

Ask the contractor for references from previous clients. This can provide you with first-hand information about the contractor's quality of work and professionalism.

Association Membership

Membership in the Rain Gutter Association means the contractor stays up to date with the latest industry trends, technologies, and best practices. They have access to continuous education and training programs, ensuring they can provide the most up-to-date advice and highest standard of service to their clients. Their membership is an indicator of their commitment to quality, professionalism, and business development.

Remember, while the cost of installation will be a significant factor in your decision, it shouldn't be the only one. The quality of installation can greatly affect the durability and effectiveness of your gutter system. It's worth investing in a professional who can do the job right.

GLOSSARY

This glossary covers key terms and concepts related to rain gutters. It includes definitions of gutter components, installation processes, and types of materials. The objective is to help you understand the terminology associated with gutter systems, aiding in effective communication and informed decision-making when speaking with gutter contractors.

Note that terms may vary from region to region.

Apron Flashing: A horizontal flashing installed where the top end of a roof slope meets a vertical projection, such as a chimney or parapet wall.

Bid: A formal offer by a contractor, in accordance with specifications for a project, to do all or a phase of the work at a certain price in accordance with the terms and conditions stated in the offer.

Box Gutter: A gutter not at an eave, typically at the base of two opposing roof slopes.

Box Miter: Adjoins two pieces of gutter at a 90-degree angle inside or outside.

Cap Flashing: The portion of the flashing attached to a vertical surface to prevent water from migrating behind the base flashing.

Downspout: A pipe that carries rainwater from a roof gutter down to a drain or to the ground.

Drainage: A system of gutters and drainpipes that carry water away from the foundation of a house.

Drip Edge: A non-corrosive, non-staining material used along eaves and rakes to allow water runoff to drip clear of underlying construction.

Drop Outlet: Formed piece that serves as the hole from which the water travels from the horizontal section of the gutter to the downspout.

Eaves Gutter: A roof gutter attached at an eaves overhang.

Elbow: Pre-finished angled piece for directing water flow through downspouts.

Electrolytic (galvanic) Corrosion: Corrosion resulting from the contact of two different metals when an electrolyte (like water) is present.

End Cap: Flat formed piece that is placed at the end of a gutter section.

Expansion Joint: A joint in a long run of cladding, gutter or flashing designed to allow for thermal expansion and contraction.

Fall (slope): The slope of the roof or gutter, often expressed in degrees, or as a ratio of vertical height to horizontal distance (e.g. 1 in 20).

Fascia (fascia board): A flat board that runs horizontally along the eaves of a roof, typically capping the ends of the roof rafters to give the roof edge a more finished look and provide a base for attaching gutters.

Fascia Angle: If there is any fascia board that is angled to follow the roof rafters, there is usually an extra charge.

Fascia Board: The flat horizontal surface right below the edge of a roof.

Fascia Replacement: New gutters need a solid fascia surface upon which to be mounted. Any rotted boards need to be replaced. Fascia boards narrower than 3" in width must be built out to provide proper support for hanging your new gutters.

Flashing: A material, usually metal, used to waterproof the junction between two intersecting roofs and/or wall surfaces. At a masonry wall, it is often built into the mortar.

Galvanized Steel: Steel sheeting protected against corrosion by a zinc coating applied by the continuous hot-dip process.

Gauge: The thickness or gauge of the gutter is very important. Primary aluminum is the thickest and most consistent available. The gauges range from .027-in, to .032in.

Gutter: Horizontal channels installed at the edge of a roof to carry rainwater or melted snow away from the house.

Inside Miter Box: An inside corner piece that connects two lengths of gutter. Found at the bottom of valleys on a roof.

Leader: A pipe that carries rainwater from the gutters to the ground, sewers, or wells. Also called an extension or kicker.

Linear Feet (often called Lineal Feet): A linear foot is the same as regular feet. It is a one-foot length of any long, narrow object. Width is not accounted for in this measurement.

Mitered Corner: Where two runs of gutter come together, joined by either a box miter, a strip miter, or a tab miter.

Offset: A downspout component that 'bumps' the downspout out from a wall, typically over an architectural feature.

Outside Miter Box: A component that connects two runs of gutter on the outside corner of a roof.

Pitch: The angle at which a horizontal section of gutter is tilted in order to force water to flow toward a downspout.

Ponding: Pooling of un-drained water on a roof.

Rainhead: A box-shaped receptacle sometimes used between gutters and downpipes to provide an external overflow point.

Run: Length of a horizontal section of gutter.

Run Height: The height (in stories) at which each gutter run will be located (1st story, 2nd story, etc.). This is used to determine the length of downspout needed.

Run Length: A straight section of gutter mounted against the fascia board. It is measured in linear feet.

Splash-block: Plastic or concrete surface put under a downspout to direct water away from the house. Also called a splashpad.

Spreader: A downpipe-tee or elbow fixed at 90 degrees to the roof slope used to spread storm-water over a greater area of the roof.

Strap: Flat hangers that are nailed into the house to hold the downspouts in place.

Strip Miter: Adjoins two pieces of gutter at an angle 90-degree or 135-degree inside or outside.

Tabbed Miter: Used to adjoin two pieces of gutter at a compound angle or non-standard angle (i.e., 135 or 90 degrees). Tab miters do not use any additional components at corners, but do require special cuts.

Thanks for reading! Consider browsing through other resources at raingutterassociation.org



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