REPORT

HOW NOT TO GET RIPPPED OFF WHEN BUYING SHUTTERS

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11 Ways Shutter Companies Rip You Off: Advice from experts on how to get the best deal on custom window treatments. Hello my name is Steven Dale and I own Shutter Nation of Orange County. I surveyed hundreds of professional window covering companies to come up with the ways shutter retailers can (and will) rip you off.

#11 Sell Name Brand

Liberty Wall coverings recommendsto clients, “If possible, request the salesperson to be there with the same samples at the time of installation.” Most salespeople won’t have a problem with this why?

Delivery of an Inferior Brand is a simple scam to pull off. Since it’s very easy to get samples from good shutter companies, all the salesperson needs to do is show you the good shutters and deliver the inferior unit.

This is a very simple scam to pull off with poly shutters. Cheap vinyl shutters can be delivered instead of a High Quality PolyCore shutters.

The same scam is commonly pulled off in blinds and shades. A Hunter Douglas Nantucket is very similar to Hunter Douglas Silhouette, however the Nantucket costs 10-15% less.

#10 Bass Wood

Robert Kincaid of Accurate Millworks. Recommends checking to make sure you’re getting the wood you’re paying for. This is very hard to check, so if possible visit the factory and look at the wood. If the wood has a green tint in it, it’s NOT Bass wood. The truth is there is no such thing as Bass wood. It’s actually the American Linden Tree. You can always trust brands like Norman, Sunland and Hunter Douglas. There are many local manufacturers who are reputable; however the biggest culprits of this scam are local manufacturers who seem to be in and out of business every few years. Look for companies with longevity and many good of reviews on-line. Ask for referrals from friends.

#9 Made in America

Gregory Dale of Shutter Nation of San Diego, (my twin brother) says, “The simplest way to determine this is by the delivery time.” Shutters from China take 5-8 weeks and from Mexico 3-5 weeks. After over 2 decades in this industry, I can tell you without hesitation the best shutters are made in China. It used to take 14 weeks to get shutters. It used to cost over $35 a sq. ft. and the quality and selection were minimal at best. Today’s shutters are much higher quality, only cost an average of $24 per sq. ft. and take 4-5 weeks for delivery.

#8 Lifetime Warrantee

Tony Cena of Colorado Shutters says, “Warrantees are not transferable. The dirty little secret is the warrantee is only as good as the manufacturer and the retailer. The good news is shutters rarely break or malfunction.” Always save your paper work, check to see if your installer is licensed and Google the company’s name.

#7 How Long They’ve Been in Business

Steven Dale of Shutter Nation of Orange County suggests checking out the company. Fact is more shutter companies go out of business and re-open under a new name but tell you they’ve been in the business for X amount years.

In Southern California, I know of 4 different shutter companies they have had multiple names, one has been involved in 19 lawsuits, one has been banned by the state from being in the window covering business and one got shut down
for painting shutters illegally. Google the owners name and look at rip-off report and similar sites. A little bit of work can save your thousands of dollars and countless hours of frustrations.

#6 Low sq. ft. Price #1

Elliott Goldenberg of Shades Above, says, “Overestimating the square footage is a common scam. You can confirm the salesperson’s measurements simply by measuring your windows.” Width & Height round up and add 3 inches to each direction. Multiply W X H and divide by 144 and you’ll get your square footage. Compare this to your quote. Example 48 ½ x 56 1/8 is 52 x 60 = 3120 divided by 144 = 21.66 sq. ft.

#5 Low sq. ft. Price #2

Jerry Levinson of Blind Devotion warns, “I’ve seen ads for $14.95 a sq. ft. Come to find out that’s for a fixed louver panel. If you want movable louvers, installation and a frame, that will cost $22/sq. ft. Don’t get sucked into the low price game. A quality shutter will cost $22-$26 sq. ft. Many times they will put up fake reviews on Yelp and Google places claiming that the low price shutter is fantastic. They aren’t!”

#4 Factory Direct

Joanie Marcinowski of Dress Your Windows, advises, “The same company I see advertising $14.95 a sq. ft., says “Factory Direct.” I suspect they only make a few items in their factory. The shutters are made somewhere else. Ask where the shutters are made.”

#3 Great Finish

Karl Investor of New England Shutters says, “I’ve seen amazing finishes on sample shutters and the delivered products were junk.” Use your cell phone and snap a few photos of what you’re being sold and compare it to what you get. Name brands are not immune from this. We ordered some Graber shutters, the samples looked great, and the products came in with the bubble wrap imbedded in the paint.

#2 Quick Delivery

Bob Silver of Shutter and Blind Factory, says, “I see this every day. Companies promise 10-15 day delivery. The truth is those are “WORKING” days. Then they add on delivery of 5-10 days. This translates to 4-6 weeks.” Confirm this and if the sales person balks, walk away.

#1 Advertise 60% off, Biggest Scam in the Industry.

Christopher Tinberg of Blinds Unlimited, warns, “I’ve seen this for 25 years, it’s a SCAM!!!!!! They use inflated numbers from the manufacturers. The manufacturers willingly participate in this Scam because it sells a lot of blinds and shutters.” A 30 x 60 shutter doesn’t cost $1400, it should cost about $275 installed. I see this in Home Depot, Lowes, JC Penney, Sears, on-line and with many local retailers.
The Official Guide to Purchasing Shutters

1) What are the benefits of real wood shutters?
   a. Real wood will provide a wider range of stains and colors. Real wood is used for specialty shapes and real wood is more authentic. However real wood shutters that are painted in California use an inferior paint.
   b. CAUTION: Never leave your windows open where a real wood shutter is installed.

2) What are the benefits of Faux Wood Shutters?
   a. Faux woods will stand up to the environment better such as leaving your windows open at night and faux wood shutters never need re-finishing.

3) How do I get the Best Finish?
   a. The answer is rather odd. It mostly depends on the county of origin. If your order real wood and it’s made in the US your most likely to get a inferior finish due to EPA rules on painting. The best finishes seem to come out of China. From China we get complete shutters and we get pre made parts. Several companies order the parts made in China and then assemble to the ordered size here in the US. This cuts down delivery time. Faux wood shutters seem to always have very good finishes regardless of where they are made. Products made in Mexico seem to have very poor workmanship and poor finishes.

4) Are the hinges and hardware important?
   a. Yes. There are several different types of hinges including different colors and sizes. There are also hidden hinges available from a few manufactures and there are “Post Hinges” available from Italy. Stay away for the post hinges they are very weak.
   b. The magnets are very important. They come in many different styles and the manufactures like to tell you their magnets are better. If they work there’re fine. There a few companies using a “Ball Stud” system that seems fine.
   c. The staples on the tilt bar. Most people seem to think the tilt bar is for opening and closing the shutter. It is not, it’s for tilting the vanes. Many people have experienced the staples coming out or breaking. Today’s shutters use stainless steel staples made just for shutters. It’s very rare to see one break today.

5) What type of Frame should I use?
   a. There are several different types of frames. There are 3 basic categories. Deco, Z Frame and L frame. Each comes in several different designs. Since every window is different it’s up to your shutter consultant to help you to determine which is best for your windows. There are also special frames for sliding glass doors, bay windows and arch windows. Most manufactures will offer a wide variety of frames. Most popular is the Z frames. They make most any window look like a million buck!

6) What about Warrantees and the different Brands?
   a. This can be confusing so make sure you ask for it in writing. What I’m about to tell you is what I believe to be the most important thing I can teach you about shutters: Always check out the manufacture and try and find the owners name. Why? I did this several years ago to a new shutter company who was telling customers they have been in business since 1991, I did a check on the owner and found out that he had been convicted 2 times for fraud in the window covering business and barred from being in the window covering business. Today that same man manufactures the worst shutter I have ever seen.
b. Brands you can trust? Norman Shutters and Sunland are the best. There are several other good shutters that are sold nationwide. Polycore, Polycraft and Cambridge are all brands I like. Sunland also makes a very nice shutter and the offer 71 different colors.

c. **ONLY NORMAN AND SUNLAND offer a 25 Year Warrantee.**

7) **What about delivery times?**
   a. Shutters take some time to make. Anyone is selling shutters in a day or a week is cutting corners. The best shutters take 6-8 weeks and come from China. There are several good US made shutters that take 3-4 weeks. Once you see the difference in cheap shutters made in a week compared to high quality shutters for only a few dollars more, you’ll be sure to order the higher quality shutters. Put temporary paper shades up. You can order them from [www.ezhangshades.com](http://www.ezhangshades.com) for a few dollars per window.

8) **I leave my windows open at night is that OK?**
   a. Yes if you buy a faux wood shutter. Never leave a real wood shutter open to the night air. It will prematurely age it and the paint will peal.

9) **How about Costco and Home Depot?**
   a. Both sell shutters. You would think they would sell them for less. However you would be incorrect. A shutter you can buy from a local shutter consultant at $22 per sq. foot sells at $38 sq. foot at Costco. A shutter that cost $20 sq. foot from your local shutter consultant cost $28 sq. foot at Home Depot.

10) **Does the Installer make a difference?**
    a. Yes. I've know of a job where a carpenter was at the house when a shutter company arrived to install the shutters. The shutter installers asked the carpenter how to use a nail gun and if he knew how to install shutters. He watched as they tried to install the first shutters. After one shutter was up and at a 15 degree angle he went to the homeowner to let her know they needed to stop before they ruined her home. Ask about the installer and his experience.

11) **Do shutter retailers need to have contractor licensees and be bonded?**
    a. In some states like California, Arizona and New York a contractor’s license is required. Several other states have special contractor permits. Always check to see if they are in compliance. Bonding is different in every state, check with your local insurance person for clarification.
    b. Call [Shutter Nation](http://www.shutternation.com) of Orange County at 949-478-2195