

**Smart Buyers Guide:
Eight Criteria to Help You Assess Who to
Buy From When Purchasing Window
Coverings Online**

YourBlinds.com

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Ordering window coverings over the Internet may be an unsettling thought for you. After all, there are many retailers to select from online and you are making a significant investment. How do you know who you should buy from? How can you tell one company from another?

Summary: Criteria to Assess Who to Buy From Online

Your overall satisfaction with your online buying experience will result from your ability to differentiate the many online window coverings retailers. This guide will provide you with the distinctions you need to make an intelligent decision about who to buy from online to make your project a true success.

- 1) **Reputation** - Do their past customers speak well of them? Can you view these comments on an independent website other than that of the retailer?
- 2) **What if Everything Does Not Go Well?** What help, if any, is the Company promising if you have a problem with your order? Do they say?
- 3) **Proactive Communication** - Will they keep you informed as to the status of your purchase throughout the process from purchase to receipt of your blinds without you having to waste your time following up? What is the Company communicating about your value to them by how they act here?
- 4) **Sales staff** - Are they commissioned? And what does that mean for you?
- 5) **Is the website a quality, up-to-date site that runs well?** The site is a reflection of the values the company holds. Do they really value you?
- 6) **Competence** – Custom window coverings are a complex product. Only if the staff knows the ins and outs of window coverings will you receive what you think you are ordering.
- 7) **Do They Include Detailed Product Pictures and Relevant Product Specs so You Know Exactly What You are Ordering?** Do they display clear, close up, detailed product pictures, including pictures of valances, bottom rails and pull tassels so you know exactly what you will receive before purchasing?
- 8) **Do They Include Explanations as to What the Various Options Will Do For You?** Do they explain how all of the available product options will help you improve your situation? Or do they just give you a list and leave it to you to figure it out? Do you really want to be competent at window coverings? Do they understand that?

Comparison of Online Companies Against These Criteria

Reputation

Investigate the reputation of anyone you consider purchasing from. It is one thing to post testimonials from satisfied customers on a company's own website. They can be carefully controlled; positive comments included and negative excluded. Epinions.com, Shopping.com and BizRate.com are a few independent sites available to assist you in selecting a reputable online retailer. These sites invite consumers to post their opinion of their buying experience.

Does the company you are thinking of purchasing your window coverings from, actively encourage you to consult an **independent** opinions website? If not, why not? If you do not find any independent testimonials endorsing the company, perhaps you should consider buying elsewhere.

What is not promised on a Company's website is not part of that Company's values, culture, thinking or actions.

What if Everything Does Not Go Well?

Most online retailers do not fabricate window coverings. Rather, they coordinate the fulfillment of your order directly with the manufacturer. Many times, the company you buy from is at the mercy of how responsive the staff of the manufacturer is to them, when helping you.

The staff of the Company you buy from is a powerful resource to leverage between you and the manufacturer if you have a problem with your order.

That said, what does the Company promise if you do not measure correctly? Or your blinds are fabricated incorrectly? Or the manufacturer forgets to include the mounting hardware? Or your new blind does not operate correctly? Do they promise to be very responsive in helping you? Or do they NOT make any commitments? If no promise is made on their website, do not expect outstanding service if you have a problem. What is not promised on a company's website is NOT part of that company's values, culture, thinking or actions.

Proactive Communication that Gives You Peace of Mind

Most websites send a courtesy order confirmation after you submit your order online. Does the follow up end there though?

Most times, you have invested significant money into purchasing new window coverings. It can be very upsetting to not know the status of your order at all times. But how much time, energy and effort will you need to expend in achieving peace of mind that your order is coming?

Before you place your order, make sure you know what information you will be receiving from the company throughout the time between when

you place your order and when you receive your new window coverings. Ensure that the company will **automatically** send you 1) an order confirmation 2) the estimated ship date of your order and 3) the tracking number once your order has shipped. This should be your minimum requirement. If they only provide 1 or 2 communications, plan to spend your valuable time following up.

Non-Commissioned Sales Staff

Is the sales staff of the company you are thinking of buying from commissioned? We are used to the automobile salesman who pushes on you what you do not need or want for the sake of increasing his commission. Window covering sales folks can do the same if they are commissioned.

Find out whether the sales staff is paid on commission or not. Trust that you will get honest answers from non-commissioned staff with no hidden agenda, they will not betray what you care about for the sake of their compensation.

How much of your time, energy and effort will you need to spend in achieving peace of mind?

Quality, Up-to-Date Website that Runs Well and is Easy to Use

Companies that are knowledgeable in the area of window coverings, KNOW how much information an average person needs in order to make a good decision when purchasing window coverings. It is easy to spot a website whose owner's do not understand your needs when purchasing a complex product like blinds.

Some things to think about when assessing a company include:

1) Balance of information presented:

- . Is it easy to find the information that you care about in making your decision?
- . Does the company present too much information, confusing you? If there is too much information presented, this can be the result of owners being experts at data base management, but not at window coverings.
- . Do they present too little information, so you do not feel at peace knowing you have all the facts to make a good decision? This can be the result of not knowing what a person shopping for window coverings needs to know, or of not caring to make the investment of company resources to present all that you need to know to make an informed decision. Knowledgeable window covering people know the proper balance of information to provide to you. Your comfort is critical throughout the entire online buying process.

2) Is the website aesthetically pleasing? Window coverings are interior décor products that affect whether your home is aesthetically pleasing to you, after all.

- 3) Does the site convey a sense of quality in how the company operates?
- . Is the site updated regularly?
 - . Or are there references to sales or products that have since come and gone?
 - . Does the site communicate attention to detail?
- 4) Do each of the pages on the site come up quickly when you click on a link? Or are you forced to wait a long time. Some of the timing is your internet provider. However, if you find that a particular site seems to take much longer to navigate than many others you regularly visit, the company is not taking proper care to ensure your experience is trouble-free.

A website reveals much about the values and quality of the Company. Your experience with the site will, no doubt, foreshadow your purchasing experience.

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Competence

You need to be satisfied that the staff of the company you plan to order from is competent at window coverings. How can you judge this from a website?

- 1) **Personal Opinion** - Does the company's customer service staff give you their opinion of specific products to assist you in your selection? Do they know the products well enough to say? Can they say why they hold their opinion? Is it from their personal experience with the product?
- 2) **Ability to Specify What You Want** – Custom window coverings are a complex product. You need to know that the staff of the company you buy from understands all the complexities of window coverings so you receive what you intend.

To assess this, look for how the company presents specific manufacturer information. Take as an example, how they present information about how much the manufacturer will deduct from the width and length of your blind during production (known as factory deductions) in order for it to fit your window properly. Do they disclose this information? If they do, is it a copy of a page taken from a manufacturer's reference manual full of jargon that you do not understand? Or is it information that a knowledgeable person within the company "digested" and then had their web folks present in a format that is easy for you to understand?

If it is a copy of a manufacturer's reference manual, you can assess one of two things 1) either management at the company did not think about the fact that you have no desire to become competent at window coverings or 2) they thought about it and decided that it was easier for them to reuse what was already available than to expend effort to make it easily understandable for you. Either way, they do not demonstrate they know the minute details of window coverings. So, how comfortable

can you feel that your project will turn out as you envision? They need to know the details in order to help you produce a successful project.

Detailed Product Pictures so You Know Exactly What You are Ordering

The website you order from should provide close up pictures of the product(s) you are purchasing. These pictures should include room settings with the window covering you are considering, displayed so you can picture what it will look like in your home. The site should also include close-up pictures of the specific product features including valances, bottom rails, pull tassels and specific operating options, at a minimum. These details are important to allow you to be at peace that you know what your custom window covering(s) will look like in your home.

Does the website convey that they understand you do not want to be competent at window coverings?

Some sites provide room scenes, but not close ups of valances and the like. If these details matter to you, insist that they send you a picture before you buy. You need to be assured that you will be receiving what you think, with no surprises.

Explanation of What the Various Options Will Do For You

All variations in how window shades operate originated in someone thinking, "If only my window covering could..." All variations in operating functions came from the real world to help people better take care of something important to them. These concerns include improving the ability to raise and lower the shade, keeping privacy while letting some light in, reducing glare on TV or computer screens, remotely operating hard to reach window shades and the like. This is what you care about.

Many websites provide a list of products and the options that are available with. Does the site make the effort to go beyond just a list of products and options to help you get a thorough understanding of what the various possibilities will help you take care of? The site you order from needs to demonstrate they are competent to help you take care of what you care about. Do not be satisfied buying from a site that throws a list of available options at you leaving you to figure out how they might be useful to you. Insist that the company help you create the situation that will work best for you and what you care about.

Comparison of Online Companies Against Specified Criteria

	YourBlinds.com	Blindsgalore.com	ShadesShuttersBlinds.com	Blinds.com	BlindsExpress.com	SelectBlinds.com	JustBlinds.com	DecorateToday.com	SmithandNoble.com
Reputation	☒	☒							
What if Everything Does Not Go Well?	☒					☒	☒		☒
Proactive Communication									
. Send Order Confirmation	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
. Send Estimate of Ship Date	☒		☒						
. Send Tracking Number when your order ships	☒		☒		☒	☒	☒		☒
Non-commissioned sales staff	☒			☒	☒	☒	☒		☒
Quality, Easy to use website	☒	☒		☒		☒	☒		☒
Competence	☒			☒					☒
Display clear, close up, detailed product pictures	☒				☒		☒		☒
Provide detailed explanation of what each option will help you take care of	☒								☒

About YourBlinds.com

YourBlinds.com is an online window coverings company dedicated to helping consumers transform their unsatisfactory window coverings, quickly and with as little time, energy and effort as possible into a satisfactory situation. They hold to the belief that, you, the consumer do not want to be competent at window coverings, you just want a pleasing situation in the end.

For more information, contact YourBlinds.com at (888) 214-4144, or visit us on the web at www.yourblinds.com.