



Freecall 1800 17 88 22

[www.ipi.net.au](http://www.ipi.net.au)

## Choosing an Exterior Door

**You should understand the pros and cons of steel, fibreglass, and wood exterior doors before choosing the one that's right for you.**



Replacing your front door can pay for itself by increasing your home's value.

But how do you know which door is right for you? Make your decision by comparing the three main materials available for exterior doors: steel, fibreglass and wood.

### Steel

If you're looking to save money, a steel door may be a good choice, particularly if you have the skills to hang it yourself. A simple, unadorned steel door can sell for as little as \$150 (not including hardware, lock set, paint, or labour) and typically runs as much as \$400 at bigger retailers. Steel offers the strongest barrier against intruders, although its advantage over fibreglass and wood in this area is slight.

Even better, replacing your entry door with a steel model preserves home value. A Cost v's Value Report

estimates the total project cost of installing a 20-gauge steel door at \$1,137. The project, on average, returns 85.6% of cost, the highest return value in the report.

Still, the attractive cost of a steel door comes with an important caveat: Its typical life span under duress is shorter than either fibreglass or wood. A steel door exposed to salt air or heavy rains may last only five to seven years. Despite steel's reputation for toughness, it actually didn't perform well in Consumer Reports testing against wood and fibreglass for normal wear and tear.

With heavy use, it may dent, and the damage can be difficult and expensive to repair. If your door will be heavily exposed to traffic or the elements, you may be better off choosing a different material.



### Fibreglass

Fibreglass doors come in an immense variety of styles, many of which accurately mimic the look of real wood. And if limited upkeep is your ideal, fibreglass may be your best bet. Nothing is maintenance-free, but fibreglass is pretty close. And it lasts twice as long as wood or steel.

Fibreglass doesn't expand or contract appreciably as the weather changes. Therefore, in a reasonably protected location, a fibreglass entry door can go for years without needing a paint or stain touch-up and can last 15 to 20 years overall. Although it feels light to the touch, fibreglass has a very stout coating that's

difficult for an intruder to breach; and its foam core offers considerable insulation.

Fibreglass generally falls between steel and wood in price; models sold at many hardware stores or specialty door outlets range from about \$150 to \$600.



## Wood

Wood is considered the go-to choice for high-end projects; its luxurious look and substantial weight can't be flawlessly duplicated by fibreglass or steel, though high-end fibreglass products are getting close. If your home calls for a stunning entry statement with a handcrafted touch, wood may be the best material for you.

Wood is usually the most expensive choice of the three roughly \$500 to \$2,000, excluding custom jobs and requires the most maintenance, although it's easier to repair scratches on a wood door than dents in steel or fibreglass. Wood doors should be repainted or refinished every year or two to prevent splitting and warping.



Tracing the environmental impact of a particular door from manufacturing process to shipping distance to how much recycled/recyclable content it contains is quite complicated and probably beyond the scope of the average homeowner, however buying a door with a certified wood and an Energy Star rating are an excellent start.

A final note on choosing a door based on energy efficiency: Because efficiency depends on a number of factors besides the material a door is made of—including its framework and whether it has windows look for the Energy Star label to help you compare doors.

To find out more and get your home inspected call your local independent property inspector on **1800 17 88 22** or email [info@ipi.net.au](mailto:info@ipi.net.au)

© Independent Property Inspections 2015