

OTTAWA WINDOW PROS

Special Situations

Stucco openings, heritage homes, odd sizes, and
non-standard installs

9 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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Table of Contents

1. Can I just replace the glass part of my window and keep the existing frame?
.....
2. How complicated is it to cut a new window opening into a brick wall?
.....
3. How do I find replacement windows that match my 1920s house character?
.....
4. What's involved in converting a window into a door for a deck?
.....
5. I have a weird octagon-shaped window - what are my replacement options?
.....
6. Could I put a skylight where I currently have a regular window?
.....
7. Can I add windows to a room in my basement that doesn't have any right now?
.....
8. Can I make a window opening bigger or do I have to keep the same size?
.....
9. I want to remove a window and brick up the opening - what's involved in that?
.....

Q1

Can I just replace the glass part of my window and keep the existing frame?

Yes, you can replace just the glass in many cases, but it's often not the most cost-effective or energy-efficient solution. This approach, called glass replacement or glazing replacement, works best when your window frames are in excellent structural condition and relatively new.

Glass-only replacement typically costs \$150-400 per window in Ottawa, which seems attractive compared to full window replacement. However, you're limited to the existing frame's capabilities - if you have old single-pane frames, you can't upgrade to modern triple-pane efficiency. The labor involved in removing old glazing compound, fitting new glass, and resealing can be almost as intensive as full window replacement.

The frame condition is crucial for this decision. If your frames show signs of rot, warping, air leaks, or poor operation, replacing just the glass won't solve these underlying problems. Ottawa's harsh winters put significant stress on window frames, and older frames often lack the thermal breaks and weatherstripping found in modern windows.

For Ottawa's climate, most homeowners get better long-term value from complete window replacement. Modern vinyl or fiberglass frames with triple-pane glass can reduce energy costs by 20-30% compared to older windows, even with new glass. The improved air sealing and frame insulation make a substantial difference during our -30°C winters.

Consider glass replacement if your frames are less than 10 years old, operate smoothly, and show no signs of deterioration. Otherwise, full replacement typically provides better energy efficiency, comfort, and long-term value. For a professional assessment of whether your frames are suitable for glass-only replacement, request a consultation from Ottawa Window Pros.

Q2

How complicated is it to cut a new window opening into a brick wall?

Cutting a new window opening into a brick wall is a complex structural project that requires professional expertise and building permits. This isn't a DIY job - it involves structural engineering, masonry work, and precise installation to maintain your home's integrity.

The process involves several critical steps that must be done correctly. First, a structural engineer needs to assess the wall to determine if it's load-bearing and design proper support systems. The brick cutting itself requires

specialized diamond blade saws and dust control equipment. You'll need to install a structural lintel above the opening to carry the load, then carefully remove the brick and any interior framing. The new window frame must be properly flashed and sealed to prevent water infiltration, which is especially critical with brick walls.

In Ottawa's climate, proper weatherproofing is essential since freeze-thaw cycles can exploit any gaps in the masonry or flashing. The exterior brick work around the new opening needs to be rebuilt and matched to your existing brick, which can be challenging depending on the age and style of your home. Interior finishing includes drywall repair, insulation, and trim work.

Building permits are required for new window openings in Ottawa, and the work must be inspected. City of Ottawa requirements may vary - confirm with your installer about specific permit requirements for your project. The entire project typically costs \$3,000 - \$8,000 depending on the window size, wall thickness, and complexity of the masonry work.

This type of structural modification should only be handled by experienced contractors who can coordinate the engineering, masonry, and window installation phases. For a project like this, request a quote through Ottawa Window Pros — an installer can scope the work and bring in a structural contractor where the opening requires one.

Q3

How do I find replacement windows that match my 1920s house character?

Finding replacement windows that preserve your 1920s home's character requires balancing historical authenticity with modern performance standards. The key is selecting windows that replicate the original proportions, materials, and details while meeting today's energy efficiency requirements.

Start by researching your home's original window style. Most 1920s Ottawa homes featured double-hung windows with true divided lights (individual glass panes separated by wooden muntins), casement windows with multiple panes, or steel windows in more modern designs. Take photos of your existing windows and note details like the muntin patterns, frame proportions, and hardware styles. If any original windows remain, measure the sight lines (the visible width of the frame) - 1920s windows typically had much thinner profiles than modern replacements.

For authentic appearance, focus on muntin patterns and proportions. True divided lights offer the most authentic look but can be expensive and less energy efficient. Simulated divided lights (SDL) with muntins between glass panes plus exterior applied muntins provide a good compromise. Avoid snap-in grilles, which look obviously

modern. Common 1920s patterns include 6-over-6 or 8-over-8 double-hung windows, or casements with 6-12 small panes.

Material selection significantly impacts authenticity. Wood windows offer the most historical accuracy and can be painted to match original colors. High-quality vinyl windows with woodgrain textures provide a maintenance-free alternative, though purists may notice the difference. Fiberglass windows can be painted and offer excellent durability. Avoid bright white vinyl on heritage homes - choose colors that complement the era like cream, sage green, or deep trim colors popular in the 1920s.

In Ottawa's climate, you'll want modern performance features disguised in period styling. Look for triple-pane glass with Low-E coatings and argon fill for energy efficiency, but ensure the overall window depth accommodates this while maintaining proper proportions. Many manufacturers offer heritage or historical series specifically designed for older homes.

For authentic replacement windows that honor your 1920s home's character while providing modern performance, request a consultation to discuss period-appropriate options that meet Ottawa's climate demands.

Q4

What's involved in converting a window into a door for a deck?

Converting a window to a door involves structural modifications that require permits and professional installation. This isn't a simple replacement - you're creating a new door opening that affects your home's structure and requires building code compliance.

The process starts with **structural assessment** to determine if the wall can support the larger opening. Most windows are narrower than doors, so the opening needs to be widened. The header (beam above the opening) may need to be replaced with a larger one to carry the load, and additional framing work is required. You'll also need to cut through the floor to create the threshold and ensure proper step-down to your deck.

Waterproofing and insulation become critical concerns. The new door opening must be properly flashed and sealed to prevent water infiltration. In Ottawa's climate, this is especially important given our freeze-thaw cycles. The connection between your interior floor and the exterior deck requires careful detailing to prevent thermal bridging and moisture problems.

Building permits are required for this type of structural modification in Ottawa. The work must meet Ontario Building Code requirements for door openings, including proper header sizing, insulation values, and safety features like tempered glass. City of Ottawa requirements may vary - confirm with your installer, who can handle the permit application process.

The typical cost ranges from **\$3,000 to \$8,000** depending on the structural work required, door selection, and finishing details. This includes framing modifications, new patio door installation, interior and exterior finishing, and permit fees.

For a project this complex, you'll want to work with contractors who can coordinate the structural, insulation, and finishing work. We can connect you with experienced professionals through the Ottawa Construction Network who specialize in this type of renovation.

Q5

I have a weird octagon-shaped window - what are my replacement options?

Octagon windows can definitely be replaced, though they require custom manufacturing since they're specialty shapes rather than standard rectangular windows. You have several good options depending on your budget and performance needs.

Custom replacement is typically the best approach - a quality window manufacturer can create a new octagon window to match your existing opening dimensions. This involves taking precise measurements of all eight sides and angles, then having the frame and glass custom-fabricated. Most major window brands like Pella, Andersen, or Milgard offer custom shape services, though lead times are usually 6-8 weeks longer than standard windows.

Material options include vinyl (most cost-effective), fiberglass (best durability), wood (traditional look), or aluminum (slim profiles). For Ottawa's climate, you'll want to prioritize energy efficiency with triple-pane glass, Low-E coatings, and proper insulation around the frame. Octagon windows can be energy weak points if not properly specified.

Installation considerations are crucial since the unusual shape means no room for error in measurements. The existing rough opening needs to be perfectly maintained, and any structural framing issues must be addressed. Professional installation is essential - this isn't a DIY project due to the precision required and potential for costly mistakes.

Cost expectations for octagon window replacement in Ottawa typically range from \$1,200 to \$3,000+ depending on size, materials, and glass package. The custom nature adds 30-50% to standard window pricing, but it's usually much more cost-effective than trying to reframe for a standard window.

For an octagon replacement, request a quote through Ottawa Window Pros - custom shapes are routine work, and an installer can talk you through the options.

Q6

Could I put a skylight where I currently have a regular window?

Yes, you can potentially install a skylight where you currently have a regular window, but it requires significant structural work and planning. This involves closing the existing window opening, cutting a new opening in the roof, and installing proper framing and flashing systems.

Structural considerations are the primary concern with this conversion. The existing window opening in your wall will need to be properly closed and finished, which may require adding insulation, vapor barrier, and matching your interior and exterior finishes. Meanwhile, creating the skylight opening requires cutting through roof rafters or trusses, which often needs engineered support to maintain structural integrity. The roof pitch, rafter spacing, and existing framing will determine the complexity and feasibility of the installation.

In Ottawa's climate, proper installation is critical for preventing ice dams, condensation, and heat loss. Skylights need robust flashing systems to handle our freeze-thaw cycles, and quality units should have triple-pane glass with Low-E coatings to minimize heat loss during our cold winters. The orientation and size of the skylight will also affect

energy efficiency - south-facing skylights provide beneficial solar gain in winter but may cause overheating in summer.

Building permits are required for this type of work since it involves both structural changes and new roof penetrations. City of Ottawa requirements may vary - confirm with your installer, but expect to need architectural drawings showing the structural modifications and proper flashing details.

Professional installation is essential due to the roofing, structural, and finishing work involved. Improper skylight installation is a leading cause of roof leaks and energy loss. To check feasibility, request a free quote through Ottawa Window Pros and ask an installer to look at both the roof structure and the room below.

Q7

Can I add windows to a room in my basement that doesn't have any right now?

Yes, you can add windows to a basement room, but this requires structural work and building permits since you're creating new openings in the foundation. This is a significant renovation project that goes beyond simple window replacement.

The process involves several critical steps. First, you'll need to hire a structural engineer to assess whether new window openings can be safely cut into your foundation walls without compromising the structural integrity of your home. The engineer will specify any required reinforcement, such as steel lintels above the openings. Next, you'll need to apply for building permits through the City of Ottawa, as creating new openings in foundation walls requires approval and inspection.

The installation process is complex and requires specialized equipment. Contractors will need to excavate around the exterior foundation, cut the opening with concrete cutting tools, install proper drainage and waterproofing systems, and ensure the new windows meet Ontario Building Code requirements for basement installations. This includes proper grading, window wells if needed, and emergency egress requirements if the room will be used as a bedroom.

In Ottawa's climate, basement windows need special attention to prevent moisture and energy loss. You'll want high-quality windows with excellent insulation properties, proper flashing and waterproofing, and potentially window wells with drainage systems. The windows should meet ENERGY STAR requirements for our Climate Zone 6, with low U-factors to prevent condensation issues common in below-grade installations.

This project typically costs \$3,000 to \$8,000 per window opening including excavation, structural work, waterproofing, and window installation. City of Ottawa requirements may vary - confirm with your installer about specific permit requirements and egress codes for your intended use of the space.

Q8

Can I make a window opening bigger or do I have to keep the same size?

Yes, you can make a window opening bigger, but it requires structural modifications and typically needs a building permit. This is more complex than a standard window replacement and involves additional construction work.

Enlarging a window opening means cutting into the wall structure, which often affects load-bearing elements like headers, studs, and potentially the foundation or structural integrity of your home. The existing header (the horizontal beam above your current window) may need to be replaced with a larger one to support the increased span. You'll also need to remove wall studs and potentially add additional support.

In Ottawa, enlarging window openings typically requires a building permit because you're making structural changes to your home. The City of Ottawa Building Services will need to review your plans to ensure the modifications meet Ontario Building Code requirements for structural integrity, insulation, and safety. Your contractor will handle the permit application process, which includes submitting drawings showing the structural changes and new header calculations.

The process involves several trades - not just window installation. You'll need framing work to modify the opening, potentially electrical work if outlets or switches are affected, insulation and vapor barrier installation, interior and exterior finishing work, and finally the window installation itself. This makes it significantly more expensive than a standard replacement - expect to pay \$2,000-5,000+ more per opening depending on the size increase and structural requirements.

For Ottawa's climate, when enlarging openings, it's crucial to maintain proper insulation continuity and air sealing. The new framing must accommodate adequate insulation thickness and proper vapor barrier installation to prevent condensation issues in our cold winters.

For a project like this, you'll want to work with experienced contractors who can handle both the structural modifications and window installation. Request a consultation to assess your specific situation and determine what's structurally feasible for your home.

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I want to remove a window and brick up the opening - what's involved in that?

Removing a window and bricking up the opening is a structural modification that requires careful planning and typically needs a building permit in Ottawa. This isn't a simple DIY project - it involves structural work, masonry, insulation, and interior finishing.

The process starts with **structural assessment** to determine if the window opening has a load-bearing header or lintel that supports weight from above. Even after bricking up the opening, you'll need to maintain proper structural support. The existing window frame must be completely removed, including any nailing flanges or mounting hardware embedded in the wall.

Masonry work requires matching the existing brick as closely as possible in size, color, and texture. The new brickwork needs proper mortar joints and must tie into the existing wall structure. Behind the brick, you'll need appropriate insulation, vapor barrier, and interior wall finishing to match the surrounding areas. The interior work often involves drywall, painting, and potentially flooring repairs where the window sill was located.

Ottawa's climate considerations make proper insulation and air sealing critical in the bricked-up area. Poor workmanship can create thermal bridging or moisture problems. The work typically requires coordination between a structural assessment, masonry contractor, and interior finishing trades.

City of Ottawa requirements may vary - confirm with your installer, but this type of structural modification usually requires a building permit. The permit process ensures the work meets Ontario Building Code requirements for structural integrity and building envelope performance.

For a project like this, you'll want to work with experienced contractors who can handle the structural, masonry, and finishing aspects properly. Want to discuss your specific situation? We can connect you with qualified professionals through the Ottawa Construction Network.

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