



NewHomes.House

SPECIFICATIONS & SELECTIONS

2020 Categories: Specifications & Selections



BLOG

Specifications & Selections

How is your house built? What types of materials are used? How are those materials installed? What decisions do you make as the home buyer? What decisions does the home builder make? These are all important questions, and we hope you find our answers helpful.

Construction Specifications

Construction specifications are the “recipe” that determine which materials are used to build your home and how those materials are installed. With thousands of different materials and installation processes, it is especially important that home buyers have a thorough understanding of their specifications.

Basic specifications should include:

- **Exterior Wall-Stud Framing**
 - Best practices are to frame all exterior walls with 2×6 studs that are spaced 16 inches apart.
 - Many home builders are now spacing their wall studs 24 inches apart to save lumber. This creates walls that have fewer studs, with the result that the walls can appear uneven as the wall studs dry and warp. Certain home builders claim that 24 inches between wall studs provides more insulation (because there are fewer wall studs). Don’t fall for it.
- **Floor Systems**
 - Best practice is to specify and build with engineered floor systems. The floor joist is engineered for proper lengths and will not warp or move. With the correct 4×8 TG flooring that is glued and screwed down, squeaks and floor movement are minimized.
 - Many home builders are using 2×10 floor joists. The problem is that 2×10 floor joists are conventional lumber and will dry out and twist over time. The reason some home builders are using 2×10 joists is to reduce *their* costs. Floor joists cost more than dimensional lumber, and new fire codes require fireproof sheetrock to be installed underneath the engineered floor joists, which can add several thousand dollars to the cost of the project.
- **Siding Materials**



- Best practice is to use a siding material that has industry acceptance and minimal warranty issues. Because every home uses different materials to provide a specific look, it is difficult to make blanket statements as to which materials are good and which have issues. For climates that get snow, we do not recommend using a cement-type siding because snow resting against the siding allows water to migrate into the concrete. Once wet, the concrete siding expands and contracts with freeze/thaw cycles, and eventually it is destroyed.
- Our recommendation is LP Smart Trim. This material has marine-grade glue and resists most types of water intrusion (which is the most common cause of damaged siding).
- **Plumbing Materials**
 - There are a variety of plumbing materials available for water lines. Our clear favorite is PEX piping. Unlike copper and other plastics, PEX is flexible and resistant to scale and does not corrode or develop pinholes. For colder climates, PEX can often withstand freezing temperatures because it can expand without breaking. Another benefit of PEX is its ability to route all the plumbing to a master manifold, which provides one location for controlling all the water lines in the home.

Product Selections

The most exciting part of building your custom home! Selecting appliances, carpet, tile, lighting, and so many more items for your new home.

There are several noteworthy considerations with selections, which fall into two categories:

- Items you select
- Allowances the home builder provides

Builder-Allowed Selections

Home builders often limit the selections that a home buyer can make. Some home builders provide only a limited list of items to choose from such as colors, window grids, plumbing, appliances, light fixtures, and basic electrical upgrades. Other home builders allow a wide variety of selections for their custom homes.

Why would a home builder limit your selections? First, the home builder is liable for all products that go into your home, including warranty issues and callbacks. The products must be proven for a home builder to take that risk. Secondly, the home builder must have an account with every vendor providing the selections. It can be extremely time-consuming for a busy home builder to establish different accounts for their clients, and billing issues are common. (Most home builders draw funds for items completed and then make payments to the vendors.)

Builder Allowances

Selection options are difficult to provide for certain products. Items such as carpet, wood flooring, countertops, lighting fixtures, and tile have so many variations — not to mention they are constantly changing — that it is exceedingly difficult to provide meaningful selections. Home builders handle these categories by providing home buyers with an allowance amount that should represent the



value of the standard selection. Home buyers then select the product directly from the vendor, make any changes, and pay the vendor directly for changes that are above the allowance amount.

Conflicts can arise between the allowance amount and the costs of the home buyer's final product selections. While it is not uncommon for custom home buyers to spend more on interior products than their allowance, the allowance amount must be fair, and the home buyer needs to understand how the allowance amount was determined.

Best practice is for the home builder to secure a current bid for a particular product, and that amount becomes the allowance amount. For instance, a home builder receives a bid for the carpet, and it is based on Shaw "Moon Shadow" carpet. The actual amount and bid go to the home buyer. This provides a true basis for the carpet allowance, If the home buyer orders more expensive carpet, they do so knowing what the allowance amount is based on, and conflict is avoided.

By providing a current bid that is based on a *specific product clearly identified to the home buyer*, the home builder is also less inclined to supply a "standard" selection that is actually substandard.

We Are Here To Help

At NewHomes.House, we believe in providing our home buyers with as much information as possible so they can make the right decisions for their custom home.

Please contact us to schedule a call so we can answer all your questions — it's free, and there is no obligation. We love to talk construction!

Call or text us at **(509) 370-8868**.