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INTERNAL DOORS

Caroline Rodrigues reveals how you can find the right style and spec of door to suit your project

The doors you choose will play a big role in setting the tone for your home's interiors; whether you're sourcing new models for a self build or as part of a renovation. With the appropriate design and correct specification, they'll form a valuable part of your project – but how can you select the best option for your scheme?

Trending now

For many homeowners, open-plan spaces are a must – but that doesn't mean internal doors are defunct. You'll always need standard sized versions to close off private spaces, such as bedrooms and bathrooms. What's more, larger doors can be design features in their own right – one popular option is to fit units that fold or slide back to partition off a dining or kitchen area. Bespoke versions allow you to create drama, too. For example, you could fit an oversized door with an off-centre pivot for a grand entrance in a large space. An alternative is the super sleek option of fitting a barely-there pocket door that slides away discreetly into the wall to maximise the opening. This is a fantastic option for wheelchair users.

Types & materials

The simplest style of internal door is a flush version, finished with a thin layer of veneer. The resulting smooth surface lends itself to modern homes. Flush units are made up of a softwood frame and hollow-core infill (usually honeycombed cardboard) with a plywood or hardboard cover. This construction means the doors are extremely stable, so they won't warp or twist. The faces are typically finished with wood veneers, but a wide variety of surfaces available – including painted versions. "We use a relatively thick layer of high-quality hardwood, which makes the doors look stronger, and feel natural and authentic," says Elizabeth Assaf, designer at Urban Front.

The traditional choice, panelled doors are produced in solid softwood or hardwood and available in various styles and finishes. Made up of timber jambs and stiles, and fitted with timber or glass panes, these doors are now also produced in contemporary designs with full-width or full-height infills. Pine is the cheapest option, and can be painted or stained to leave the grain on show, but oak and other hardwoods can make a real statement. If you want a similar result on a budget, pressed doors mimic panelled versions, but the effect is created by one-piece moulded facings, bonded to a timber frame.

For a country look, choose a ledge and brace door. The simple style puts the solid timber on show. From one side, a row of vertical planks is on view, while the other side proudly displays the 'ledges' (horizontal struts) and 'braces' (diagonal and vertical timbers) that hold it square and secure.

Period detailing

For an authentic result, match the door to the period of your home. Georgian examples typically have six panels, while Victorian versions usually have four and Edwardian designs three to six. Oak was once and still is a favourite for doors, but softwoods such as pine – usually painted – were a less costly option and therefore hugely popular.

If you're renovating a fairly sizable period property, you may have noticed that the downstairs doors leading to the public



rooms are more imposing and decorative than those fitted upstairs, which were less likely to be seen by guests. The most impressive examples featured a decorative wood pediment to add extra height and grandeur. Converted industrial buildings often feature larger-than-standard openings internally, to allow goods to be easily transported in and out.

Salvaged doors offer a sense of heritage, but they will almost certainly need adjusting to fit your home's openings. They can be trimmed down, taking care to preserve the product's proportions, or a filler strip can be added to pad them out. Avoid examples that have been caustically stripped because the process can damage the wood and wreck its character. Check that the units are not warped and that the areas around the hinges are not cracked.

Glazed doors

For many of you tackling a major project, large expanses of glass are likely to be a big priority on external walls – allowing you to bring in plenty of natural light. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the trend is taking hold for internal fittings, too.

Door specialist JB Kind's selection of glazed units includes both conventional and bifold options. "As well as the practical advantages of introducing more natural light and allowing you to view what's going on in another room, glazed doors can also be a much admired design feature in their own right," says Martin Hile, commercial director at JB Kind. "There is a great deal of choice regarding styles and glazing options, plus you can now get attractive fire doors in this material that are rated for 30 minutes of protection. All our units are supplied with safety glass to meet Building Regulations and European standards." You can find out more about minimum requirements in Approved Document K of the regs, which is available to download at www.planningportal.gov.uk.

Room dividers

With an increase in the demand for open-plan spaces, the boundaries between rooms are disappearing, but there is an advantage in being able to close off part of the space, such as a kitchen area, home office or an occasional bedroom.

"We've noticed a surge in demand for room dividing doors – largely down to a proliferation of internal refurbishment projects," says Mike Ward, managing director at Jeld-Wen. "Of the wood finishes, oak has dominated the interior market as it fits both modern and traditional styles." The trend for glazed bifold and sliding doors also suits internal spaces, allowing light to penetrate into the farthest parts of a room. Bifold versions concertina open and stack neatly at one side of the room, minimising the amount of lost floorspace. Use them to replace a whole wall, or simply to open up part of a zone.

Doors used as room dividers can sit on bottom-running tracks or be top hung. The former is a particularly good solution where you don't want to upgrade the ceiling structure to take the weight of the new folding or sliding panels. They can be laid flush with the floor surface to provide clear access.

Pocket doors

Designed to slide discreetly away, these clever units are supplied as a kit with a steel frame to build into a studwork wall, forming a recess or pocket to take the door. They're available in double configurations, curved formats or as fire doors. They're typically finished with paint or wallpaper, but some feature veneer, tiles, glass or ceramics.

Pocket doors can be fitted retrospectively, but really come into their own for new builds. "The systems are easy to fit," says Padraic Healey, general manager at Eclisse UK. "Installation times have really come down and the work can be done in about two hours once the studwork wall is ready. Our systems are designed with standard-sized doors to suit conventional internal wall thicknesses of 100mm and 125mm, so there's no need to cut the steel – the pocket can simply be screwed into the studs at finished floor level and the door fits perfectly."

1 Made from FSC-certified sustainable timber, this retro-style 'sunshine' door is supplied primed in white and ready for a top coat. Solid and glazed versions are available.

Calypso Aurora glazed doors each 1,981mm (H) x 762mm (W), £314 for a pair, JB Kind.

2 Open up a space with these glazed doors, which are available in various configurations and with glazed or solid panels. **Shaker White Oak 4 light clear glazed three-door room fold, 2,047mm (H) x 1,929mm (W), from £1,463, Jeld-Wen.**

3 This modern door is completed with an exterior 6mm layer of natural solid wood lamination. **Raw Hinged internal doorset in American black walnut with handle option 2a, 2,400mm (H) x 1,040mm (W), £2,500, Urban Front**

QUICK GUIDE: SPECIFYING INTERNAL DOORS

- A typical internal door measures 1,981mm tall to fit a 2,040mm opening. Widths vary, but 762mm and 864mm are commonplace to allow for good access. The usual thickness is 35mm.
- If you're working on a self build project, you might prefer to buy doorsets (where the door and frame are supplied together). These often come with the door pre-hinged and hung on a fully assembled frame, for ease of fitting.
- Bespoke shapes and sizes look impressive but can be pricey. If you want to keep a rein on your budget, it may be more cost effective to construct the opening to suit a standard size. On renovations, you can fill a gap with an additional door liner, packers, or a wide architrave.
- In some circumstances, such as when creating a habitable loft or other third-story space, you may need to fit fire doors. These are thicker than standard units and generally supplied in depths of 44mm or 54mm. "To maintain the stated fire rating, the unit must be fitted into the same type of door liner and with the same ironmongery it was tested with," says Vanessa Garrett from Broadleaf.

CONTACTS

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Interior Door Systems 0333 800 1579 www.interiordoorsystems.co.uk **JB Kind** 01283 554197 www.jbkind.com **Jeld-Wen** 0845 122 2890
www.jeld-wen.co.uk **Urban Front** 01494 778787 www.urbanfront.com **Vufold** 01625 442899 www.vufold.co.uk

DESIGN IDEAS

Door style selector

Find inspiration for your internal doors among this selection to suit all spaces

With a top-hung roller system for a smooth fingertip opening and closing action, these oak veneer room dividers open left or right and come with all the hardware you need. **Finesse oak three-door bifolds**, 2,054mm (H) x 1,790mm (W), from £889, www.vufold.co.uk



This made-to-measure solid French oak door comes in a choice of timber grades. A matching liner with smoke seals is available. **Oak plank fire door**, from £425, www.broadleaftimber.com



Finished in white oak veneer, this modern take on a panelled door is manufactured from particleboard. **Contemporary Aston American white oak three-panel door**, in sizes from 1,981mm (H) x 610mm (W), from £283, www.jeld-wen.co.uk

A utility area is hidden away behind these dramatic room divider doors, made to order in Draks' Oxfordshire factory and the mirrored effect makes the dining area appear twice as large. **Bespoke Circle room divider**, from around £1,900 for a similar design, www.draksonline.co.uk



These double doors feature a 6mm layer of natural solid wood, with an oiled finish, over a composite stabilising core. The frames are in natural hardwood. **Raw Hinged internal doorset in European oak**, 2,400mm (H) x 2,000mm (W), £4,000, www.urbanfront.com



This stylish contemporary pocket door kit includes the steel frame, running gear and full timber jambs. **Single sliding pocket door system**, £245, www.eclisse.co.uk

