

FAQ? Frequently Asked Questions about Skylight Replacements

The most common questions homeowners have when it comes to replacing skylights.

Do Skylights Need to be Replaced?

The most common question about skylight replacements is whether they even need to be replaced. While modern skylights are designed and built to last longer than ever, the average lifespan of a skylight is 20-25 years, so yes, they do eventually need to be replaced.

What if My Skylight isn't Broken or Leaking? Does it Still Need to be Replaced?

To prevent leaks, skylights use sealants along with their flashing. After being exposed to the elements on a roof for 20 years, those sealants start to break down. Then it stops being a matter of if the skylight will leak and becomes a matter of when it will. And by the 20-year mark, nearly all skylight warranties have passed their expiration dates. If you find evidence of leaks or other damage after 20 years, you're likely to pay the full price for replacements.

When is the Best Time to Plan for Skylight Replacements?

The best time to plan on replacing your skylight is when you replace your roof. This gives you the opportunity to coordinate projects and coincide your roof and skylight warranties. If you're already planning a re-roofing project, be sure to incorporate skylight replacements into that plan too.

Coinciding Warranties is Great, but Do I Really Need to Replace My Skylights When I Replace My Roof?

We understand a new roof is already a big project in terms of budget and labor, and that's why many homeowners are reluctant to add another component like skylight replacements. But your roof acts as an entire system, and skylights are a part of that. In fact, many roofers now include in their contracts that old skylights must be replaced during a roof replacement to ensure the entire roof is under warranty.

Consider it this way: you wouldn't buy a new car then have the dealer put the tires from your old car on it because they had a few more miles left in them. It's the same thing with skylights.

I'm Still Willing To Risk It. What's the Worst That Could Happen from Having an Old Skylight on a New Roof?

Your old skylight that didn't leak before your new roof is almost guaranteed to leak afterwards. It could also sustain frame damage from all the sawing and hammering going on during the roof replacement. In other words, in another few months you'll have someone else up on the roof to replace your skylights because now they're the ones causing problems.

Something else to consider is that you may pay a higher rate to have the skylights and surrounding roof area replaced later. And since those shingles around the skylights will need to be replaced again, they won't match the rest of the roof, giving it a mismatched, spotty look.

Doesn't My Skylight Have a Lifetime Warranty?

Unfortunately, no. This is another common misconception about skylights. VELUX's No Leak Warranty has the best coverage in the industry, and it offers protection against leaks for up to 10 years and protection against hail and other glass damage for up to 20 years. This is because skylights are mostly made up of wood, glass, aluminum, and different types of plastic that break down over time. Eventually, they do need to be replaced.

What Information About My Old Skylights Do I Need to Have Ready for My Roofers/Installers?

When you consult with your roofers about skylight replacements, they will get all the measurements they need to ensure they order the right sizes. But there is other information about your current skylights that would be helpful to tell your roofer while you're still in the planning stages, including:

- The brand and model if known,
- If it is fixed or venting,
- And if it vents, whether it is manually or electronically operated.

You can also talk to your roofer or installer about any upgrades you want in your replacement skylights, like going from fixed to venting, plastic to glass, or even adding blinds and Smart Home automation.

How Can You Upgrade a Skylight?

Skylight technology has advanced in recent years, so there are quite a few ways you can upgrade your skylights. If you currently have plastic skylights, for example, you can upgrade to glass skylights for better light quality and energy efficiency, as well as a longer life span. You can also replace fixed skylights (skylights that don't open) with venting skylights (skylights that do open) for a fresh air upgrade. And venting skylights aren't just manually operated anymore; there are electric and solar-power options to allow for remote operation of skylights.

Many types of skylights are also now compatible with blinds of varying styles and colors, so you can even upgrade your light control too.

What Happens During a Skylight Replacement?

It varies from project to project. If you're starting out putting in a new roof, you'll talk with your roofers during the planning stage about new skylights as part of your new roofing system. Your roofer will get measurements from your existing skylights to ensure your replacements are a perfect fit. This is the time to talk about any upgrades you have in mind, like springing for venting skylights or adding on a pre-installed blind. Then, when your roofers come back to replace the roof, they'll replace your skylights while they're up there. There may be a small amount of interior drywall work depending on your replacement situation, but the majority of the replacement process will take place on the roof.

Other scenarios involve replacing skylights without replacing the roof. If your skylight becomes damaged, starts leaking, or shows other signs of aging past its prime (i.e., discoloration or mildew in plastic bubble skylights), it's time to replace. The first step is contacting a VELUX Installer in your area. During an initial consultation, they'll get the measurements of your existing skylights and make suggestions for the best skylight model for your replacements. Once you've decided on your skylight upgrades, you'll schedule a time for your installer to come back.

On replacement day, your installer will remove your old skylight from the roof and replace it with your new one. Depending on the type of installation, there may be minimal interior drywall work, but most of the work will be done on the roof.

In any scenario, once your installer is finished, you'll have the opportunity to ask any last-minute questions about operating your skylight or adding on more accessories. This is also when you'll register your new VELUX Skylights to ensure complete warranty coverage and easy assistance if you ever need to contact customer service.

Wouldn't It Be Cheaper to Close My Skylight In Instead of Replacing It?

Pricewise, yes, it would be cheaper to close in your skylight instead of replacing it. But closing a financial corner here may have you sacrificing more than you realize. If you've had the skylight for a while, your eyes have gotten used to natural light in your space, and any artificial replacements are going to seem that much dimmer.

Before you make any decisions about closing it in, throw a tarp over your skylight for a few days. This will give you a sense of what things would look like without a skylight. It may also help you realize just how much of a difference natural light makes.

