



The Prepared Homeowner's Guide to Gutters

IMPORTANT

Before you hire a contractor to install gutters on your home... read this first!

Inside, you'll find important facts you need to know about new gutters, so you can protect your home from costly and dangerous water damage...

Compliments of Dan & Kim Cox
On Top Home Improvements, Inc.



The Definitive Guide to Gutters

Let's start with the basics, shall we?

So what are gutters, anyway?

Simply speaking, gutters collect water runoff from your roof, and direct it away from your home to prevent costly water damage.

They keep your house dry!

Typically, gutters hang from brackets under the edge of your roof, and are sloped slightly downwards towards a downspout to drain water down and away from the house.

Designed and installed properly, gutters minimize the chance of water damage to your siding, trim, paint, fascia, foundation, and landscaping.

How the local weather affects your home

This area of the country gets its share of rain, snow, and ice.

And the common element – water. Sometimes, lots of it.

Ok... Trivia question time...

Did you know that for every 10 foot square area of your roof, an inch of water produces 62 gallons of water runoff that has to go somewhere? Didn't think so.

The roof on many homes can be 15 times that size, which means about 1000 gallons of water will run off each side of the roof in a 1" rain storm.

Just imagine twenty 55-gallon drums lined up side-by-side to catch all that water...

If it's not safely diverted, 1000 gallons of water will certainly wreak havoc on your house and landscape, causing serious water damage, rotting wood, siding, destroying paint, and eroding your foundation.

But a properly designed and installed gutter system will prevent these problems, and look good, too.

How do you know if a new gutter is right for you?

These questions will help you decide...

- Are your **gutters falling off**, damaged, or rusty?
- Do your gutters or downspouts leak?

- When it rains, **do you get soaked** when you go through your front door or garage?
- Are there stains and debris on the bottom section of your siding and foundation?
- Do you have rotted siding, trim, or peeling paint?
- Do you get **water in your basement**, or does it easily flood?
- When it rains hard, do big pools of water accumulate around the foundation, and **wash away the landscaping**?
- Are your gutters or downspouts always **clogged with leaves**, pine needles, or other debris, forcing water to spill over the edge?
- Do your gutters stand out like a sore thumb, or just **plain ugly**?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, then you may need a new gutter system. But how do you choose the best one?

Choose the right gutters

There are many factors to consider when adding or replacing gutters on your home.

Some are functional... some are for aesthetics...

But they are all important.

- Gutter material
- Seamless or not
- Length
- Price
- Maintenance
- Local weather and temperature
- The immediate landscape
- And yes... aesthetics for good looks

Think about it... You don't want a perfectly designed and functional gutter system that stands out like a sore thumb, do you?

Materials

Gutters and downspouts are made with aluminum, copper, vinyl, steel, and even wood. The most common ones are aluminum and vinyl because of the lower cost, and they're easier to install by the do-it-yourselfer.

Copper and wood gutters are the least common because of the high material and installation price.

They are available in many different sizes, colors, and profiles so you can perfectly match your home's color scheme. Remember the aesthetics?

Seamless or sectional

You can get aluminum and vinyl gutters in sections, usually 10-20 feet long, and the sections are fastened together. This allows a lot of flexibility when designing a gutter system, because of all the different end caps, corner pieces and outlets available.

But they also have a huge drawback. Sectional gutters tend to leak, usually at the joints or where the downspout is located. And that can be a major pain and create serious problems.

The better option is to go with a seamless gutter.

It will cost more up front than a sectional because it must be installed by a professional with a special machine for making seamless gutters. But it will never rust and never leak. (Unless someone pokes a hole in it on purpose)

Length

With sectional gutters, you simply buy and join enough sections to get the length you need. If you need 40', you add four 10' sections.

With seamless gutters, their special seamless gutter machine will bang out a single 40 footer, or as long a gutter as you need, so length isn't an issue.

The pitch of the gutter is crucial to proper operation, so it's important to make sure it's pitched the right way so water will go where you want it to.

Price

Sectional vinyl, aluminum, and steel are the least expensive to buy and install. Copper and wood are expensive to buy, install, and maintain.

Aluminum seamless gutters are more expensive up front, but will never rust, will last forever and never leak.

Maintenance

Sectional gutters require regular maintenance to fix leaks, and damaged sections. Seamless gutters never leak, so there is no maintenance.

Both types of gutters may require some type of gutter guards to keep the water flowing properly, depending on how many trees are in the direct vicinity.

There are many options, and can be installed by a professional gutter installer.

Weather and temperature

Both are taken into consideration by a professional when choosing materials. For example, if there is a tendency for lots of ice or snow, then stronger, higher gauge metal may be used. And when it's consistently hot, vinyl has been known to deform.

Immediate landscape

Effective gutter design takes into account the landscape, the pitch, and how much water is expected to run off the roof. There must be an appropriate place for the downspout to drain roof water that's away from your foundations or flood your yard with hundreds or thousands of gallons of rainwater.

Proper design will minimize gutter and downspout clogs by leaves and other debris that can attract mold, mildew, and provide a breeding ground for insects like mosquitoes.

Aesthetics – (Yes... they can look good, too)

No matter what style or color your home is, a professional installer will integrate a gutter system that looks so good, you may not even know it's there. You can get almost any color, material, and trendy style, such as K or half-round shaped to match your home.

Choose the right gutter contractor

It's no secret that many people out there market themselves as handymen, builders, or contractors and quote jobs for a fraction of what a professional would.

But do they really have the necessary experience and credentials that separate the amateurs from the professionals?

You'll need to dig a little bit to find out, so here are some great questions to ask:

- Do they provide a free, no-obligation estimate – not a high-pressure sales pitch?
- Do they use the highest quality and gauge material available, so your gutters hold up to the weather and last for years?
- Does the estimate include removal and disposal of old materials?
- Do they offer a reasonable warranty on the materials and their workmanship?
- Will they protect your landscaping, trees, flowers, and other property while working on your home?
- Do they provide references of real clients, not friends?

- Do they have the necessary worker's comp and liability insurance? (You do realize they are working on ladders several feet off the ground?)
- Are they properly licensed by the state?
- Are they bonded?
- Are they a member of local or national building organizations like the NAHB?
- Good grade from the Better Business Bureau?
- Do they have experience installing gutters on houses like yours?

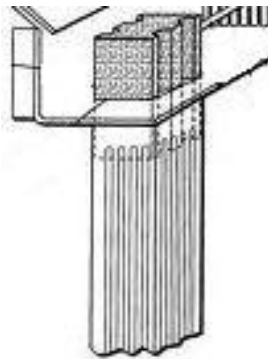
The laymen's glossary of gutter system terms

Bracket

There are several styles of mounting brackets available, depending on what kind of gutter you have, and the look you desire. They physically attach the gutter to your home with screws. Downspouts also use special brackets.

Downspout

The vertical spout or tube that goes from one end of your gutter to the ground, and acts as the drain for your gutter system, so to speak.



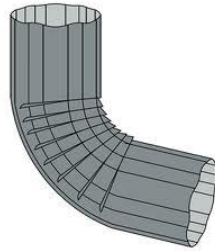
Downspout

Drip edge extension

This isn't necessarily part of the gutter system, but is sometimes a necessary add-on to make sure water properly runs off the roof and into the gutter. It's simply a length of bent metal that slides under the existing drip edge and sticks out far enough for the water to go in the gutter instead of behind it.

Elbow

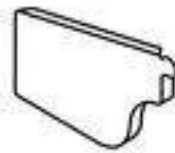
Short pieces of downspout attached to the top or bottom and bent at an angle to direct the flow of water.



Elbow

End cap

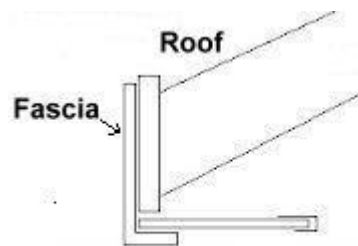
Metal face plates that plug the ends of the gutter, designed with the same profile as the gutter, and attached with waterproof caulk or screws.



Endcap

Fascia

The vertical board that is directly underneath the roof edge and runs the whole length of the roof. Most gutter brackets are attached to the fascia board.



Fascia

Gauge

The thickness of metal is defined in inches by the gauge. For example, gutters typically range from .019 to .032 inches. Obviously, thicker metal is heavier and will last longer.

Gutter

The horizontal component of your system that hangs directly under the edge of your roof to catch and direct water runoff. Can be made of aluminum, steel, or copper.



Gutter

Mitre

Inside or outside corners that attach to the gutter

Seamless Gutter Machine

Special forming machine used to create a continuous piece of metal gutter that is custom sized to your home.

Summary

Frankly, gutters aren't the most glamorous or exciting topic in the world...

But they are a crucial component in keeping your house and yard dry.

Without a properly designed, installed, and functioning gutter system, using high-quality materials, you take a huge risk of serious and costly water damage.

Not to mention a buildup of mold and mildew that could be dangerous to your family's health.

Ask yourself... is it worth it to ignore these potential problems by not having properly designed and installed gutters on your home?

Probably not...

About On Top Home Improvements, Inc.



Kim and Dan Cox

*For over 28 years, 6000+ homeowners in Montgomery, Prince George's, and Howard Counties have trusted us and our exclusive **Lifetime Roofing Labor Warranty** to protect, add value and curb appeal to their homes!*

Dan and Kim Cox, owners of *On Top Home Improvements*, know customers like you are looking for a **reputable, experienced** Maryland gutter contractor and home improvement company...

- Who's **completely honest** with you during the entire home improvement process... from estimate to final payment
- Who's rated A+ from the BBB
- Who'll do the **job right the first time**
- Who **you can trust**
- Who is fully licensed, insured, and certified in all the areas they work
- Who provides **free, comprehensive, detailed estimates** so you know exactly what you need, what you will get, and when you'll get it
- Who will do an **exceptional job** for a **reasonable price**
- Who won't require a deposit unless the job is over \$6000 – even then, we only ask for one-third, and balance due after you're completely satisfied with our work

***On Top Home Improvements* provides all these benefits to every single customer, leaving no doubt you can depend on us to take care of all your gutter needs!**

**To get a FREE, no-obligation estimate and gutter analysis...
or to ask us a question, call us at 301-368-3551**



Home Improvements, Inc.

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Here's what some happy customers say about our service...

"Thank you for getting our roof and gutter work done quickly and neatly!"

Mr. & Mrs. Carlberg, Germantown, MD

"Thank you for your good work on my roof and especially for the "little/big touches..." like cleaning my skylights, filling in cracks, alerting me to other house needs."

Lucia P., Columbia, MD

"The roof looks great. The color was just fine. The crew worked diligently. They cleaned up after the job was completed. Please feel free to use us as a reference."

The Singers, Laytonsville, MD

"Thank you for a job well done. Your workers were respectful and diligent. They cleaned up the worksite and were conscientious of our flower beds. You have restored our belief that there are good contractors out there. We'd be happy to refer other customers."

The Ashby's, Colesville, MD

"Thank you Dan. You did a great job. We're very happy with all the work."

Ed & Georgia Rodatus, Frederick, MD

"Thank you for the service you provided in the recent replacement of our roof. The service was impeccable and the entire process was smooth. Everything was handled, expediently and efficiently. Your sub-contractors who worked on the house were kind and professional."

Kimberly Sabatano, Frederick, MD

"Thank you very much for the excellent work done on our roof. Everyone was very professional and on time and we will be happy to recommend you to anyone, and are glad we chose you."

Mr. & Mrs. Wiles, Laytonsville, MD

"Thank you for the prompt completion of our roofing project. We are very pleased with the results. The roof looks much better!"

Jim Quinn, Laurel, MD

To get a FREE, no-obligation gutter repair or replacement estimate... call us at 301-368-3551



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