

# 10 tips for choosing a stained glass artisan

By Mark Prettyman

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Many people shy away from the beauty of stained glass because it seems expensive, and they're not sure who they can trust to do a proper job of both the fabrication of the windows, and the installation.

Actually, a quality stained glass addition can add significantly more than its cost to the value of the property into which its installed. A good quality stained glass window can lift a mundane dwelling into the realms of the extraordinary in a way which just can't be achieved with a new kitchen or bathroom. Not only can a new window become the focus of neighbour's envy if you're staying in your house, but it can also sell the house in days instead of months if you're moving on. The emotional appeal of a well-crafted window is hard to put your finger on, but we all feel it.

So how to do it right?

1) Choose an artisan with experience. A lot of experience. Stained glass takes days to learn and years - even decades - to master. You should choose an artisan with at least ten years experience. 20 would be better.

2) Choose a stained glass artisan with a variety of experience under their tool belt. If all they've done for the past ten years is re-lead glass in ageing parish churches, then they won't be much good at putting an intricate modern design in your front door.

3) Choose a professional who has done a project similar to that which you are planning. You want a lamp shade? Ask to see some. YOU want a front door? Ask to see examples or photos. Experience is king with stained glass.

4) Contact previous customers of any artisans you're considering, for a reference. If they are local, ask if they'd mind you popping around to assess the quality of the work. Most people are happy to show off their beautiful new window!

5) Ask the artisan to view the place where the window will go and advise on possible patterns, colours etc. They should give their advice and consultancy freely, without subjecting you to the sales patter you might receive if you were planning a new conservatory. Stained glass is of a more civilised age, and your artisan's attitude to making a sale should reflect this.

6) Can your artisan show you a book of patterns that would work for your window? Can they draw up a plan of what the finished job will look like, to scale? You should approve a to-scale \*colour\* picture before committing - stained glass is a serious investment so it needs to be right. Modern artisans can usually offer a computer-generated image for these purposes - this is perfect.

7) Can your artisan advise on glass texture and light? Stained glass windows are three dimensional, and every type of glass casts a different pattern on the surfaces around it when light shines through it. Stained glass is not just coloured glass, and they should recognise this!

8) Will your artisan explain how much of their quoted price goes on materials, how much on fitting and how much in their pocket? They are (or ought to be) highly skilled people, and they charge accordingly. However they should be transparent about pricing, and offer different windows to suit different budgets, explaining clearly where the savings are made.

9) Where does your artisan work? Do they have a proper workplace or is stained glass just a hobby they do on their kitchen table occasionally? Ask to see their workshop. Its tidiness will tell you a lot about their professionalism.

10) Lastly but not least, do you like their work? Stained glass is a highly personal thing, and you will make a gut decision within moments of viewing a portfolio whether this is the artist for you. Go with that.

Choose a top quality stained glass window which you and your family can enjoy for decades. Its an investment on many levels, and is sure not to dissapoint if you take your time and follow the pointers above.

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Mark Prettyman is owner-operator of Putney Stained Glass <http://www.putney-stained-glass.co.uk>

Putney Stained Glass design and build stained and leaded glass panels to order. All their products are hand crafted using traditional methods and materials. With over 20 years of experience, they offer a full range of glazing services. See [http://putney-stained-glass.co.uk/glass\\_facts.html](http://putney-stained-glass.co.uk/glass_facts.html) for more information on stained glass.

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