

Curtains vs. Drapes: Are They the Same Thing?

If you've ever bought or sold a house, you might have noticed that in real estate vocabulary, anything that hangs on or around windows is referred to as a "window treatment." Presumably this frees real estate agents from having to specify whether said window treatments are blinds or shades or curtains or drapes or something else, especially since different people may have different ideas of what these various terms refer to.

For example, the terms curtains and drapes are typically used interchangeably. And, honestly, when you're having a conversation with your friends about your new window treatments, they're likely to conjure similar pictures in their minds regardless of which word you use.

If you're a stickler for details, though, you might be interested to know that there is, in fact, a difference between a curtain and a drape.

A curtain is an unlined window covering, generally hung with tabs or a rod-pocket from a wood or metal pole or a tension rod. Curtains may have a number of different features, including ruffles, lace, or embroidery, and you'll often see curtains of different sizes and shapes used to create different looks. Curtains are lightweight and generally casual in design. Many crafty folks like to make their own curtains; they're typically easy to sew, even for beginners.

Drapes are the curtain's fancy cousin. Drapes are pleated, lined and often installed by a professional. They generally hang all the way to the floor, regardless of the height of the window sill, and they're attached to a traverse rod with hooks so they can be opened and closed with a cord. If you've ever stayed in a hotel, the windows were probably covered with drapes. They look formal and generally provide more privacy than curtains (although, depending on the fabric, curtains can certainly provide privacy as well).

If you're trying to decide whether you want to install curtains or drapes, the key question you want to ask yourself is what type of style you're going for.

If you want your room to feel casual and relaxed, maybe even a little eclectic, you want to go with curtains. Many options are available to create just the look you're seeking, from long breezy panels to cute, country, half-curtains and valances.

On the other hand, if your style is more formal and you want your room to look sophisticated and refined, you should definitely go with drapes. Drapes are designed to look professional and elegant, and they'll add a distinguished quality to your windows that you just won't get with curtains.

Regardless of which style you select, don't feel bad if your guests can't tell if you've installed curtains or drapes. In the end, if the room reflects your personality and taste, the last thing anyone is going to focus on is the technical term for your window treatments.

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