



All you need to know ROOF WINDOWS

SKYLIGHTS AND ROOF LANTERNS FILL A HOME WITH LIGHT TO BRIGHTEN A BASEMENT, ENHANCE AN EXTENSION OR CHEER UP A DARK CORNER

With their small windows and low ceilings, traditional country properties can be cosy - and dark. Which is why bringing in natural light and ventilation is often a priority when adding a new extension, carrying out a loft conversion, or simply renovating the existing space. Skylights, roof windows and lanterns are all popular solutions as they can be installed into both flat and

pitched roofs, transforming the room more than a typical standard window would. They do, however, require specialist installation to ensure they are fitted safely and are watertight. Today, a wide range of materials and technology is available, allowing your new roof lights not only to blend in sympathetically with your country home but also to be operated via remote control, to help you manage ventilation, sunlight and privacy.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ROOF WINDOWS, SKYLIGHTS AND LANTERNS?
Roof windows can be fitted to a pitched roof at an angle between 15 and 90 degrees. Building regulations state they must be installed in the same orientation as the roof plane, and no more than 150mm from it. These can be fixed or operable and are common in loft conversions. Skylights, on the other hand, can be installed onto either a



pitched or flat roof and are usually much larger than your typical roof window, allowing you to create an almost entirely glazed design. They are popular for new extensions, although any side-facing windows above 1.7 metres above the ground must be obscure-glazed.

Lanterns are better at channeling light than a flat skylight, and work well in garden room extensions. Thanks to their architectural pyramid shape, they can make a room feel bigger by adding height to the space.

WILL I BE ABLE TO OPEN AND CLOSE THE WINDOW?

Yes, all types of skylight can come in fixed or operable models - some which will open fully, and others for venting only. If you wish to have an operable skylight which will be out of reach, opt for one with a motor

switch or remote control. Today, you can even find solutions which open and close automatically by detecting the climatic conditions indoors and outside.

IS SPECIAL TOUGHENED GLASS OR GLAZING REQUIRED?

Skylights must have toughened or safety glass. Additionally, building regulations state that any skylight must be proven to have sufficient insulation against heat loss. If the skylight is in close proximity to a boundary, the fire performance of the roof light will also need to be considered.

WILL I NEED BLINDS OR SCREENS?

This depends on where the skylights are placed in your home. You can have blinds tailor-made for skylights and roof lanterns,

which are ideal for privacy as well as controlling the amount of light and heat that enters the space through the glazing. For example, a blackout blind is best for a bedroom space, to keep light out and to maintain the temperature of the room. It's a good idea to choose motorised blinds for skylights that are out of reach. Alternatively, investing in electrochromic glass - also called smart glass - which becomes opaque at the flick of a switch could be a good option for privacy any time of day or night.

WHAT ABOUT PLANNING PERMISSION AND BUILDING REGULATIONS?

According to the Planning Portal, you do not normally need to apply for planning permission to re-roof your house or to insert roof lights



or skylights, as the permitted development rules allow for roof alterations subject to certain limits and conditions. For example, alterations must not project more than 150mm from the existing roof plane, and no alteration must be higher than the highest part of the roof. However, if you own a listed building or live in a conservation area, further restrictions may apply, so it is always best to consult with an architect and check with your local planning authority before beginning any work.

ANY PITFALLS TO WATCH OUT FOR IN COUNTRY PROPERTIES?

It is important to ensure your skylights are installed properly - including a flashing kit to waterproof and insulate the opening - so find an installer who specialises in country properties and their sometimes quirky rooflines! You can also run the risk of bringing in too much light and heat into the space. Fortunately, many brands now have virtual planning tools online to help you visualise your design. If you are working with an architect they can mock up

CAD drawings for you - as well as advising on size and placement.

WHAT FINISH AND MATERIALS CAN I CHOOSE FROM?

Most roof lights come with aluminium exterior covers as standard, and brands such as Velux offer conservation-style designs to blend seamlessly with your property's exterior. When it comes to choosing your glazing, look out for the U-value which can tell you its insulating properties.

WHAT MAINTENANCE DO THEY NEED?

If roof lights are not within easy reach then they may need professional cleaning, but there are ways of reducing the frequency of doing this. Ensure your skylights are installed away from tree branches, and consider self-cleaning glass which comes with



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT Skylights transform a basement into a light home office; Velux's Cabrio balcony system, from around £2,456, not only provides light to this loft conversion, but also a small outdoor space; roof lights in bathrooms should have moisture resistant surrounds



a special coating to help keep your windows looking clean.

WHAT IS THE COST?

Prices start from around £300 for a standard easy-fit roof window, but this can vary considerably based on materials used, functionality and difficulty of installation. The cost also increases for skylights and lanterns. However, they can all add real value to your home, either as the centrepiece of a light and airy extension, or by helping to transform rooms such as lofts and basements into functional spaces - an office or an extra bedroom.

Sourcebook OUR PICK OF GLAZING EXPERTS

- For all roof window solutions Velux, velux.co.uk
- For large architectural glazing Thames Valley Window Company, twindows.com
- For bespoke hardwood roof lanterns Prestige, prestige-roof-lanterns.co.uk
- For conservation specialists The Roof Light Company, therooflightcompany.co.uk
- For walk-on glazing and skylights Sun Square, sunsquare.co.uk