EASY entrance

Sliding, stacking, folding, frameless ... our doors, windows and walls are all fast becoming vistas to the outside, finds Lucinda Jordaan

Folding doors, when revealed completely, can offer a fully unobstructed walkway. Image: *SA Home Owner* photo library.



The original patio door, now modernised. Image: *SA Home Owner* photo library.

The sliding patio door has evolved – the original window wall designed to smooth the transition between inside and out has branched out into a dizzying array of options for home owners, architects and interior designers who are increasingly choosing to maximise views and limit barriers to the outdoors.

STYLES APLENTY

The sheer volume of names and descriptors reflects the wide range on offer, from frameless to bi-folding (multiple panels that overlap and fold onto each other) and stacker or stacking doors that stack on top of one another when opened.

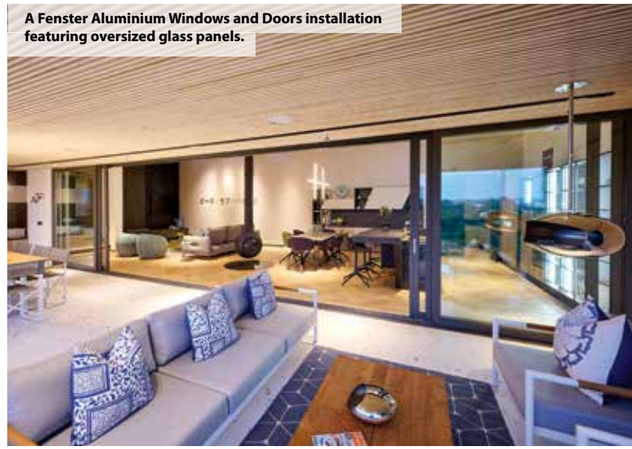
Each obviously has its advantages, but the final selection almost always comes down to budget, says Johan Lombard, owner of Premium Aluminium. "There are so many different types of systems and options that it's vital to confirm with your manufacturer or installer that the system you choose is within the limitations for which it's been designed. The cheaper system is not always the answer; there's a reason why it's cheaper."

Whatever system you choose, all experts agree that site assessment is crucial. "Each opening is assessed on its merit so that the end result takes wind loads, traffic flow, views and, of course, overall look into consideration," explains Alouise Matthyser, key accounts manager at EGA: everything glass and aluminium.

VIEWING PLEASURE

Matthyser recommends sliding doors with large glass panels for higher wind load areas. "These are particularly popular in Cape Town suburbs where mountain views are the focus. They come in a variety of design options – double/triple sliding, centre opening – and can be made to include window inserts for ventilation when the doors are closed." >

A Fenster Aluminium Windows and Doors installation featuring oversized glass panels.



“Aluminium is one of the best ways to increase the value of your home and modernise its look.”” – Johan Lombard

Aluminium is a popular choice, as it’s virtually maintenance-free. Image: *SA Home Owner* photo library.



Matt black is trending in both commercial and residential applications, says EGA.



Double glazing or glass for solar control is also on-trend, says EGA.

Folding doors, by contrast, “offer a completely open door reveal, giving you the perfect unobstructed walkway – which is always a massive plus for most clients,” adds Matthyser.

Frameless doors, popular in commercial applications, are now also meeting residential concerns with innovative solutions, says Sheila Gebhardt, owner of Clearview Folding Doors.

“The biggest concern home owners have with frameless is their weather resistance. Our product incorporates the concept of the bottom sill as a patio door, leaving a height difference between the inside and outside that creates a seal when the glass is closed.”

The possibilities for frameless are endless, reckons Gebhardt. “For example, we have incorporated our folding door over a balustrade, so you can close off a section, much as one would with roll-down blinds – only now, you have closure with a view.”

ALUMINIUM ADVANTAGE

Aluminium is definitely trending. “Aluminium sliding folding doors are still the most popular, purely because of the >

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GREATER GLAZING

The use of performance glass – double glazing or glass for solar control, for example – is increasing in residential applications. “Performance glass may seem extremely pricey, but the value it adds and the long-term benefits are a great reason to investigate the various options available,” suggests Alouise Matthyser of EGA.

Performance glass can add soundproofing benefits as well as solar, temperature and light control, depending on the type of glass used. “The correct glass application can save you a small fortune in sun damage to your furnishings,” adds Matthyser.

Performance glass options include:

- Solarvue HL with low emissions blocks out the heat in summer and traps it in winter;
- acoustic glass blocks out external noise;
- white translucent glass offers privacy; and
- obscure glass is making a comeback, with many designers using Pacific obscure, Slender reed, Wintervue and Frostyvue as decorative features in doors and facades.

Double glazing, popular in Europe, is another performance glass that is becoming more popular here, with the makeup based on the performance required.



When stacked, these folding doors offer unobstructed entrance. *SA Home Owner* photo library.



Frameless sliding doors are ideal for interior installations. Image:*SA Home Owner* photo library.

wide open space it affords. Aluminium sliding folding doors seal properly and are as secure as any other aluminium door. Generally, people want more glass and less aluminium: big openings with as little as possible obstruction from mullions and transoms," says Lombard. Matthyser agrees: "Not only is aluminium virtually maintenance-free, but it is also one of the best ways to increase the value of your home and modernise its look."

SAFETY

According to EGA, most clients opt for safety glass beyond the South African Glass and Glazing Association compliance of a 4mm float. Here, the two options include intruder-proof laminated glass – where two pieces of float glass are fused with a vinyl interlayer that allows the pane to stay intact even when broken – and a toughened safety glass, which is float glass hardened at high temperatures to offset severe harm when broken.

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– Alouise Matthyser

EXPERT ADVICE

"Aluminium windows and doors are manufactured with pneumatic machinery for precision. If the door is five millimetres too big, it will pose a huge problem, and it's important to know that changes cannot be made once the product is in production."
– Johan Lombard, Premium Aluminium

"All frameless folding doors have polycarb or PVC seals between the glass; these require maintenance and replacement every two years."
– Sheila Gebhardt, Clearview Folding Doors.

"Folding doors come with a design rule: each door panel should not exceed 900mm in width."
– Alouise Matthyser, EGA.

With thanks to Clearview Folding Doors, EGA: everything glass and aluminium, Fenster Aluminum Windows and Doors, and Premium Aluminium

TOP TIP

"Never use force to open or close an aluminium door or window, rather get a professional to service the door or window before the damage is too great."
– Johan Lombard, Premium Aluminium