This article is the archived version of a report that appeared in June 2009 Consumer Reports magazine.

Siding that scored highest also tended to be thickest and priciest. But several other choices did almost as well for far less.

CR Best Buy

All offer top value and are recommended. Prices are per square (100 square feet).

Recommended

These high-scoring models stand out from the crowd for the reasons below.

Recommended

Vinyl siding; all are fine values:
A1 Heartland $200
A3 Norandex $205
A5 ABTCO $160
A6 Heartland $75 CR Best Buy
A7 Mastic Home Exteriors $200
A11 Revere $125 CR Best Buy

All have double-hem mounting, and several have foam backing and deeper profiles. **A1** and **A7** offer the most resistance to cold-weather impacts. **A1** and **A11** offer longer lengths; **A6** offers the most performance for the price.

If you want shakes or fiber cement:
B1 CertainTeed $315
B4 KP $240
C1 Nichiha $160
C2 James Hardie $200

Plastic shakes offer more realism and cold-impact protection than vinyl. **B1** offers top performance overall, though you can save with **B4** for shaded homes where fading is likely to be less of an issue. Fiber cement best mimics the look of wood and reduces but doesn't eliminate the need to paint or stain. Among this group, **C1** offers the most performance for the price overall, though it comes only primed. **C2** can be ordered with a factory finish, which tends to last longer than finishes applied later, though color choices for fiber cement are relatively limited.

CR Best Buy
Recommended
Excellent Very good Good Fair Poor

Guide to Ratings

Overall score for siding is based primarily on resistance to fading, impacts, and wind in our tests. Displayed scores are rounded; products are listed in order of precise overall score. **Fading** reflects resistance to color changes after accelerated weathering tests using intense heat, UV light, and water spray to mimic typical weathering cycles siding would encounter on an actual home. **Cold impacts** is resistance to damage from blows at 0º F. **Warm impacts** is resistance to damage at roughly 70º F. Impacts mimic blows from fallen objects and other mishaps. **Wind** is siding's ability to stay attached in lab tests simulating high winds; the best withstood forces equivalent to more than 150 mph. **Rigidity** denotes stiffness; stiffer siding should appear flatter and more woodlike on a wall. **Thickness** is as measured by our testers. **Price** is approximate retail per square (100 square feet).

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Guide to

CR Best Buy
Recommended
Excellent Very good Good Fair Poor

Recommendation	Rank	Product	Price (100 sq. ft.)	Overall score (0–100; P | F | G | VG | E)	Thick (in.)	Test results: Fading	Cold impacts	Warm impacts	Wind	Rigidity	Features: Foam-backed	Longer lengths	Deep profile	Double hem
		A VINYL Best for low cost and maintenance; today's looks more like wood.												
✓	1	**Heartland** CedarMax Composite Cladding	$200	83	0.050	●	○	●	●	●	•	•		•
	2	**Royal** DuraPlank	210	80	0.054	●	◒	◓	●	◓	•			•
✓	3	**Norandex** Polar Wall Plus	205	79	0.044	●	◒	◓	●	●	•		•	•
	4	**KP** Norman Rockwell	165	79	0.044	◓	◒	●	●	●			•	•
✓	5	**ABTCO** TimberCrest I/S	160	78	0.046	◓	◒	●	●	●	•		•	•
✓	6	**Heartland** HeartTech	75	77	0.044	●	◒	●	●	◓				•
✓	7	**Mastic** Home Exteriors Structure EPS	200	77	0.044	◓	○	●	●	●	•		•	•
	8	**Exterior Portfolio by Crane** CraneBoard 6	225	74	0.046	◓	◒	◓	●	●	•		•	•
	9	**Royal** Woodland 16	160	72	0.046	●	◒	○	●	●		•		•
	10	**Mastic Home Exteriors** Trademark	65	72	0.040	●	◒	●	○	○				
✓	11	**Revere** Sovereign Select Energy Smart	125	72	0.046	●	◒	◓	●	●	•	•	•	•
	12	**Kaycan** Ocean Park Ultra	155	71	0.050	●	◒	◓	◓	◓	•			
	13	**Crane** Premium Pointe 360	140	71	0.046	●	◒	○	●	●		•		•
	14	**Napco** American Splendor	135	70	0.046	◓	◒	○	●	●			•	•
	15	**Alside** Prodigy	160	70	0.046	◓	◒	◓	●	●	•	•	•	•
	16	**Mastic Home Exteriors** Brentwood	70	68	0.040	◓	◒	●	○	○				
	17	**CertainTeed** Monogram 46	110	68	0.046	◓	◒	◓	●	◓			•	•
	18	**CertainTeed** CedarBoards	220	67	0.044	◓	◒	◓	◓	●	•		•	
	19	**ABTCO** Waterford	75	65	0.042	●	◒	◓	◓	○				
	20	**Alside** Charter Oak	95	65	0.046	◓	◒	○	●	●		•	•	•
	21	**Wolverine** American Legend	80	59	0.042	●	◒	○	○	◓				
	22	**Georgia-Pacific** Forest Ridge (Lowe's)	90	58	0.040	◓	◒	○	◓	○				
	23	**Owens Corning** Essentials (Home Depot)	55	55	0.040	●	◒	○	○	◒				
		B PLASTIC SHINGLES/SHAKES These offer even more realism and require little maintenance.												
✓	1	**CertainTeed** Cedar Impressions Straight Edge Perfection	315	95	0.100	●	●	●	●	◓				
	2	**Exterior Portfolio by Crane** Portsmouth 8' Long Length Cedar Shake	360	91	0.100	●	●	●	●	○				
	3	**Mastic Home Exteriors** Cedar Discovery Perfection Shingle CD70P	350	90	0.080	●	◓	●	●	○				
✓	4	**KP** Perfection Shingle VSPC	240	83	0.100	○	●	●	●	◓				
		C FIBER CEMENT These most resemble wood but must still be periodically refinished.												
✓	1	**Nichiha** Sierra Premium Smooth	160	76	0.500	NA	○	○	●	●				
✓	2	**James Hardie** HardiePlank Select Cedarmill	200	73	0.313	NA	○	○	●	●				
	3	**CertainTeed** WeatherBoards [1]	70	68	0.313	NA	◒	◒	●	●				

[1] Price is for clapboard; other styles cost up to $350 per square.
NA = Not applicable; unfinished samples were not tested for fading.

Ratings

Overall score for siding is based primarily on resistance to fading, impacts, and wind in our tests. Displayed scores are rounded; products are listed in order of precise overall score. **Fading** reflects resistance to color changes after accelerated weathering tests using intense heat, UV light, and water spray to mimic typical weathering cycles siding would encounter on an actual home. **Cold impacts** is resistance to damage from blows at 0° F. **Warm impacts** is resistance to damage at roughly 70° F. Impacts mimic blows from fallen objects and other mishaps. **Wind** is siding's ability to stay attached in lab tests simulating high winds; the best withstood forces equivalent to more than 150 mph. **Rigidity** denotes stiffness; stiffer siding should appear flatter and more woodlike on a wall. **Thickness** is as measured by our testers. **Price** is approximate retail per square (100 square feet).

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Other siding can also be a dubious deal. Georgia-Pacific's Forest Ridge vinyl costs only $90 per square, and Owens Corning's Essentials is just $55. But so-so scores in our warm-impact tests, among others, put them at the bottom of our Ratings.

Before choosing vinyl, consider whether your own taste or your neighborhood makes the added realism and cost of plastic shakes or even real wood a better choice. Then follow these steps:

Check the features

Look for vinyl with a double nailing hem, which helps resist lifting from high winds. Foam backing makes vinyl more rigid and adds some insulation; profiles ¾-inch deep or more increase shadow lines. Some vinyl offers lengths beyond 12 feet to eliminate seams on long walls without windows or doors. Those features are noted in our Ratings.

For fiber cement, decide whether the added color choices and money savings of painting it yourself outweigh the longer durability of a factory finish. You can get that finish on the HardiePlank Select by James Hardie for roughly $30 more per square.

Factor in your climate

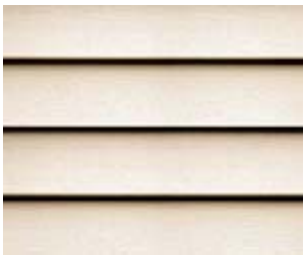
Top-scoring siding resisted fading longest. For stormprone areas, choose siding that scored at least very good for wind resistance.

Do the choosing yourself

Pros also tend to have siding preferences. But as with roofing, we suggest choosing a topscoring line even if it means changing your installer or paying a bit more for a special order.

Real wood costs $500 to $700 per 100 square feet (one square) and needs periodic refinishing. Vinyl and other options now offer added realism with little upkeep. Prices are per square; figure on 20 squares, $1,800 to $4,000 labor for a 2,300-square-foot house.

Vinyl



Best for little upkeep at a low price. Needs no painting. Won't warp or twist. Impervious to insects or water. Today's looks more like wood, especially from a distance, and offers longer lengths to help eliminate seams.

But looks less real up close. Can rattle, melt, burn, or crack.

Cost $55 to $220.

Plastic Shingles/Shakes

Best for realism without the upkeep. Same strengths as vinyl but looks more convincing even up close. Better cold-weather impact resistance than vinyl. Vertical seams blend into a pattern of shakes.

But costs more than most vinyl siding without being as rigid.

Cost $240 to $350.

Fiber Cement

Best for the ultimate wood look at vinyl prices. Blend of cement, sand, and cellulose is insect-proof. Comes primed or prepainted.

But must still be refinished, though less often. Water freeze and thaw might damage it. Fewer colors when prepainted.

Cost $70 to $200.

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Stiffer construction and deeper profiles that cast wider shadows help the best vinyl look more like wood for as little as $125 per 100 square feet. We also tested plastic shingles, which closely resemble their cedar counterparts, and fiber cement, which mimics wood planks but requires less upkeep.

Our weathering and abuse tests found that some fiber cement can be fragile. For example, at just $70 per 100 square feet, CertainTeed's WeatherBoards costs less than half the price of its tested competitors. But subpar impact resistance could cause cracks that let in water, a major threat that fiber cement is designed to resist.

By comparison, even pricier plastic shingles can be a bargain when you factor in their resistance to impacts and wind. They also banish seams because the ends are where panels connect. CertainTeed's Cedar Impressions, $315 per square, outscored two higher-priced models. KP Perfection was mediocre in our fading tests. But at $240 per square, it's a money-saving choice for shaded homes.