

Your Complete Guide to Custom Shower Doors

Considering a glass shower door or enclosure? You should! It's one of the quickest ways to add value to your home and make your bathroom more functional and luxurious. This guide will tell you everything you need to know, so you can make the very best decisions for your home.



What Defines a Shower Door as Custom?

Custom shower doors are tailor-made for your home by a glass expert. While prefabricated shower doors are available online or through many home improvement stores, they only come in standard sizes, and your design options will be extremely limited. Some of these limitations are due to market considerations, but when it comes to certain styles of glass showers — like frameless styles — a perfect

fit is especially important...and almost impossible to achieve with a prefab door.

You get almost limitless design and style options when you work directly with a custom glass company, which is why more homeowners prefer to work with a specialist — either through a builder or a designer or directly.



Prefabricated Glass Shower Doors

Pros

- Prefabricated glass shower doors can sometimes be cheaper than custom shower doors, but not always. And, like most things in life, you tend to get what you pay for. Be wary of kits that use thin, 1/8" glass; they typically look flimsy and can be wobbly, even when installed correctly.
- If you already have a prefabricated glass shower, you can typically get a prefabricated replacement for it, should it break.
- If you're handy, you might be able to install your glass shower yourself.

Cons

- You'll have fewer choices when it comes to the shape and style of your shower if you choose a prefabricated solution.
- Prefabricated options are only available in a narrow range of shower sizes and often can't accommodate even the smallest imperfections. We find that approximately 80% of the homes our experts visit have walls that aren't plumb and shower curbs (also called thresholds) that are not perfectly level.
- While some manufacturers of prefabricated solutions opt for high-quality glass, these kits are typically made overseas and don't include high-quality hardware that is designed to last.
- Glass showers are made of tempered glass, which can't be resized or cut down after the fact.
- If a prefabricated kit isn't a perfect fit, and you've already tried to install it, you might not be able to return it to the store.

Custom Glass Shower Doors

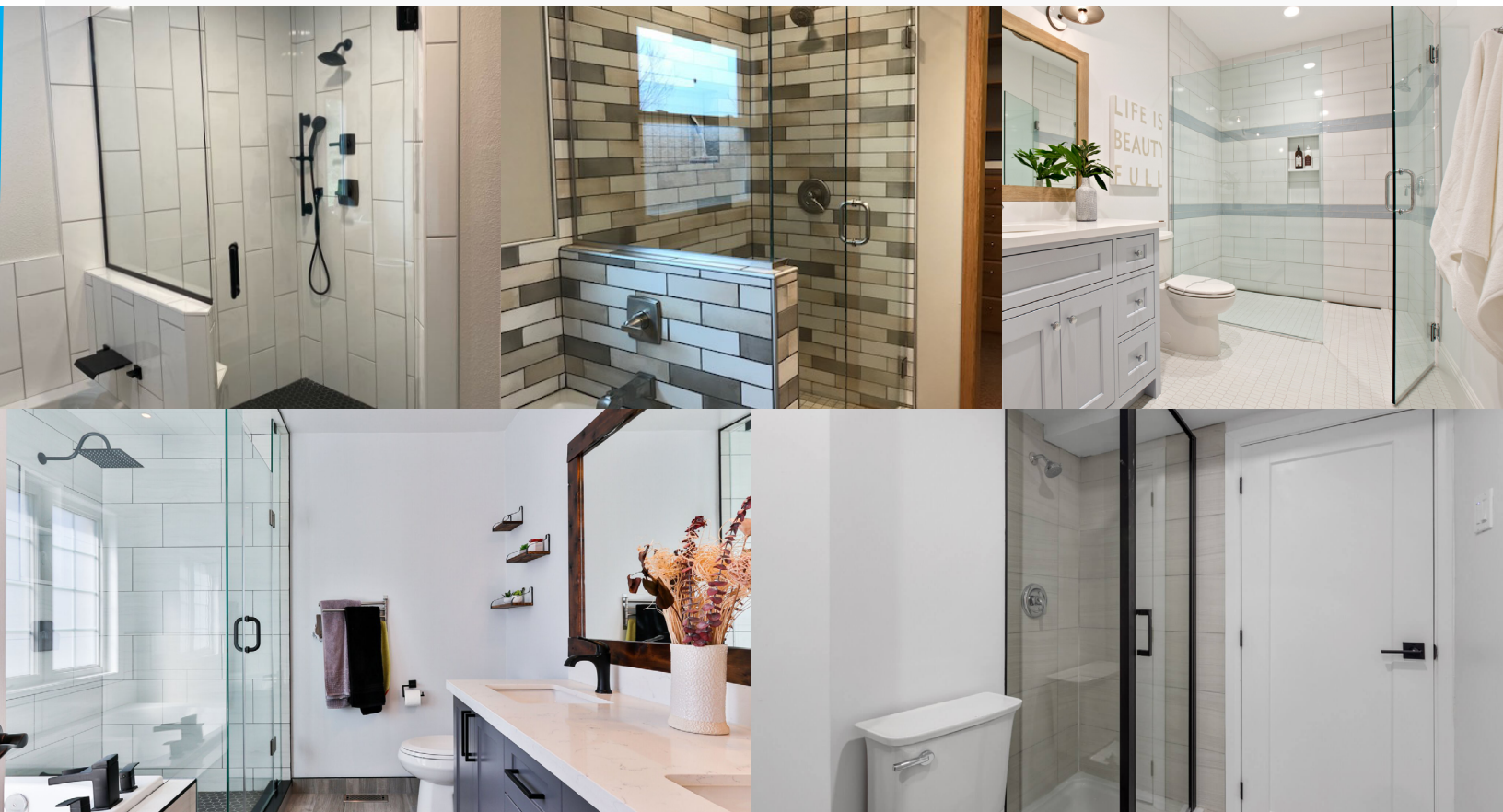


Pros

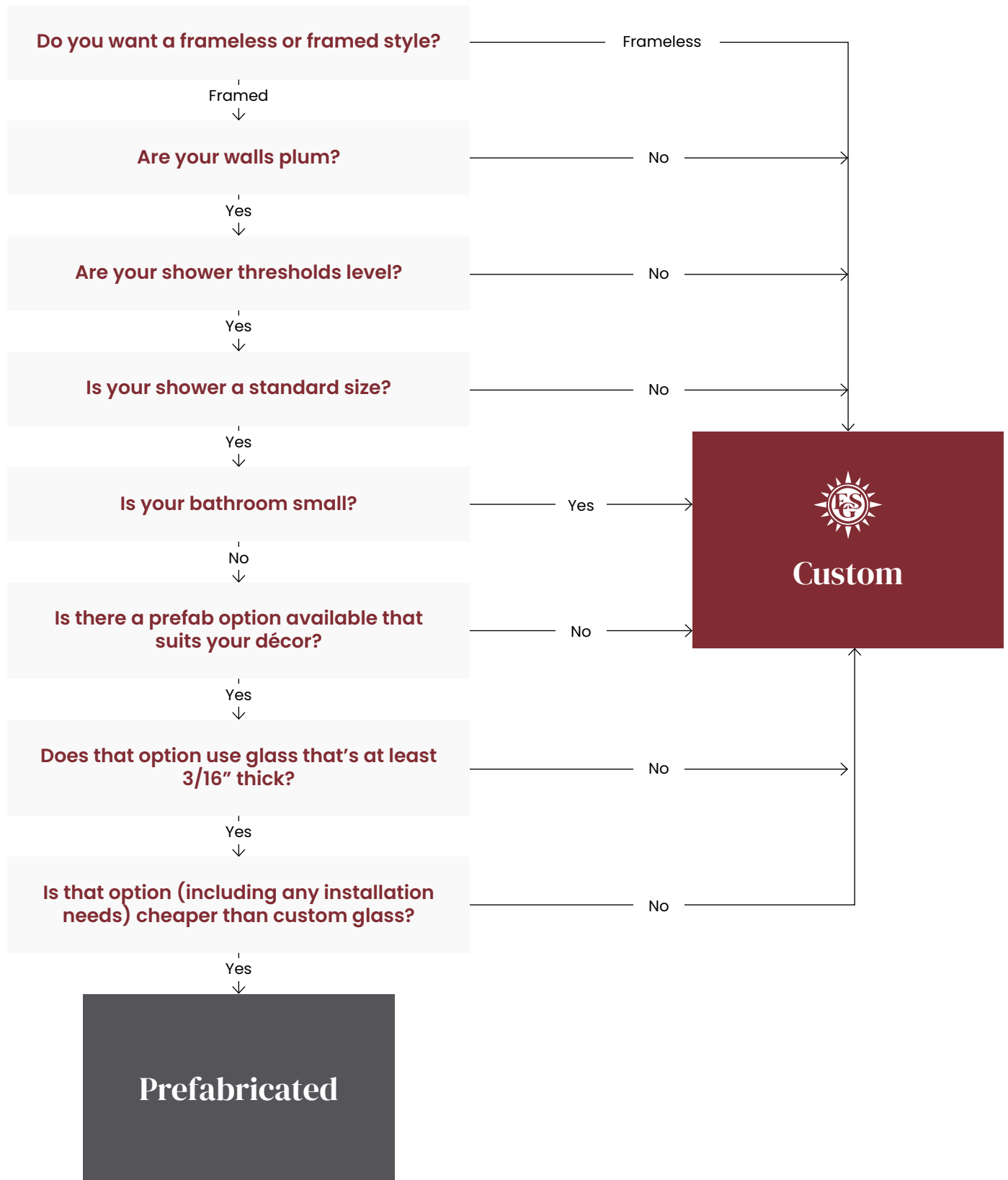
- You can choose a **frameless or framed shower door** without worrying about fit or leaks.
- Your hardware, design, and style options are almost limitless if you work with a glass expert.
- A custom glass shop can use **frosted or pattern glass** to add privacy.
- Custom glass showers can be created to fit almost any space, including very **small bathrooms**, and non-standard showers.
- Custom glass shops like ours have invested quite a bit of time researching which hardware suppliers offer the best quality and value, and will only stock products that will live up to their promises.
- A glass expert can replace prefabricated or custom doors should they break.
- Measuring and installation will be done by experienced pros with specialized tools. For example, at our shop, we use a laser device to make sure our measurements are accurate, walls are plumb, and curbs are level prior to installation.

Cons

- Custom glass showers are sometimes more expensive than prefabricated options, but it depends on the style and hardware you choose.
- Lead times might be longer because your glass shower is being custom-made.



Glass Shower Purchasing Flowchart





Additional Privacy & Thickness Options



Frosted or Pattern Glass

You can use **frosted or pattern glass** anywhere traditional glass is used, including shower enclosures and doors. At East Side Glass, we stock a wide variety of glass options, and we are also happy to track down anything currently available on the market. If you're curious about what a glass shower could do for your bathroom, but you're concerned about maintaining some privacy in a shared space, let your glass provider know.



Upkeep

Pattern glass has the added bonus of hiding water spots better than standard or clear glass, but it still requires some upkeep and cleaning. It's also important to understand that frosted glass can stain fairly easily. That doesn't mean it isn't a good option — we always recommend having the exterior frosted surface sealed.

At East Side Glass, we recommend Invisible Shield or ShowerGuard to keep your glass shower looking great between cleanings and free from stains. Either one comes with a limited warranty and can be applied to your shower door before installation.



Glass Thickness

Glass thickness is something that's easy to overlook, especially if you're just looking at pictures online. Thin glass tends to look just fine from afar, but it won't have a higher-end look inside the actual space, and it's usually wobbly when installed. Frameless shower doors tend to be thicker than framed styles — we typically use 3/8" or 1/2" glass. When we're designing a framed or semi-frameless shower, we typically use either a 3/16" or 1/4" glass, as the frame itself adds stability.

Framed Glass Shower Advantages

Less Breakable

Framed shower doors have a lot going for them. Their aluminum frame helps stabilize glass shower doors so they're less likely to break.

More Watertight

That aluminum frame does more than just add stability. It also helps protect against leaks.

Can Be Installed in More Places

Framed shower doors are slightly more forgiving when it comes to fit and installation, and they can be installed over any type of shower material, including fiberglass.

More Design Options

If you work with a custom glass expert who's done their homework, they'll be able to provide you with a number of hardware options that will make your shower a real show-stopper.

Frameless Glass Shower Advantages

Appearance

Some people may argue that frameless styles bring more of a wow factor, but from what we've seen, that really depends on your space and what you're trying to achieve.

Easier Upkeep

Ditching the frames means you won't have to worry about them corroding over time, and there will be fewer places for soap scum, minerals, and mildew to build up.

Easier To Replace

Without a frame that needs to be matched, any custom glass expert should be able to help you replace, for example, a broken door or a portion of your enclosure.

Hardware Considerations

Our **shower doors page** features our most popular options for clamps, handles, hinges, knobs, sliders, and towel bars. If you have a certain style in mind, we're happy to accommodate it to the best of our ability. But whenever we're designing a custom shower for a customer, we make durability part of the conversation.

We've been in business **since 1953**, so we know which manufacturers' products stand the test of time, and which ones tend to frustrate customers.



Getting the Most Value for Your Money

A glass shower is an investment — one you want to get right the first time. We can't speak for every custom glass provider, but at East Side Glass, we take pride in coming up with unique and beautiful solutions for bathrooms of every size, shape, and style. And while we know we don't have the name recognition of the big box retailers, we understand how frustrating it is for customers who have already purchased a prefabricated solution and tried to install it, only to find that it isn't a good fit.

If you're considering a glass shower for your bathroom, and you're in the greater St. Cloud, MN area, come see us at 305 Franklin Ave NE. We've been in business since 1953, and we've continually reinvested in our third-generation family business to bring our residential and commercial customers the very best. We install hundreds of showers each and every year, so our experts know how to make your shower fit perfectly and what solutions have worked well in homes just like yours.

If you're curious about working with us, your next step is easy! Contact us to get a free estimate for your next glass project.

Get a free estimate