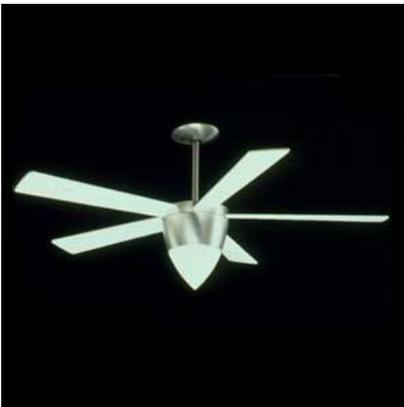


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Ceiling Fans

By: Leslie Plummer Clagett



Nimbus, The Modern Fan Company

The right ceiling fan will help cool down sizzling July afternoons and add a nice touch to any room. Ceiling fans are a happy meeting of the economical and the esthetic. They're one of the few household appliances that can save you money — as much as 15 percent off your energy bills — and look good enough to enhance the decor of nearly any room.

Over the years, the choice of fan styles has broadened beyond the traditional Tiffany model with its dark wood blades and elaborate glass shade. You can now find designs that complement your clean-lined kitchen or contemporary living room as well as traditional bedroom or dining room.

There's also a fan to meet any budget. The typical retail display includes models that range from less than \$100 for a bare-bones unit to well over \$1,000 for an ornate design with cutting-edge controls and light fixtures. Here's a primer on finding the fan that's right for your home.

Choosing a Fan

When shopping for a fan, you'll need to know what size and style are right for your room and if any of the optional features, such as light fixtures or remote controls, make sense for that environment. Fans are sized by the length of their paddles, which should be matched to room size. The paddle span on residential fans ranges from 29 to 54 inches. Select paddle size based on the room you want to cool; see "Size It Right."

If you live in a three- or four-season locale, a reversible fan can provide year-round benefits. During the summer, the forward (counterclockwise) motion of the fan cools the room. With a fan, you'll conserve power without compromising on comfort. You can typically save between 4 and 8 percent of your cooling expenses for every degree you raise the thermostat in summer.

Ceiling fans can also help lower heating bills — up to 2 percent on heating costs for every degree the thermostat is lowered in winter. To get savings, switch the fan to run slowly in reverse: The clockwise movement breaks up the warm air that collects at the ceiling and pushes it down into the room. (Some fans have a special winter setting, in which intermittent bursts of speed blend warm and cool air.) This can be especially effective in rooms with a very high, angled ceiling or cathedral ceiling that collects a lot of heat. However, some authorities argue the benefits can't be felt in rooms with standard 8-foot ceilings. If you are buying a fan for its cooling ability, experiment during the heating season. But not all fans have reverse switches, so double-check before purchasing a unit.

What to Look For: Blades and Motor

Blades

If choosing a fan with wood blades, make sure they are sealed to prevent warpage. Fans rated for use in damp locations, such as a porch or bathroom, usually have plastic paddles. Because they're produced as factory-matched sets, you can't swap out blades from different fans; it throws them out of balance (see "Fixing Wobbly Ceiling Fans" — page 7 — for tips on correcting wobbly fans). But many manufacturers offer a variety of blade styles for a given fan, allowing you to customize the look. Many blades are also reversible, featuring different finishes on either side of the paddle.

Take note of the pitch of the blades because that, along with the blade span, determines how well the fan cools. The steeper the blade pitch, the more effectively the fan will move air around. Look for angles between 11 and 16 degrees; this information is called out in the manufacturer's catalog or on the packaging. Smaller fans that are designed for tight quarters such as bathrooms, where circulating the air and exhausting it help to prevent mold and mildew from forming in the closed, often steamy space have blades canted up to 22 degrees. Fans that are to be used in damp or humid locations, like the bathroom or a covered porch, must be Underwriters Laboratories-certified for moist environments.

Motor. The motors in ceiling fans range between 1/60 and 1/3 hp. A higher-power motor helps meet the demands put on the fan by the resistance of the blades. In other words, the greater the span and pitch, the more powerful a motor is needed. Heavy-duty motors are more resistant to overheating, as well.

A motor with sealed bearings that never need to be oiled is among the items that denote quality in a fan. Another is a rubber flywheel, which helps keep the torque under control, stabilizing the fan while preventing noise from channeling up into the ceiling, where it is amplified. Inexpensive fans often lack these noise-dampening components.

What to Look For: Lights, Hardware, Warranty

Lights and more. Most fans are designed to accommodate optional light fixtures. These can range from simple incandescent bulbs to halogen downlights or elaborately crafted, hand-cut crystal upright shades. To attach a multiple-light fixture to the fan, you may have to choose a fitter, which connects to the bottom of the fan body. Uplights, which bounce light off the ceiling, provide more ambient illumination than do downlights.

One manufacturer makes a fan that comes with both lights and a small but powerful built-in heating unit. Thermostatically controlled, it's intended to extend the seasons for comfortable porch and sunroom use.

Finishes. The best painted finishes are electrostatically applied powder coatings. Look for a multiple-coat lacquered finish on brass-plated fans.



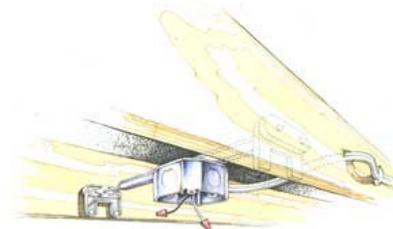
Tristar, Emerson



Odyssey, Emerson



Malibu Star, Casablanca



Mounting hardware. Most fans come with a standard 6-inch downrod. Longer downrods, up to 72 inches, are available for tall ceilings. You'll need a hugger mount that minimizes the distance between fan and ceiling for low-overhead spaces.

Look for fans with a swiveling ball-and-socket hanging system. It allows a fan to be hung from a flat or sloped ceiling, and helps keep the fan level when it's in use.

Warranty. Compare the fine print on guarantees. Some cover the entire fan, others just the motor. Duration can range, too, from five years to lifetime coverage.

Controls. Standard controls for the fan motor and lights include a pull chain from the housing. Consider wiring the fan to a wall switch (which may already be in place if you're replacing a ceiling light) for convenience and to minimize the wear-and-tear on the pull-chain switch and its housing. (These switches are often the first thing to wear out or come loose on fans.)

For the ultimate in convenience, look for a remote control. Either wall-mounted or a wireless handheld unit, the device should control the lights and the fan speed. Some have a night-time mode for use in bedrooms, in which the speed is automatically slowed over time. Others include a security setting that trips the lights using random patterns that simulate an occupied house.

Size it right

Although manufacturers' packaging typically lists formulas that relate specific room size to the blade span of a fan, there are some general guidelines.

Up to 50-sq.-ft.-room: 30-in. span
 51- to 100-sq.-ft. room: 36-in. span
 101- to 200-sq.-ft. room: 42-in. span
 201- to 400-sq.-ft. room: 52-in. span
 More than 400-sq.-ft. room: 54-in. span

Remember, in long, narrow spaces or in very large rooms, you can install more than one fan.

Keeping a Fan Secure

When possible, attach hanging brackets for a fan right to the ceiling joist. But when the fan must go between joists, use one of the methods described here.

If you can only work from below and the ceiling is finished, use a brace bar, a heavy-duty adjustable metal bridge with spiked ends (about \$15 with box). Cut a hole in the ceiling large enough to slip the bar through to the framing. Position the bar so its legs are flush with the bottom of the joists. Rotate the outer shaft to set the spikes in the wood, then proceed with the installation.

If the area is accessible from above or open below, screw 2 X 6 blocking between the joists.

Installation Basics

Place fans as close as possible to the middle of the room. Blade tips should be a minimum of 18 inches from any wall or cabinet. Standard installation packages, designed for the typical 8-foot ceiling, position the fan 7 feet from the floor, where it can deliver maximum circulating performance.

For low-slung spaces less than 8 feet in height, flush, or hugger, mounts provide an 8-inch clearance from the ceiling. Downrod, or pole, mounts make optimal installation possible in rooms with ceilings that are higher than 8 feet or that have a slope of up to 45 degrees. Available in lengths up to 72 inches, downrods bring the fan closer to the optimal function level. The higher the fan is hung, the less air circulates near the floor where it's better appreciated.

If there is a ceiling fixture where you plan to put your fan, you can often use the existing wiring (see "Weekend Project: Fan Appreciation"). Otherwise, you'll have to run a new power line. Remember that fans weigh 25 lbs. or more and that they vibrate while in use, putting extra stress on the overhead connection. Plastic electrical boxes cannot stand up to that stress. Make sure that you're working with a UL-listed metal box approved for ceiling fan installation.

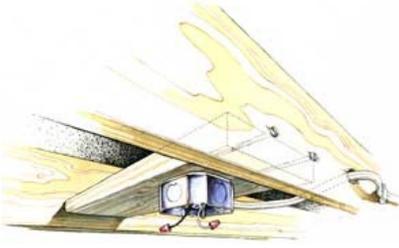
How the box is mounted is also vital to keeping the fan on the ceiling. If possible, it should be anchored directly to a ceiling joist, but that doesn't always center the fan in the room. For details of two safe alternative methods — one using blocking that requires access from above or below, and one that requires hardware that can be mounted without tearing up the ceiling — see "Keeping a Fan Secure." However you mount the box, disconnect the power before screwing in the hanger bracket box.

The fan typically attaches to the bracket in one of two ways: with J-hooks or a swiveling ball-and-socket. An advantage of the ball-and-socket design is that it helps keep the fan level.

Run the downrod through the canopy, and thread the wires through it. Then attach the downrod to the motor assembly and secure it. Lift and hang the fan in position. Next, carefully fasten the blades into their holders and affix to the fan body. Hook up the wires according to manufacturer's instructions (or consult an electrician) and reconnect the power source. The final step: Turn down the air conditioner!

Fixing Wobbly Ceiling Fans

There are a number of on-the-spot fixes for a wobbly ceiling fan. To check blades for alignment, hold a yardstick vertically against the outer, leading edge of a paddle with the end of the yardstick against the ceiling. Note this measurement and compare it to those of the other blades. Gently bend any wayward blades into line. If the fan is still shaky, try swapping adjacent paddles. If that fails to solve the problem, a blade-balancing kit, available from the manufacturer of the fan, might do the trick. Some companies, such as Casablanca, will send these kits to fan owners free of charge or can refer you to a supply source in your area.



To use a blade-balancing kit, attach the balancing clip at the midpoint of the leading edge of each blade, one at a time, then run the fan and observe the wobble. On the paddle with the least amount of play, fix the clip to the front edge again, this time close to the blade bracket. Spin the fan again, checking to see if stability improves. Continue moving the clip out to the end of the blade and testing the rotation. When you've found the point on the paddle where the fan runs most smoothly, apply the self-adhesive weight on the center line of the blade, opposite the clip. If necessary, repeat the procedure, adding more weights to the blades as needed.

Where to Find It

Casablanca Fan Co
761 Corporate Center Dr.
Pomona, CA 91768
888-227-2178

Emerson Ceiling Fans
8400 Pershall Rd.
Hazelwood, MO 63042
www.emersonfans.com
800-237-6511

The Fan Man
1914 Abrams Pkwy.
Dallas, TX 75214
www.fanmanusa.com
214-826-7700
An impressive source for rare and offbeat antique and reproduction fans. Also restoration and repair services. Catalog is available.

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800/4Hunter

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212/226-1276
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2002 Ave. R
Grand Prairie, TX 75050
800-527-1292

Minka-Aire
1151 W. Bradford Circle
Corona, CA 91720
800-278-2828

Modern Fan Co.
701 Mistletoe
Ashland, OR 97520
www.modernfan.com
888-588-3267

Reiker Enterprises
Box 939
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