

A photograph of a dark interior room with a light-colored wooden floor. A white-framed window with a six-pane grid is set into a dark grey wall. The window looks out onto a bright outdoor area with a white railing and a blue sky. To the left of the window is a white door with a similar six-pane grid. The text 'Let There Be Light' is overlaid on the image in a large, white, sans-serif font. The words 'Let There Be' are stacked vertically, and 'Light' is on a separate line to the right. The text is partially enclosed by thin white rectangular outlines.

# Let There Be Light

An interior window  
lightens a dark room,  
extends sightlines,  
and adds charm

BY JUSTIN FINK



**A**s a remodeler, I'm commonly asked to upsize windows to let in more sunlight, and to either widen interior doorways or remove a wall completely to make a room feel more connected. Those jobs are often invasive and messy, which means they aren't inexpensive. Now, when a discussion with a client starts down the road of more light, better sightlines, or a stronger connection between rooms, I first consider adding an interior window.

Compared to more drastic solutions, adding an interior window is a relative walk in the park. The materials are inexpensive, and the majority of the work can be done off site. If planned with some forethought and executed cleanly, the finished result can truly change the feel of a floor plan.

Although this work is possible to do in a load-bearing wall (as long as you're willing to temporarily support the floors above and add a structural header), and in a wall where electrical, plumbing, or ductwork has to be moved, the ideal is a non-bearing wall without any hidden mechanicals. This allows for simple, precise, and quick surgical alteration to the wall. For this particular job, the on-site portion started after breakfast and was done and cleaned up before lunch.

This client wanted the transitional charm of a modern farmhouse style, so I used a true divided-lite pine window sash (\$72, brosko.com), but any fixed window sash—new, old, or shop-made—can be used to the same end. I've also seen projects where interior windows are functional (visit [finehomebuilding.com/magazine](http://finehomebuilding.com/magazine) for a gallery of inspiring interior windows). Regardless of the age or type of window, the building process and installation are both fairly straightforward, and require only basic carpentry skills.

Best of all, interior windows don't require any flashing and will never rot, and that's a welcome respite that this remodeler definitely appreciates. □

Justin Fink is editor of *Fine Homebuilding*. Photos by Matthew Millham, except where noted. Drawings by Dan Thornton.



## SHOP ASSEMBLY

**Spacers set the sash.** Cut the jamb stock to be just a whisker larger than the sash, then fasten the jambs together with countersunk screws before dropping the sash into place. Use spacer blocks to support and locate the sash, then secure it with screws through the back of the jambs.



**Prefab the casing.** Using the jamb assembly as a template, size and cut the parts for two full sets of trim—casing, stool, and apron—one for each side of the window. Join the parts using glue and pocket screws driven from the back sides.



**Trim one side.** After marking the reveal around the jambs, add a bead of glue and attach one of the two casing assemblies, fastening it with brad nails. (The trim on the other side of the window will be installed on site).



# ON SITE: PREP THE OPENING



**Trim as a template.** After holding up and leveling the unattached trim assembly on the wall, trace around its inside perimeter. Then, add a little more than the thickness of the jamb to the scribed line to find where to cut back the drywall. Cut the opening with a new, sharp utility-knife blade, making several passes.



**Retrofit a rough opening.** Any studs that extend through the new opening must be accurately cut back. Measure  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. from the cut edge of the drywall, mark a line across the face of the stud, then make the cut at an angle away from the line using an oscillating multitool. Toe-screw the new sill and header to blocking added to either side of the opening and then into the angled cut, which ensures that the new 2xs won't be thrown off by out-of-flat cutting.





# AND INSTALL THE WINDOW



For measured drawings of this window, visit [finehomebuilding.com/magazine](http://finehomebuilding.com/magazine).



**In and trimmed.** With the opening prepped, set the window in place—centered and double-checked for plumb—and then fasten through the casing with finish nails. The unattached casing is then installed on the opposite side and fastened, covering the wall surgery completely.

