

LOG HOME LIVING

Choosing A Log Cabin Roof

Take time to plan your cabin's design, but don't forget what's on top. Use these pro pointers for choosing a log cabin roof that is not only stylish but practical.

Choosing a log cabin roof may seem like an afterthought. When choosing a cabin design, it's usually the floor plan that garners the most attention from owners. But choosing the right roofing style and materials can play a huge role not only in a cabin's style, but how big a cabin feels on the inside. Here are a few things to consider when choosing your cabin's roof design.



This log home has a gabled, standing-seam

metal roof.

The Right Style

There are a variety of roof styles that adorn the top of a cabin, from gable to hip to pyramid to gambrel. For cabins, perhaps more than any other type of home, a gable roof is the most common choice. The reason is simple: It maximizes the amount of space upstairs, and adds more options for extra rooms, storage or architectural features.

“I find the gable-style roof lines to be most common with our log and hybrid home designs,” says John Lanner, senior design consultant at [Beaver Mountain Log & Cedar Homes](#) in Deposit, New York. “This is driven by several factors — cathedral ceilings and floor-to-ceiling glass walls for taking in the views are likely the top two.” However, gable roofs are not the only style suited to a cabin. “Our customers prefer the traditional cape or chalet roof seen on many log homes,” says Mark Elliott, vice president of [Coventry Log Homes](#) in Woodsville, New Hampshire. “If the customer chooses a cape style with a farmer’s porch, a standard gable roof is typical. If they choose a design that has lots of windows facing a scenic view, a prow roof may be added.”

Regional Differences

Certain roof styles may be prevalent in some areas more than others. Some of this distinction is simply preference. But the weather in different parts of the country also can play a role in your choice of roof.

“On an Appalachian cabin, you might see a roof with a 12/12 [45-degree angle] or 10/12 [40-degree angle] pitch to shed rain and snow as efficiently as possible,” explains Allen Halcomb of Knoxville, Tennessee-based [MossCreek Designs](#). “However, out west in Colorado or Montana, where it snows a lot, it’s actually preferable to keep the snow on the roof, so it doesn’t build up around the logs. There, you often see an 8/12 [34-degree angle] or even a 6/12 pitch [27-degree angle].”



A cabin with a classic gambrel roof from Coventry

Log Homes.

Gambrel roofs have a larger appeal in New England, observes Mark Feder, vice president of sales for [Appalachian Log Homes](#) in Ripley, West Virginia, because that style tends to collect less snow. Roofs for log structures are slightly different than conventional roofs because they are designed to protect the logs from rain and snow, adds Lanner.

“One of the biggest features that differs in my mind is the size of the overhangs,” he says. “Conventional homes typically have very short overhangs or none at all, where our designs use at least 2-foot overhangs. I also like to use stepped overhangs in the peaks of gable roofs, which not only provides additional protection to the logs but also adds some architectural interest.”

The Right Material

Another factor in the style of your cabin is the roofing material you select. The most cost-effective option is asphalt shingles, which you can upgrade to a more dimensional “architectural” shingle to give your cabin a distinctive look. Metal roofs also are becoming increasingly popular for cabins, partially for appearance and partially for durability.

Metal roofs will be more expensive than shingles, but the cost will vary depending on the style or quality of metal you choose. Another frequently

used option for a cabin is cedar shingles. These can be pricey and won't last as long as other roofing options. According to John Ricketson, a project manager for [Hearthstone](#) in Macon, Georgia, there is now a pressure-treated cedar shake that offers greater longevity. Slate is another interesting but pricey option that is popular in regions such as New England.



This cabin with cedar shingles roofing was built by Hearthstone Homes. (Photo Courtesy Hearthstone Homes)

Add-Ons

The roof options for your cabin are not much different than those offered for a conventional home. What really makes the difference in price for your cabin is adding exposed timber beams and rafters that match the cabin's

other wood elements. You can create a more conventional roof from pre-assembled trusses and dimensional lumber, then hide this structure behind Sheetrock, siding, oriented strand board (OSB) or plywood.

This is a less expensive roofing option, but it's not as visually captivating.

"The most expensive roof systems to build are ones with structural exposed beams – typically a 6-by-12 ridge beam and 4-by-8 rafters – with a 2-by-6 tongue-and-groove ceiling," Feder states. "The least expensive roof systems to build are ones from common rafters or pre-fabricated trusses."

However, Feder adds that even a less-expensive roof structure can still be dressed up without major cost. "If the sheathing is either OSB or plywood, the customer then has the option to finish the ceiling with drywall or install 1-inch tongue-and-groove boards to the bottom side of the trusses for a wood ceiling," he says. "Decorative, non-structural beams can be added as well."
