

Barn Door Sliders

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Not so long ago, having to install a glass sliding door in your shower was almost a curse. Swing doors had become gorgeous, sleek, and sophisticated frameless glass, but sliders were still the same old glass surrounded by ugly metal that we grew up with.

Until... barn door sliders came on the scene!

Barn door hardware brought the frameless look to sliders. Goodbye to the ugly, bulky metal track that was used to hide the glass support. Hello to the sleek bar and exposed industrial rollers that are the pinnacle of style and functionality.



Rorik, by Krownlab

The awful metal bar across the top of our old, outdated slider wasn't removed, it was transformed into a stylish bar that we love.

Actual top mounted barn doors (and by that, I mean doors on barns) have been in existence for hundreds of years. Their design allowed for the door to be opened by the farmer without fear of the wind taking hold of it, and the hardware used to hang a door from the top was much more secure and longer lasting than side mounted hinges. Later, barn doors made their way indoors, as a design aesthetic for interior

doorways or furniture. Finally, the barn door style was applied to shower openings.

A barn door slider, or any slider for that matter, is a great choice when there's not enough space for a swing door to open into the room. The compact, linear opening and closing means no wasted space.

These sliders can be found with either one operable door and one fixed panel, or two operable doors. The two sliding doors are called by-passing, even if there are knobs that keep them from actually passing each other. Two operable doors may be an important feature when the entrance to the shower is on one side but access to the shower controls is on the other side.

The benefit of a slider with one fixed panel is that the fixed glass becomes a structural part of the shower. The glass helps to support the bar so that the weight-bearing portion of the bar is not wall-to-wall, but only wall-to-glass fitting. The hardware can be smaller and less bulky, or the overall opening of the shower can be much wider, when one of the panels is fixed.

Sliders aren't limited to wall-to-wall applications. Many come with through-glass fittings that allow for a wall on one side and a glass panel on the other, or even two glass walls with the slider in between. Very wide openings could have a longer fixed panel and shorter door, or even two doors plus a fixed panel. Engineering limits exist, but there's still plenty of room for design creativity.



River, by Jade Hardware

Despite their many benefits, a barn door slider is not going to be right for every application. Below are situations where a slider is a bad idea:

- **Narrow overall opening.** The largest a sliding door can be is half the size of the opening, plus 1" for overlap with the other panel. To calculate the maximum shower access width, use the formula:

$$\text{Shower Access} = (\text{Total Width} / 2) \text{ minus } 1''$$

With a 48" total width, the shower access width would be approximately 23". A slider installed in a space that is narrower than 48" risks not meeting code.

- **Out of level base.** Sliding door glass is cut level so that it can move from one side to the other without hitting on a high spot. This can create excessive gaps or result in the glass coming out of the guide if the base is too far out of level. Semi-frameless and off the shelf sliders are build with metal sills and metal shims that are used to create a level base where one might not otherwise exist. Opting for the beauty of less metal, means losing out on the ability to compensate for a shower that was not built level.
- **Insufficient backing in the walls.** Frameless glass sliders hold a lot of weight, so the bar must have good solid support where it attaches to the wall. The good news is that once you have the bar supported, it's okay to have less sturdy material in the area below the bar.
- **Locations where water leakage is a concern.** Frameless glass showers are always prone to water leaks, and barn door sliders are even more susceptible. Ensure the area outside the shower is waterproof and expect some water to escape between the panels and below the glass, even when seals are used.
- **Trying to match custom colors.** Barn door sliders are generally available in chrome, brushed nickel, or matte black finishes. Other color choices are rare.

Thinking about a barn door slider for your own shower? There are two aspects to consider. First, which styles and colors appeal to you? Second, what hardware will be up to the task of supporting the glass in the width and height of your space? Keep your mind open because there may be some trade-offs, but odds are that you'll find a barn door slider that achieves the balance you need between style and functionality.

For more information about shower glass, download our Essential Guide to Frameless Glass Showers. In addition to this 40-page guide, you'll receive our blogs and other announcements as soon as they're available, or you can choose a monthly summary.

