How do Outdoor Curtains Install and Operate?

The following is a condensed summary of how outdoor curtains are installed and how they operate. For further details, please contact your installation specialist.

**Velcro vs. tracking comparison**

There are two primary methods of top attachment, Velcro or curtain tracking. The choice between Velcro and tracking depends on whether you want to draw your curtains open and closed during the day.

**Velcro attachment** (above) is versatile (especially for non-rectangular applications), simple, and least expensive. Velcro attachment will not slide, but you can still create wide 8ft doorway openings for easy access.

**Tracking attachment** enables you to slide your curtains open and closed to both improve access and to decoratively swag curtains when not in use. Typically, curtains are decoratively swagged open most of the time and closed only when needed.

**Velcro Attachment**

Velcro mounted curtains will have a 5/8” loop-sided Velcro strip that is double-stitched to the top binding of the curtain. You simply “peel and stick” a corresponding hook-sided Velcro strip (included in your attachment kit) to your surface. It is best to attach the adhesive-backed hook-sided Velcro strip to a vertical (perpendicular) wood surface like the outside face of a header beam.

1. Clean hanging surface with a damp towel.
2. Peel and stick our hook-sided Velcro to a perpendicular face of your porch ceiling.
3. Reinforce adhesive Velcro with a staple gun every 12 inches.
4. Hang curtain by pressing the top of the curtain to your hanging surface.
5. Reinforce both top corners of your curtain panel using either curtain hooks & eye-screws or marine snaps.
Tracking Attachment

Some would like to have the added flexibility to frequently open and close their curtains. Our curtain track is the same tracking used in hospitals for “privacy curtains”. Tracking is sold separately and is NOT included in the standard attachment kit. If your porch is taller than 10ft, you may need a heavier gauge of tracking that is conceptually the same as described below, but has free flowing carriers better suited for tall curtains.

We configure curtains that use tracking a bit differently. The tracking carriers create a very small gap at the top of the curtain. We sew a coverage valance to minimize the gap. Curved tracking, straight track, and connecting tracking splices allow you to create virtually any tracking configuration for any desired length.

Our tracking is made of rustproof white powder coated aluminum intended for outdoor use. It is 5/8 inch wide and 1/2 inch deep for a sleek unobtrusive look. It is ceiling mounted (screws go straight up through track into wood or masonry).

1. Pre-drill holes into tracking (3 per 7ft. track) and screw tracking directly into your ceiling surface using provided screws.
2. Make any necessary cuts using a hacksaw and use splices to connect tracking.
3. Insert spiked end of curtain hook into top binding every 5” and loop hook through carriers.
4. Pinch hooks around carriers and feed the curtain into place by sliding carriers one-by-one into the end of the track.
5. Insert end caps into tracking, secure the sides of your curtain panels, and enjoy your screened porch.

Ordering track: Tracking is a lot like the old Hot Wheels track you may have played with as a child. There are 4 components. 7ft straight tracks, curved tracks, splices to join tracks, and end caps to contain the carriers. When planning for your track, simply map out what you will need and order the necessary parts.

Inside hang vs. Outside hang

An outside hang is when the mosquito curtain is hung on the outside of any support columns and railings. Since wind always blows towards your protected space, support columns offer natural structure to your curtain and help to keep the bottom of your curtain stable, often without even securing the base.

Outside hangs tend to look better from the interior as the eye wants to directly see the support columns. Outside hangs maximize the usable space of your porch and enable you to rest a soda/margarita on the rail. If choosing a Velcro attachment, strongly consider an outside hang. It is easier to wrap something around a barrel than along the inside of a barrel.

Inside hangs have better curb appeal if your porch is on the front of your house. Often, inside hangs require elastic cord to act as a rib to brace the curtain. It is typical for tracking applications to use an inside hang if the curtain turns a corner since they tend to swag (decoratively tie back) better. In practice, most of the time tracked curtains are swagged open, and the tied back look is as important as when mosquito curtains are closed to protect you.
Securing sides and base

There is something a bit counterintuitive about securing the base of your curtain. At first, you might think the best way to secure the bottom is to pull it straight down and perhaps tie it down or weight it, however the key to securing the base is actually **horizontal tension**. Imagine for a moment, we laid a large belt from the britches of the Jolly Green Giant on the sidewalk that was 20ft long. If you step on one end, and say, Martha Stewart stood on the other end, it would be hard to lift the middle of the belt. Even if the belt were not stretched taut, the little bit of horizontal tension would be enough to keep the center of the belt down.

If you can secure any three sides of a curtain panel, the fourth side really has no where to go. The top is secured when the curtain is hung. If you secure both sides, particularly at the two bottom corners, the base is very stable. An outside hang is very effective for maintaining horizontal tension along the base, but what about an inside hang? If a curtain turns a corner, you can marine snap the bottom binding of the curtain to the base of a corner support column. In addition, **elastic cord** attached from ceiling to floor, pinches the curtain to the support column. The elastic cord gives the curtain something to go around so that the curtain maintains continuous horizontal tension.

The curtains are designed for a relaxed fit. They aren't stretched tight like a drum and they aren't sloppy loose. The relaxed fit will animate your curtain allowing it to wave a bit in the breeze, but won't become unruly.

Don't be concerned about tiny gaps around the edges of the curtain. A mosquito is DUMB. It smells certain chemicals you emit and vectors right towards you. Insects in search of food vector directly towards the food. Bees, on the other hand, don't see you as food and are geographically oriented. When faced with an obstacle, they are more likely to move laterally. Nonetheless, we want you to feel safe and secure on your porch.

**Attachment items**

Curtain hook & eye screw

Neodymium magnet

Marine snap

Mini spring clamp

Sew-on & Adhesive Velcro

**Curtain hooks** are used for tracking attachment when they are inserted into the top curtain binding and loop through carriers that slide back and forth through the track channel. An eye-screw inserted into your porch structure combined with a curtain hook is perhaps the strongest method of securing the curtain.

The curtain hook is a drapery pin shaped like a swan with a 1-inch spike that slips between the seam of the 1-inch doubled-over binding. Loop the hook into the eye of the screw and pinch the hook closed.

**Neodymium magnets** are very powerful rare earth magnets that are used on side bindings only. These nickel-plated ring-shaped magnets will only adhere to iron-based metals and will not adhere to aluminum or brass. These magnets are amazingly strong and can lift a 5lb weight!

Standard attachment kits include 8 magnets per curtain panel and some broad-headed nails (described below). So if your project requires 3 separate curtain panels, you will receive 24 magnets in your kit. There are two very effective ways to use magnets to secure the sides of your curtain:
Stitched magnets - The magnets have a hole in the center. Stitch the magnet to the side binding using dental floss knotted at one end forming a sort of peace sign. The magnet secures the curtain to a broad-headed nail hammered into a wood structure. Doorways where 2 curtain panels meet use a variation of this technique.

If you are securing to masonry, vinyl or aluminum you obviously cannot drive a nail. Instead, glue a second magnet to your surface using either Liquid Nails for Masonry or Gorilla Glue. The curtain is pinched between the magnet stitched to the curtain and the magnet glued to your surface. Clip off the stitched magnets when it is time to launder your curtain. If you are attaching using this double-magnet system, you will need to order an extra 8 magnets per panel.

Tethered magnets - You can avoid stitching altogether by tethering the magnet to the nail (or, in the case of non-wood surfaces, to another glued magnet) using a short 6 to 8” piece of dental floss. Place the tethered magnet over the netting (just inside the binding), and then over the nail. When you open the curtain to exit, the tethered magnet will stay attached to the wall and you won’t be chasing expensive magnets all over kingdom come.

Marine snaps are very useful in a variety of creative ways. The female snap is fastened to any top, side, or bottom binding in about 4 minutes start to finish. The male snap is on a 5/8” inch screw stud which can be screwed into most surfaces, including masonry, by using a $4 masonry drill bit and plastic insert casing to receive the screw. Marine snaps are great for securing the 2 upper corners of a curtain when using a Velcro attachment, or on side bindings (about every 2 to 3 ft) to secure to a wall or column. You will place the female snaps onto the side bindings with a tool that we will provide so that you can place them exactly where they are required. Once the female snaps are fastened, position the male screw-in snaps so that that the binding is stretched semi-taut between snaps. This will force the binding to lay flat against your attachment surface.

Marine snaps are perfect for bottom bindings and can be used sparsely every 8 to 12 ft or as needed. Typically, this is the same spacing between support columns so you can either snap to the base of the support column or to the floor near a support column out of the way so no one will stub a toe. Use a bit of horizontal tension between snaps so the binding will lay nice and flat.

Mini spring clamps look like miniature 2” jumper cable clamps. They have black vinyl protective coverings and the handles have a small hole so that you can screw them into any surface. Simply pinch these clamps open and insert a side or bottom binding. Mini spring clamps are not as unobtrusive looking and are not made of weather resistant metals like the other attachment items, however they grip very well. They are used for unusually strong wind conditions.
Sealed doorways and fiberglass rods

You can exit at either end of any curtain panel whether it is sealed to a wall, support column or to another curtain panel. When two curtain panels come together to form a doorway, we have a special method for sealing using fiberglass rods and magnets, but first, let’s describe the binding in greater detail.

We cut netting, fold a 2 inch binding in half like a taco, tuck the netting inside and double-stitch it. Between the fold and the first row of stitching there is a narrow 1/4 inch hollow channel. This hollow channel will accommodate a 3/16 inch fiberglass rod that inserts up into the side binding through a small hole at the base of the curtain. The rods are 10ft in length and can easily be cut to the height of your curtain. When the curtains hang, there is a nice straight and semi-stiff edge to the side binding.

Fiberglass rods are flexible and won’t prevent you from swagging your curtains AT ALL. In fact we coil the rods into 18” rings when we ship them along with your curtains. fiberglass rods are NOT intended to be used in bottom bindings. To create a sealed panel-to-panel doorway, insert fiberglass rods into each adjacent side binding. Overlap the 2 adjacent bindings so that one is directly aligned over the top of the other. Use stitched magnet pairings every 2 to 3ft in such a way that the magnets don’t directly touch. When done correctly it will look like an Oreo cookie. Magnets are on the outside and the two overlapping bindings are the delicious creamy filling on the inside.

Fiberglass rods give your side bindings a nice straight edge and distribute the pressure on magnets and marine snaps more evenly making them more efficient. In fact, they are strongly recommended when sealing the side of your curtain to a non-wood surface such as masonry, vinyl, or aluminum siding.

Color Selection

By now you should have a pretty good idea which color you favor. The colors, White, Ivory and Black are deliberately chosen because they blend well with any color scheme.

Keep in mind that it is sometimes better to contrast a color scheme. For example, if the house is ivory, the trim is ivory, and the curtain is ivory, you will get a washed out appearance, so you might consider contrasting with black.

The photo gallery is the best way to decide which color is right for you. The photos on this page compare black and white on the same porch.

White and Ivory are bright and cheery inviting reflective light into your space. White is bright white and Ivory is the color of ivory stationary or the color of masking tape. Ivory is ONLY offered in mosquito netting and ivory is NOT offered in no-see-um netting.

The visibility through a White or Ivory curtain is about 80% in the shade and about 60% in the direct sunlight. About 25% of all orders are either White or Ivory. It is sort of a Key Largo movie, tea with a friend, arms around you, "Hey cabana boy, get me another Mai Tai, feel."

Black has nearly perfect visibility, especially when the light differential is brighter on the other side of the curtain. Often clients feel more comfortable with a fixed Velcro attachment using black since the visibility is nearly perfect at 95%. Black curtains on tracking have more of a formal elegant look and go with any color scheme. It is the Invisible Man movie.
**Mosquito mesh vs. No-see-um mesh**

Our mosquito netting mesh is custom loomed to our specifications with 270 holes per square inch. Many netting meshes have column threads weave in and out of row threads and then is simply heat stamped. Our netting is knitted and heat cured such that every time a column thread passes a row thread, the threads are actually knitted together, EVERY TIME. In fact, when cut, it will not unravel.

Our mosquito netting has about 15% of the density of a bed sheet so that if you threw a bucket of dirt on a white curtain and hung it, you would only see about 15% of the dirt. The air flow is about 75% because of the 15% density and the fact that it is not stretched like a drum. When blown by the wind, it cups a bit and deflects some of the wind. In fact, our curtains act as a limited rain barrier for the same reasons. The driving rain tends to cup and slide down the curtain which is why the curtains are popular with restaurants.

The term “No-see-um” has nothing to do with visibility, rather the term refers to a tiny biting fly near coastal regions that is so small that hole sizes are smaller at 800 holes per square inch.

Our no-see-um netting is incredibly durable and we aren’t strong enough to rip a raw edge. Compared to the mosquito mesh, no-see-um netting has similar visibility for black at 90%, yet visibility for white no-see-um netting is 75% in the shade and about 45% in the direct sunlight. In addition, white no-see-um will show the dirt more than white mosquito netting mesh. Air flow is about 65% for no-see-um mesh and it needs to be well secured as it catches the wind more.