

Fig & Feather — Home Style Cheat Card

A quick-glance guide to help you ID your home's architectural style in minutes.

1) Five-Step Workflow

- **Date it:** Look up the year built on tax records or old listings to narrow likely styles.
- **Read the form:** Start with the overall massing (boxy, long-and-low, L-plan) and roof shape (gabled, hipped, gambrel, mansard, flat).
- **Scan the openings:** Note window type (double-hung vs. casement), pane pattern (e.g., 6/6), pairs/triples, and door details (transom, sidelights).
- **Note materials & trim:** Clapboard vs. shingle, brick patterns, brackets, half-timbering, column type (Tuscan, Doric, etc.).
- **Compare & confirm:** Match your notes to a trusted style guide. Many homes are hybrids—totally normal!

2) Roofline Quick Key

Front-gabled: ridge runs front-to-back with the point facing the street (common in Folk/Vernacular, Craftsman). Side-gabled: long eaves face the street (Colonial Revival, Cape Cod). Hipped: all sides slope down (Foursquare, American Foursquare, Prairie). Gambrel: double-pitched barn-like profile (Dutch Colonial Revival). Mansard: nearly flat top with steep lower slopes (Second Empire). Flat/low-slope: often with deep eaves (Mid-century Modern, Contemporary).

3) Openings Clues (Windows & Doors)

Double-hung with many panes (6/6, 8/8): Colonial Revival, Georgian Revival. Wide single-light or paired casements: Craftsman, Tudor, Mid-century. Arched entries or grouped multi-lite windows: Tudor Revival, Romanesque details. Sidelights + transom at main door: Federal/Greek Revival/Colonial Revival cues.

4) Materials & Details

Clapboard/shingle: New England traditions, Cape Cod, Shingle Style. Brick with simple lintels: Federal/Georgian cues; patterned brick or decorative cornices: Victorian. Exposed rafters/brackets: Craftsman/Bungalow. Half-timbering + steep gables: Tudor Revival. Ribbon windows, smooth planes: Mid-century Modern.

5) Quick IDs by Era (U.S., very high-level)

c. 1780–1860: Federal/Greek Revival—symmetry, side-gabled or low-hipped, simple trim, multi-pane sash. c. 1840–1900: Victorian (Italianate/Queen Anne/Second Empire)—taller proportions, decorative brackets, towers, or mansards. c. 1890–1940: Colonial Revival/Cape Cod/Tudor—revived symmetry, multi-lite sash, gambrels or steep gables. c. 1905–1930: Craftsman/Bungalow—low-pitched roofs, deep eaves, exposed rafters, porches with tapered columns. c. 1945–1970: Ranch/Mid-century—long and low, large picture windows, carports/garages integrated. c. 1970–present: Contemporary/Eclectic—mixed references, varied rooflines, big glazing.

Trusted references to explore next:

- NPS Preservation Brief 17 (character-defining features)
- Historic New England Style Guide
- SAH Archipedia (Society of Architectural Historians)
- Pennsylvania H&MC Field Guide
- This Old House: House Styles Overview