

Gas, Electric or Wood—Pros and Cons

Wood Fireplace

Pros:

- Aesthetics of a "real" fire - smell, crackling sound, dancing flames
- Exercise of chopping wood and physically building a fire
- Firewood is readily available in many areas
- Can be used as supplemental heat source
- Self-sufficiency in a disaster scenario
- One of the most economical fuels
- Renewable, environmentally friendly fuel

Cons:

- Cleaning the fireplace; emptying and hauling ashes
- Requires a chimney/flue for ventilation
- Inexpert use may cause odors and smoke
- Fire is less autonomous than other options
- No "on/off" switch
- Less uniform heat output than other options
- Wood storage can take significant space
- Bad install can result in dirty, ashen smoke emitted from chimney

Gas Fireplace

Pros:

- Cleaner burning than a wood fireplace
- Easier to start a fire than a wood fireplace - simply flip a switch
- Flexible installation options
- More uniform heat output
- More easily controlled flame height
- Can be used as a supplemental heat source
- Reduced requirement for human interaction with fire

Cons:

- Doesn't have the same ambience (smell, sound) of wood fireplace
- Reduced requirement for human interaction with fire
- May be unusable in long power outage
- Fossil fuels are not environmentally friendly

Electric Fireplace

Pros:

- Easiest fireplace to install - just plug it in
- Portable
- Very convenient
- Can be used in any room of the home
- Ideal for apartments, condominiums, hotels, etc

Cons:

- Low ambience and aesthetics; not realistic looking
- Low heat output
- Very expensive heat
- Dependent on electrical grid